

Madly in Love

by Brad Harrub

Having looked in the tearful eyes of parents whose children have abandoned the Faith, I have learned there are a million miles between our children “going through the motions” in reference to their spiritual lives versus our children possessing hearts that dictate their actions. In this column, I plan to share with you what I hope to instill in the hearts of my children and those whom I love.

Do you know someone madly in love?

The vast majority of people in the United States say they believe in God-but their actions say otherwise. Likewise, those who profess to be Christians recognize that the greatest command is to love God with all of our hearts, souls, and minds (Matthew 22:37), and yet, very few demonstrate that kind of love for God. Rarely does our “love” for God translate into action. Most Christians are comfortable, and will continue to worship and sing praises to God, as long as they don’t have to make large sacrifices. We will meet for an hour or two a week, but we are not going to actually give up many of the worldly activities or niceties of life we enjoy. Consider just how much would actually change in many people’s lives if they no longer “loved” God. Would anything really change? They would still watch the same television shows, participate in the same activities, and wear the same clothes. This is

not the love Jesus commanded.

This lukewarm love (Acts 3:16) has poisoned the church. In America we have created an environment where God is worshipped in luxurious buildings and we “hire out” our benevolence and evangelism. We have Americanized and sanitized the Gospel so that no one has to get his hands dirty or give up anything. As a result, many hearts have forgotten their first love. The words Jesus quoted from Isaiah should ring in our ears, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Matthew 15:8). We say we love God but we refuse to turn our lives over to Him as we continue to be a slave to the god of “control.” We love God primarily because we feel we should and not because of genuine love that pours deeply out of our hearts. And our children can see it-or rather a lack of it. I think in many Bible classes we learn His precepts and we learn doctrine, but we never teach our children how to establish a relationship with Him.

Here’s what I intend on teaching my children about loving God.

I’ve been purposefully waiting to write this article, as it hits close to home, and it is extremely important. There is a massive difference between saying you believe in God versus actually forming a relationship with Him. I am earnestly praying that you will develop that relationship with God-a love that supersedes everything else in this life. Look at

Psalm 63:1-5 and meditate on the picture David paints. This sincere love was something that I sadly did not learn until fairly recently. Allow me to try to describe just what I'm talking about.

When your mom and I were dating and engaged, my world revolved around the next time I would get to see her. I worked evenings and nights at the hospital, so oftentimes we had to be creative about when we could get together. For instance, we might have a picnic at midnight instead of during the day. Or we might see one another very early in the morning if I worked the night shift. I would go to great lengths to tell her of my love for her (get her to tell you about the signs along the road). I knew she liked chocolate, so I would surprise her weekly with chocolates, flowers, and gifts. We would talk on the phone until the wee hours of the morning. Hours spent apart were often spent thinking about when we would be together again. I would literally do anything (within the sphere of Christianity) for her. I was (and still am!) madly in love with your mom. My sincere love caused (and causes) me to act on my feelings.

That is what I pray you will have for God—a love that causes you to want to be with Him more than anything else. Focus your attention on the greatest command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). I pray your world revolves around Him and your time with Him. Don't allow individuals to Americanize this verse to say, “Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind if it is convenient and does not require too many sacrifices.” Seek a love that will actually change the way you live and cause you to “go upstream” against the apathy we find in many churches today. Some individuals will think that this is radical and may feel uncomfortable with the thought of it—as it may expose an absence of love for God in their own lives. But I pray that your love for God causes you to turn this world upside down (Acts 17:6)!

Let me freely admit I don't have all of the answers on how to build this love, as it is an ongoing part of my life. I think in order to establish this type of relationship you need to start concentrating more on eternity and less on life on earth. Not a day should pass by without you considering Heaven and the fact that this could be the day you meet Jesus! Our love for God should start when we honestly comprehend the magnitude of who God really is (Isaiah 42:5). If you spend time each day really considering the creative power of God (Psalm 19) and what the Lord has done, your love for Him will grow. How could it not grow when you really consider His creation! I suspect you will find yourself praising God more

readily. Too often individuals look around, and, instead of seeing the majesty and awesomeness of God, they see what they don't have.

Set aside some time to meditate on the holiness of God (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). By focusing on who God is, it will become apparent that He cannot have anything to do with sin and still be God. It is virtually impossible to be running the race and pursue God and sin at the same time. Normally you have to stop one to do the other. Focusing on God will help you run toward Him and leave you less time for sin and trouble. Finally, take time each day to focus on God's love toward man (John 3:16), and the fact that Jesus conquered death. No matter what comes at you in this life, it pales in comparison to the fact that we can have eternal life with Him. If you do this daily, I believe it will prevent what one author deemed “spiritual amnesia.”

Notice that these focal points have absolutely nothing to do with you, and everything to do with God. Most people are living their lives as though “it's all about me,” when the harsh reality is they are just a speck of sand among many in a galaxy too big to fully comprehend. When you begin to focus on God rather than self, your life will soon reflect it. With these eternal thoughts come the realization that many are spiritually dead, and the urgency to teach them about God. That's where our love for God can call us to action.

Some individuals would encourage you to blindly follow the pathway society has set before you and “wait” for God to reveal His plan for you. They find comfort in “waiting” for God. One wonders if these same individuals “wait” to go sporting events, to go on vacation, or to play golf. I suspect their love of these secular things cause them to act! True love will freely bring about sacrifice and action (1 John 3:16-20). Many of these same individuals are living under the false impression that if they live a good life and are kind, then lost souls will come up and want to know about Jesus. Wrong! Consider for a moment the fact that there are “good” and “kind” lost souls who don't know Jesus. Are people coming up to them as well? Your love for God should cause you to get outside of your comfort zone and tell others about Him.

Real relationships take work and effort. Cultivate the relationship. Spend time with Him. And above all else, love Him with all of your heart!

Correspondence/Encouragement

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Mission Works

Westhill Works

Benevolence Program

Local Works

Cherokee Children's Home - www.chc4kids.org
House to House, Heart to Heart
In Search of the Lord's Way
Preaching Students - Southwest School of Bible Studies
The Truth in Love - www.ttil.tv
WVBS Online School - school.wvbs.org

Prison Works

La Poynor Prison Ministry - Steve & Carrie Handley

Foreign Works

Four Seas Bible College, Singapore - Peter & Pooi Fun Chin
New Zealand Harvest Missions - James & Emily Cammock

Leadership

Elders

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Ministers

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Cory Myers - 512.627.6672 (Youth & Family)
Tim Cooke - 903.641.5515 (Seniors)

Prayer List

Paul Loosier has returned to Tri Sun after his hospital stay for pneumonia, and he is doing well.

Billie Mixon is still recovering from two episodes of heart failure and would like prayers.

Ed Garrett, Barbara Gould's and Gene and Velma McDougald's neighbor, is scheduled for heart surgery in October. He has also suffered in his brain due to a recent stroke.

Meagan Gould did not start chemo as planned, but is rescheduled for more tests in a few weeks.

Lori Mosley is scheduled for surgery on Sept 14th at Medical City.

Bessie Bell is one of our benvolence customers and frequently visits our services here. She has requested our prayers. She is in a lot of pain from arthritis and diabetes complications. Please pray for and encourage her. Her address is on pg. 3.

Continue to Remember: James and Yvonne Ainsworth, Gayle Garner, Velma McDougald, Bud Moore, Martha Olsen, Henry & Eula Parrish, Patty Williams, Meagan Gould, Myrna Haufe, Connie Ivie, Iris Ramsey

Service Men: Clay Bayes, Jason Book, Alston Compton, Robert Johnson, Ryan Payne, Douglas Ramsey, Ryan Stewart

Announcements

PM Song Service will be held tonight during our evening worship time. Please place your song requests in the box at the back of the auditorium. All song leaders are encouraged to attend and participate.

Lads to Leaders Bible Bowl kicks off September 11th. Flash drives are available in the back of the auditorium. Please see Cory for details.

Grandbury Street Church of Christ is presenting a Bible Teachers' Workshop in Cleburne, TX on Saturday, September 10th. If possible, preregister all attendees so that printed materials, food and childcare can be adequately provided. If you would like to preregister call 817-517-7713 no later than September 7.

Save the Date! Fall Lectureship - October 9-12

Birthdays This Week

September 4 - Mike Wylie

September 5 - Nancy Armstrong

September 7 - Scott Barham, Hannah Blaylock, Danielle Gibson, and Corbin Massey

September 8 - David Dilbeck

September 9 - Ashley Jones and Dalton Shastid

Next Week's Adult Class

Introduction to "The Life of Paul"

Records for August 28, 2016

Bible Class	254
AM Worship	383
PM Worship	260
Wednesday	144
Contribution	\$8,154.50

Privileged to Serve

Song Leader	Cory Myers
Opening Prayer	Darrell Olsen
Communion Leader	Rusty Owens
Communion Servers	
Darwin Thomas	Thomas Saunders
Wade Braly	David Shastid
Wade Hall	Dan Gibson
Andy Parrish	David Dilbeck
Kyle Slaughter	Gene Steinkraus
Tanner Bearden	Bryan Bearden
Bronny Watson	
Closing Prayer	Eric Olsen
Nursery	Faith Beamon and Martha Dowdle
Security	David Baumgartner, Mike Drain, and Wade Hall
PM Song Leader	Various
PM Opening Prayer	James Horn
PM Closing Prayer	Austin Roughton
Wed. Song Leader	Jimmy Horn
Wed. Devotional	Greg Olsen
September Contact Elder	Darwin Thomas - 903.695.0176