
Words of Truth

Loving People To Death

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Love is a wonderful biblical subject. Through love God sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for our sins (I John 4:9-10). The Scriptures say that the greatest, in comparison of faith, hope, and charity [love]; is charity (I Corinthians 13:13). Christians are supposed to love one another (John 13:34-35). Christians are supposed to love God (I John 5:2-3). Faith works by love (Galatians 5:6). We serve one another by love (Galatians 5:13). We are rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17). The church of Christ edifies itself by love (Ephesians 4:16). I could continue to talk about love for the duration of this article and would still only touch the "hem of the garment".

With the much good to be said about love from the Scriptures, there is much that can be said of how people abuse the subject matter of love to their own destruction. Our focus is going to be on one particular matter, though many could be addressed.

The Scriptures teach us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Like many subjects, people twist this passage of truth (II Peter 3:16-17) into something that is false. Many teach and practice the false concept that loving someone is accomplished by avoiding saying and doing anything that would be offensive to that person. In fact, many just overlook the sins of others for fear of offending that person. The Scriptures teach us that this is not loving that person.

Love Includes Correcting The Erring

Jesus, who is by far the authority on all matters and especially that of love (I Timothy 1:14), said this: *"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"* (Revelation 3:14-19).

The word of God teaches us to love our neighbors (Mark 12:28-31, Romans 13:9-10, and James 2:8-12). Notice what is included with the instruction to love thy neighbor: *"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord"* (Leviticus 19:17-18). Some

people would take that instruction and wonder who is included in being their neighbor. We should recall that Jesus defines our neighbor as anyone, whom we come into contact with, that has a need we can meet (Luke 10:25-37).

It is not an action of love for us to allow someone in error to just continue in sin. Notice: *“Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful”* (Proverbs 27:5-6). It is not an action of love to just tell people what they want to hear either. Again, notice what God says: *“It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools”* (Ecclesiastes 7:5). It is for these reasons that we see correcting the erring is part of a Christian’s responsibilities.

Christians Are Expected By God To Correct The Erring

It is an obvious fact that Christians are expected to teach the lost people of the world the Gospel of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 5:42, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:14-17, Philippians 2:14-16, Colossians 1:23, etc.). In this, we are obviously correcting the erring (i.e. Acts 17:16-30). Our work of correcting the erring doesn’t stop there.

Notice the following instructions from God: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican... Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him... Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted... Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”* (Matthew 18:15-17, Luke 17:3-4, Galatians 6:1, and James 5:19-20). Now, do we do this “softly”?

Does Correcting Mean Using “Kid Gloves”

Sometimes, people need taught with compassion and other times they need snatched up (Jude 1:22-23). The truth can NEVER be watered down though (II Corinthians 3:12). Even with a babe in Christ, there must still be a rebuke (Acts 8:13-24). With some this has to even be done publically (Galatians 2:11-14 and I Timothy 5:20). Regardless, to cause sin to be stopped, there has to be some level of sharpness (Titus 1:10-14). This will often include using terms that clearly establish where that person stands with God (I John 3:8-10) that may SEEM offensive (Matthew 16:21-23, Matthew 17:17, John 8:44, and Galatians 3:1-3).

Conclusion

Don’t “love someone to death” by using carnal logic in remaining silent about their sins. Stupid people won’t hear you regardless of your approach (Proverbs 12:1). Honest people will love you for correcting them (Proverbs 9:8). Consider this in conclusion: *“He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue”* (Proverbs 28:23).