
The Greatest Thing You'll Ever Learn Is Just How Much You're Loved By God, Like So Shall You Love In Return

The world is desperately seeking true love. There are more books listed on Amazon on the topic of love or that have "love" in their title than books on God, Money or Sex. Some of the most popular apps, websites and social media platforms nowadays are attempting to help you in finding true love. Love is one of, if not the most popular theme in the music industry.

One of my favorite quotes is by an American songwriter: "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return." As intriguing and romantic as that may sound, it misses the mark. Looking for love in all the wrong places... Our world craves love, but they can't find fulfilling and lasting love. Not until they come to the cross.

On a side note: my version of the quote is "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just how much you're loved (by God); like so shall you love in return." And it's derived from this passage as well as Matthew.

Now Jesus says if you will love each other this way, "all" will know you are My disciple. He doesn't say "might know" or "can know" but "will" know.

Brothers and sisters, we can tell people about the love of God and we can tell people what we believe in and that will not convince anyone nearly as much as seeing our love in action and how we care for one another. Jesus says that the key to impacting the world is for Christians to love each other. So why is the church having so little impact? Why can't the church point the world to what it so desperately craves—true love?

I'd like to suggest an answer through a true story from the life of Dr J. Vernon McGee.

He tells the story of when he was a boy, his dad died, and he went to work to support his mother and sister. He stayed with two aunts and his bachelor uncle. One aunt was a Baptist and the other was a Presbyterian. The uncle was a rough unbeliever with a drinking problem. Every Sunday after church they would all sit down for lunch and at the table, McGee said, we heard all the Baptist dirt and the Presbyterian dirt. Years later, when the uncle was in the hospital about to die, one of the aunts wept and asked McGee why the uncle had refused to trust Christ, and this was McGee's answer: "You do not win people to Christ by being Christian cannibals". What does that mean?

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Many do not come to church where they could hear the gospel because all they hear before they get to church is the gossip.

The world looks, and they don't see much love. They don't see a difference. There is no way for them to know whether those who call themselves Christians are real or not.

Paul Washer preached a series once on 1. John and he called it "Tests of true faith". Let us take a look and see how John interpreted this verse and the meaning of "my disciples". He concluded that being a true disciple means being truly born again! Not just outward expression and involvement in a church but an inward transformation, a miracle, changed by the Spirit and given a new heart of love for God and man. Love is how you can know that this transformation has happened.

I want to read five verses to underline this point. You don't have to turn there, I'll just read through them and you can write them down if you're taking notes.

- "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God." – (1 John 4:7)
- "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death." – (1 John 3:14)
- "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." – (1 John 3:10)
- "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." – (1 John 4:8)
- "Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling." – (1 John 2:9–10)

Or as Jesus says in John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The clearest and most straightforward conclusion comes in 1. John 3:23

"And this is his commandment (singular!), that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us."

In other words, in John's mind, Jesus' command to believe on him, and his command to love each other are inseparable. So together he calls them one commandment: "And this is his commandment (singular!), that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us."

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If you declare yourself to be a disciple of Jesus – your Savior and your Master – then your love for others will be decisive in showing that you are real. Are you a true believer? Are you really a disciple? Have you really been changed by Jesus? They will all know “if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). What He meant is love confirms that your profession of faith in me is real.

We have to move on for time’s sake, but John 15 wonderfully elaborates on this and we will review and expand on this when we get there.

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