

What's Love Got To Do With It?



Norm Miller

How long has it been since you have spent over 2 months with one person? I'm talking day and night, 24/7! Probably not since being with yo' mama! Well, my wife Anne and I...JUST THE TWO OF US...took a once-in-a-lifetime trip several summers ago. We rented a 36' motor home in Langley, B.C. (Western Canada) near Vancouver and off we went.

We began planning this full summer "get-away trip" the previous fall, and after several considerations, our plan evolved into a 5,006-mile adventure from Vancouver, Canada...back down to Glacier National Park in Montana...then North to Canada again, through Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper...and on up the Alcan Highway into Alaska, through Anchorage... out West to the literal end of the road, Homer! We then made a u-turn and headed back East and South, down the Marine Highway on the ferry systems of Alaska and Canada.

It was indeed an adventure for sure, but also quite a challenge. The roads are often mountainous, curving and narrow with little or no shoulders at all. And the days were packed with so many decisions to AGREE on, i.e....WHEN to leave, WHEN to stop, WHAT to eat and WHEN, WHERE to park at night, WHICH spot, WHAT view, HOW private and ON and ON and ON...EVERY DAY! Yes, it was indeed a challenge! I learned many things from this trip – especially these five:

I'm impatient

Intolerant

Rude

Sometimes even MEAN!

And...SO IS MY WIFE!

Anway, when we turned in the motor home that last morning, Anne and I both shouted with glee, “We made it, we actually made it!!!”

But, that’s not the focus of my story. What I want to express is a wonderful byproduct of the trip.

You see, long before the trip, I began visualizing what each day would be like, and I saw a relaxed casual approach to everything. Thinking along those lines, I decided my mornings would be mine, no rush, no pressure. I LOVE long quiet times alone when I wake and draw near to God through devotionals, Bible reading and just thinking and praying. This is a special time for me.

With all that in mind, I decided I would read the New Testament again, slowly and thoroughly, reviewing the footnotes, reading the corresponding verses, i.e. – a slow, relaxed absorption of it all by adding this study to my usual morning times with the Lord. How wonderful, I thought. I’ll have plenty of time, no rush, just slow and easy. I can’t wait!

Fast forward now to only 2 weeks left on our journey and I was only in the last part of Matthew. Can you believe it?! I had not even completed the first book of the New Testament.

It’s difficult to explain how this happened, but in reality, I just had not done it. With the long days (sunsets at midnight), I stayed up later. Then the early dawns at 4:00 a.m. or so, made for fitful sleep, plus some medication contributed, as well as a casual procrastinating, relaxed approach to time in general. Looking back over those first six weeks of all that, plus outright laziness, I just didn’t get it done.

I was pretty bummed about it, kind of depressed, knowing it was too late to complete my plan, reach my goal, accomplish what I determined to be “wonderful.” I had blown it!

For some reason as I sat there, I began thinking about what is the one most important thing God desires of and for me? I thought of the time where some lawyers asked Jesus, “What is the most important commandment?” He answered, “You are to LOVE your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and likened unto that – LOVE your neighbor as yourself.”

I thought of the fact that **LOVE** is a verb, the action word in the most important commandment from God himself. It seemed then that LOVE must be the most important verb (action) in the Bible. Nope, I said, “It must be the verb in Genesis 1:1.” *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* Created is the first verb and the most important – yes, God’s first action – created.

He created us to LOVE Him, then others. Well, I pretty well had known all this – not thinking about verbs and all that. I felt I was a pretty good “lover,” in general, as per the command. I’m thankful and grateful. I pray regularly for His Kingdom – I pray for folks. I try to be obedient, be responsible/spirit led, a good giver, I help others, try to evangelize, introduce others to the Lord, draw near to God every day, asking for an ever-increasing LOVE for Him and others. I gotta be a good “lover,” right?

But my thoughts continued on thinking that if LOVE is my most important action response to God, then what specifically is LOVE? I mused over some scriptures as they came to mind; Scripture says God is LOVE...LOVE covers a multitude of sins...

without LOVE as our motivation all other actions are empty, worthless, like a bell with no “clangor”... God so LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten son...they’ll know you by your LOVE. Now understand, I was just thinking, not making an exhaustive search through the Bible or going to a concordance, etc...just sequence thinking things out.

In my memory, next came the “LOVE Chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. LOVE is patient, kind, not rude, etc...I have read it and heard it, at almost every wedding scores of times, but I couldn’t recall all of it, so I turned to it in my Bible and read: “LOVE is patient, LOVE is kind, and is not jealous, does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, is not rude; does not seek its own, is not selfish; is not easily angered or provoked; does not take into account a wrong suffered, is not resentful; does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with truth; is long suffering, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. LOVE never quits, fails or ends.”

I stopped right there and I was prompted to think of this as a “behavior scale” to see how I was doing. Oh, I’m fine, I thought. I have known all this for years I mused until I re-read....LOVE is patient, LOVE is kind, does not act unbecomingly (those three were far enough and more). I had failed all three of them in the last 24 hours!

My 67 days, 24/7 with Anne had partly been a difficult adjustment to which my response was impatience, intolerance, rudeness, anger and arrogance among others! Slowly I realized that in my everyday life, I had also committed these same sins, but interspersed among them were many times of “doing good” also, which diminished their significance (to me).

Confined in the motor home, one on one, day after day, God showed me clearly my true, unloving behavior. There was no getting away from it. Then I experienced even greater shock because this was the first time I realized that this behavior convicted me of failing in my LOVE for God.

I had never equated my behavior toward others as **lack of LOVE for God**. I think my past approach was that “I’m human”; I’m not perfect; I’ll try, then confess when I fail; He forgives me (1 John 1:9), which is true; however, this does not fulfill His intentions for me.

Now understand, that I have always known that this behavior is sin, I just had not thought of it as the sin **of me not loving God** as per the commandment, “If you LOVE Me, you’ll keep My commandments.” At any rate, I was convicted right then.

Jesus said, “They’ll know you by your LOVE.” LOVE that is patient, kind, not rude, not self-serving, not envious (jealous), not a braggart, not arrogant, that is not easily provoked, not resentful and all the others.– 1 Cor. 13

The scripture that teaches “Be doers of the Word, not just hearers” came to my mind and that the LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS* command is **THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL**, and it is specifically spelled out in 1 Cor. 13. It is the very foundation of the faith, i.e. first things first. Again, Jesus said, “If you LOVE me you’ll keep my commandments.” Keep this one and we’re a long way along on keeping them all! I felt like God then said to me, “Norm, **LOVE IS** the New Testament!”

Right then, I made a bookmark and wrote down these “LOVE specifics” from 1 Cor. 13. Since then, I’ve tried to begin my morning prayers by going down the list, rethinking the past 24 hours and confessing my failures to Him, one by one (if I hadn’t already confessed them when they happened).

After that, I start with patience again and go through the list asking God to give me the patience of Christ, the kindness of Christ, not to be selfish or jealous, or resentful or rude, on and on, after which reminding Him that He said He would give me anything I asked for that is in His will!

You know what? He’s doing it! I’m loving more and better! I’m happier, slower to anger, less intense, more friendly, i.e. more patient and kind! Less rude, on and on!

I’ll close with this question. Can you quote me the scripture, 1 Timothy 1:5?

“The goal of our instruction is LOVE, from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

LET THIS BE OUR PRAYER

FOR ONE ANOTHER!

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*Real Love comes from God and is given freely to those who have entered into a personal, one-on-one relationship with Him. If you’re not sure of your relationship with God, please read through the scriptures on the back page.

YOU CAN **KNOW** YOU HAVE A PERSONAL AND ETERNAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Isaiah 53:6 - All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on Him the sins of us all.

1 John 4:10 - This is real love – not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

John 3:16 - For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 1:12-13 - But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn – not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

1 John 5:11-13 - And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** you have eternal life.

You can receive God's true love and forgiveness by sincerely telling Him in prayer:

- That you are sorry for your sins;
- That you believe Christ is His one and only Son who died for your sins and is the Savior of the world;
- And that you receive Him (Christ) right now as your Lord & Savior. Amen!

Let us help you grow in your relationship with God.

Email to: GodsLove@ibsa.com or write to:

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GOD BLESSES!

These Bible scriptures are from the New Living Translation.