



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

February 4, 2024

P.O. Box 416
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Elders:

Kendall Bear
Dana Carter
Don Chandler

Deacons:

Larry Brackett
Aaron Evans
Larry Hill
Steve McCreary

Minister:

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Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7 pm

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Love Those Long Sermons

The youth minister and I were discussing sermons, specifically how long they should be. We were both curious at how two different preachers could preach a lesson of the same quality for the same amount of time but one would be well received and the other criticized. As we talked, I remarked that I knew a preacher that was known for his bouts of long-windedness, but that people didn't complain rather they were cheerfully amused. I said it was because he was such a loving part of the lives of the congregation, a little bit of extra time on Sunday didn't seem that bad. His love overrode his mistakes. I don't think that phenomenon is just related to preachers.

We all have foibles and flaws. We talk too much. We forget to say "thank you". We get lost in our own little world and ignore others. We interrupt. We are selfish, judgmental, and just plain hard to be around (well, at least those are all true of me). But when we show love in what we do, those flaws don't seem that bad. The love we have for others smooths out the bumps in own personality.

That is why a spirit of love is vital not only for a preacher but for every Christian. As Peter puts it, in **1 Peter 4:8**, "*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*" You and I will never be perfect. We will say something we shouldn't, do something we shouldn't, offend, and upset those around us. However, when we act in love, those mistakes are so much easier to overcome.

Love has the power to help us overcome our biggest problem, ourselves.

Barry Haynes
Hope church of Christ
Hope, AR

Measuring Our Love for God

While there is definitely an emotional component to love, true love is not merely emotion. True love is also a decision. It is a deliberate act of the will. The Bible reveals some measuring sticks by which we can determine whether or not our love for God is as deep as it could be.

Our love for God is measured by how much we love each other. *“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17). “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20). “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.” (1 John 5:1-2).* One may proclaim loudly and proudly that he loves God, but if his actions toward other Christians do not show that he seeks their well-being, then he really doesn’t love God like he thinks he does.

Our love for God is measured by how much we hate sin. *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15).* If we are totally captivated by the things of this world, then we really do not love God like we may think. The real measure, however, of how much we hate sin is not our disgust at the sins of others, but rather our level of disgust at the sin we find in ourselves! The exhortation of **Psalm 97:10** is simple, but profound in its application: *“Hate evil, you who love the LORD!”*

Our love for God is measured by whether or not we obey God. *“But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:” (1 John 2:5). “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).* Here is where some who profess to love God actually prove that they do not.

I once studied the Bible with a man who simply refused to accept that he needed to be baptized in order to be saved (**Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21**). At one point we read **John 14:15**, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”* The gentleman avowed his belief in what Jesus said. We coupled that passage with **Mark 16:16**, where Jesus said, *“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.”* It was there that he balked. I posed this question to him, *“If Jesus wants you to be baptized and you refuse, then according to John 14:15, do you really love Jesus?”* Tragically, he never accepted the implications of his rejection of Jesus’ instructions.

Do you love God?

Eddie Parrish
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