



Sidecar's Sidebar

The Bible is a wonderful thing. God has provided us in His word a template for evangelism among many other things. In the Gospel of Acts, we see that the love shown within the body is an attracting force to the soul changing power of the Gospel message. The showing of love within the body of believers is an essential characteristic of fellowship and evangelism.

So, why is it so difficult to show this gospel image of love for one another within the body of Christ? The following are questions I must ask in this regard;

- Is deep and abiding love for other members of the body in a fellowship necessary?
- If we do not possess and reflect agape love for one another, what harm are we doing the cause of Christ?
- Is it logical to rationalize that these principals of Christian love are not applicable in certain circumstances or situations?
- Is it logical to relegate this image of a loving body of believers in Christ to a historical perspective, not relevant in our modern times

The answers to most of these questions are clear from my biblical perspective. So again, if this brotherly love exists, why is it difficult to show? I believe one answer or reason for the lack of demonstrated love within the body of believers is a concept I will call "the unmet expectation".

What are our expectations of others? Do we expect other believers to embrace a Christ-like standard for living? Probably so, there is no arguing this point. The issue becomes; what does that living look like, and how should agape love manifest itself in our daily lives and the daily lives of others?

The big do's and don'ts are easy calls. As one moves from the major Biblical imperatives, things are less clear. We must ask questions like; do we focus on our role and responsibilities, or the needs and feelings of others? Do we focus on our experiences and revealed truths or attempt to learn from what Christ has revealed to or through our brother? Do we rejoice in our gifted position within the body of Christ or the opportunity to facilitate the desires and aspirations of others? Do we serve by leading or lead by serving?

As you may have guessed, I believe there are scripture mandates concerning these issues.

Regularly I refer to myself as a broken and imperfect vessel. So, please be assured my comments are not meant to sound self-gratifying. I can honestly say I have never felt God give me a message about how someone else should live his or her life (short of not accepting open sin or immoral behavior). Opinions, yes, everyone has them. Yet I spend hours in prayer for the elusive clarity of vision for God's plan for my own life. The older I get the more I try to keep my opinions, reference others, to myself. Still, I must confess I am encumbered with expectations. I sometimes expect others to be more caring, more understanding, more thoughtful, more considerate, more kind, more polite, more helpful, more loving, more supportive, more generous, more enabling, etc. I would fully expect others to have expectations of me too!

These expectations result in the derailment of demonstrated love. In fact, they can take the "like" completely out of the interpersonal equation. The result is not a glorifying one in a Christian walk. There is no easy answer for overcoming the unmet expectation.

Yes, we must be careful to focus on high standards and their application within a Christian walk and fellowship.

Yet we must be very careful in our evaluation of others with regard to their success in application of these standards. It is very easy to slide down a road leading to a non-affirming, judgmental perspective. Without doubt, this takes our eyes off Christ. Perhaps you will agree, our major focus for development should be ourselves.

We are all Christ's construction project, a work in progress until the wonderful day we are in His presence. Let us acknowledge the construction zone we call life on earth, and take our role as encouraging brothers seriously.

Chappy's Corner

The Interior Life

I have recently been doing a lot of reading in relation to the interior life, sometimes called the contemplative life, or inner prayer.

To find out much on what Paul talks about when he admonishes us to "Pray without ceasing" you have to dig into the writings of the desert Fathers.

I think many shy away from these writings as being mystic. However, what I have found in my study of this directive from Paul is that these ancient writers had a firm grasp on what it means to have a "heart" for God. It is truly more about focusing our attention inward and allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us fully with its presence. Only then do we begin to truly understand the difficult truth of ceaseless prayer.



I began by practicing the Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner." There are many variants of this simple prayer, but this is the one I find the most useful to me.

I quickly found that my mind would fix on a situation or a person that needed prayer and while still praying the Jesus prayer I was able to put forth a truly heart felt inner prayer that was specific to the need.

As I have continued this practice as one of my daily rituals, I have found a clearer source of inner prayer and have felt that my prayers were much more real and effective.

I am, in an age of evangelical feel good theology, becoming more and more rooted in ancient spiritual practice that brought our Desert Fathers closer to God and allowed them an intimacy that I hear so many Christians long for.

This is especially easy to do on the back of my bike. Not having the interruption of the world to get between me and God, a simple prayer like this brings me into the mindful humility of God's presence and lets His Spirit fill my soul.

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