

The Nature of Love

by Bill Crews

When I speak of “love,” I have in mind the love that is enjoined, commended, and exemplified in the New Testament. I have in mind the love that one should be talking about when he speaks of loving others – friends and enemies alike, or when he speaks of the need for more love among people, or when he speaks of love as the solution to many problems. I do not have in mind what most rock-’n-roll and most country and western songs lyricize as love.

The Bible defines love, not by telling what it is, but by telling what it **does** (or what love will motivate one to do or be): *“Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NASB).

Parents may say, “I can’t say ‘no’ to my children, and I can’t bring myself to punish my children because I love them too much.” But the Bible says, *“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently”* (Proverbs 13:24). And also: *“For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom he receives”* (Hebrews 12:6). Does God not love us by our standards?

Man reasons, “I hate my enemies and do not understand how I could possibly love them. Anyone who would do me wrong or harm my family or destroy my property is someone I cannot love.” But the Bible says, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you; in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”* (Matthew 5:43-45).

Love in the teaching of Jesus has in view what will promote the other’s good, or welfare, or character, or salvation, not what will please him or elevate us in his eyes; what is *best*, not what is *easiest*; what is *needed*, not what is *desired*.

With this in view, parents do **not** love their children. . .

1. When they will not correct them when they are wrong.
2. When they will not discipline them when they need it.
3. When they will not give them chores to do and teach them to do things for themselves.
4. When they will not teach them to be independent and industrious.
5. When they will not teach them the difference between right and wrong – using the Bible as the standard.
6. When they will not be good examples before them.
7. When they will not teach them good manners and to be kind, courteous and helpful to others.
8. When they will not teach them and show them that spiritual things are more important than all other things – job, school, necessities, etc.
9. When they will not teach them the word of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.
10. When they will not make heaven the primary goal for themselves and their children.

All of this can be accomplished if we teach them to have reverence for God and a deep respect for the Bible as the word of God.

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