

- #1) The unique love which exists between God and Jesus Christ in the Godhead/Trinity (John 3:35; 5:20; 14:31).
- #2) God's love for His creation and all that is in it (Genesis 1, "it is good." Matthew 5:43-47, God sends sun and rain to both righteous and unrighteous).
- #3) God's love for "the world" (which stands in opposition to Him). John 3:16, 1st John 2:2, John 15:19. This love is designed to draw out those who will love God back -- thus it has a salvific effect, even though it is a love for everyone (Matthew 13, Parable of the Sower).
- #4) God's selective and unique love for those He has chosen (Israel or the church). Ephesians 5:25; 1st John 4 -- great explanation of love for His people and their response of love toward others which authenticates faith).
- #5) God's conditional love which is directed toward His people, and thus fits nicely within #4, but is separate from it. Jude 21 (remain in God's love), John 15:19, see also Matthew 6:14-15 for a clear conditional limitation given to those who already are in faith.

Jesus Loves Me, This I Know, For The Bible Tells Me So?

Long Beach Alliance Church • August 29th, 2004 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**...SO THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL
IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH;
AND THAT YOU, BEING ROOTED AND
GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY BE ABLE TO
COMPREHEND WITH ALL THE SAINTS
WHAT IS THE BREADTH AND LENGTH
AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH, AND TO
KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH
SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE, THAT YOU
MAY BE FILLED UP TO ALL
THE FULLNESS OF GOD.
~EPHESIANS 3:17-19 (NASB)**

1) Love In John's Gospel

- A) When John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world...") is read casually, it seems to mean that God loves everyone equally and without particular specificity.
- B) It is noteworthy though (and very significant), that God's love is quite selective in Scripture (as a whole). For instance, in

the Old Testament, God selected the nation of Israel to be His "chosen people." This choosing of Israel was not based on their goodness or loveliness (in other words, they didn't deserve it) -- it was based on God's choice -- nothing more and nothing less (Deuteronomy 7:7-11). God's choice of Jacob in favor to Esau is explicitly clear in Malachi 1:2-3.

- C) The New Testament is no different in its talk of God "choosing" people, even in John's Gospel (John 15:16-19, where Jesus states directly that "You did not choose me but I chose you"). Note also Ephesians 1:4-5, John 17:24 & Ephesians 5:25 for further study and understanding of this kind of clear "selective/elective" love of God.
- D) Yet, even in John 15:19, the disciples (whom Jesus is speaking with) are referred to as being "out of the world." John writes in 1 John 2:2 that Jesus Christ died for the "whole world." God's nature objects to the idea that the wicked will die without Him, and God even pleads on the behalf of those who are wicked (Ezekiel 18:23) to repent. It is God's will that everyone would know Him (2nd Peter 3:9).
- E) It is this "unconditional" nature of God's love (that it is by the pure "grace of God" we are saved, not because of our own loveliness or merit -- Ephesians 2:4-10) which has taken root in our own culture and been twisted beyond comprehension.

2) God's Attributes In American (Western) Culture

- A) There was a time when the love of God was an almost impossible doctrine to 'connect with' because the wrath of

God was a much better understood and taught doctrine. Most children knew and had memorized 2nd Peter 3:11-12 (observe holy conduct and godliness, God is coming and is going to judge with destroying fire).

- B) But a remarkable shift occurred in Western Culture. While there is not time (or space) to detail the shifts which have occurred, they have reached new heights in the 'Postmodern shift' we see today.
- C) This shift has affected the church, sometimes radically. The shift though, is not about belief -- recognized faith is at an all time high! However, if you believe you are in the light, and someone comes to you with an invitation to step into the light, it seems irrelevant and/or downright pretentious.
- D) The church has been slow to catch up with postmodern shifting. Our explanations for how God interacts with mankind, especially on the kingpin doctrine of love, have proven to fall woefully short -- and the world senses our confusion, and watches us closely for answers.

3) Beginning To Understand God's Love

- A) God's love for mankind is described in five different fashions in Scripture. It is important to not think of these as modes or states which God adopts. These are all equally "the love of God." D.A. Carson, in his excellent book *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, has supplied us with the following five divisions of God's love.

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) Experiencing God's love, in many ways, is like a journey. We experience the love of God differently at different times along the journey, and we learn different aspects of God's love along the way. Take a few moments to review the 5 different "loves" of God from your outline. Now, take another few minutes to jot down how you have experienced each of these in your own life. Do you notice anything unusual or unique? Share your observations with your group.

- B) Christians use phrases like, "God loves everyone" and/or "Jesus died for your sins." Sometimes, these phrases can be misleading. Not because they aren't true, but because we are not thinking clearly about God's love and sacrifice. If you were sharing with someone about God's love for them, how would you explain it?

- C) What if someone told you, "I just can't believe a God who loves everyone would send someone to Hell. That's just not conceivably possible!" How would you respond? Take some time in your group to share some stories of encountering this kind of thinking in friends and family.

- D) What aspects of God's love do you understand the least? How does this hinder you in your walk with God?

- E) What aspects of God's love do you experience the most? Has your tolerance of sin gotten our of hand because you have over-emphasized God's love at the expense of God's other characteristics? What is one area of your own life which needs a new infusion of the love of God (ALL OF IT, NOT JUST PART)? This could be risky, but share these items with your group and ask for prayer and accountability for them. Don't let one more day pass without a new infusion of God's love!

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) Experiencing God's love, in many ways, is like a journey. We experience the love of God differently at different times along the journey, and we learn different aspects of God's love along the way. Take a few moments to review the 5 different "loves" of God from your outline. Now, take another few minutes to jot down how you have experienced each of these in your own life. Do you notice anything unusual or unique? Share your observations with your group.

- B) Christians use phrases like, "God loves everyone" and/or "Jesus died for your sins." Sometimes, these phrases can be misleading. Not because they aren't true, but because we are not thinking clearly about God's love and sacrifice. If you were sharing with someone about God's love for them, how would you explain it?

- C) What if someone told you, "I just can't believe a God who loves everyone would send someone to Hell. That's just not conceivably possible!" How would you respond? Take some time in your group to share some stories of encountering this kind of thinking in friends and family.

- D) What aspects of God's love do you understand the least? How does this hinder you in your walk with God?

- E) What aspects of God's love do you experience the most? Has your tolerance of sin gotten our of hand because you have over-emphasized God's love at the expense of God's other characteristics? What is one area of your own life which needs a new infusion of the love of God (ALL OF IT, NOT JUST PART)? This could be risky, but share these items with your group and ask for prayer and accountability for them. Don't let one more day pass without a new infusion of God's love!