

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, April 8, 2017

If asked the question, “Are you truly living and loving?” I imagine many would quickly respond affirmatively. However, if asked to explain how we truly live and love, we might be hard-pressed to convey the depth to our answer. And, if asked to compare our real life experience to the accounts of the life of Jesus, I suspect we would soon realize just how little we know about living and loving as Jesus demonstrated during His short time here on Earth.

Based upon biblical accounts, Jesus was remarkably compassionate and continually put the needs of others before His own needs. The only thing He placed as a greater priority was His relationship to His Heavenly Father. So, what does “truly living and loving” look like?

My intrigue with this elusive subject comes from studies in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7 and a small book I recently read entitled *THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD*. The author of this booklet is a nineteenth century Scottish evangelist by the name of Henry Drummond. Apparently, over twelve million copies of this booklet have been sold. It was based on a powerful sermon he preached on 1 Corinthians 13. In his summary, Drummond beautifully explains that Christ came to give men and women “*a more abundant life than they have, a life abundant in love*” which is available to all who truly love God with all their heart, mind, and soul. He goes on to compare the gospels to Paul’s “Love Chapter” and the fact “*They (the gospels) offer peace, not life; faith not love; justification not regeneration. And men slip back again from such religion because it has never really held them.*” That’s quite a bold statement, but one worthy for us to address.

In essence, Drummond is conveying what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 that “*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels If I have the gift of prophecy If I give all I possess to the poor but have not love, I gain nothing.*” (NIV) Let me simply state that in these tumultuous times it’s not easy to truly live and love as Jesus demonstrated to us. In fact, I suspect it never has been easy. Yet, I don’t believe there’s anything more important in life.

I suspect none of us really want to just exist and find ourselves at the end of the journey sensing that we’ve missed out on what could have been. Yet, I’m certain many who have read Drummond’s booklet have gone to the grave feeling empty and unfulfilled. My goal is to hopefully challenge you the reader to learn to desire much more and recognize where the Power truly lies.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 we’re reminded “*For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him Who died for them and was raised again.*” (NIV) Did you get that? Those who truly follow Christ as Savior and Lord must “*no longer live for themselves but for Him (Christ).*” Only those who truly follow Christ and are filled with the Holy Spirit can exude the love presented by Paul in these verses. Only they can truly live a life that is pleasing to the Father. These are not my words, but the words of scripture sent by one of God’s special messengers for our sake.

Imagine living a life where you can exude love for the unlovely that confront us daily in business, in church and all facets of life. If we truly love Him, we can certainly show the love of Christ. Remember in Romans 5:8 we’re comforted, “*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us.*” (NIV) It’s time we all started truly living and loving as He has shown us through His example.

Passages to Ponder: Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43-46; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 13:11-13; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; 1 John 2:15-17

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Leviticus 19:18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

Matthew 5:43-46 New International Version (NIV)

Love for Enemies

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13:11-13 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹²For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 New International Version (NIV)

²⁰We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 John 2:15-17 New International Version (NIV)

On Not Loving the World

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.