

Who do you love? Many names and many faces come to our minds. When these people come to mind we smile and our hearts quiver with pleasant feelings; and they should. There are certain ones of that number that we know we would do most anything on their behalf that made them better or happier. Anyone with grandchildren immediately gets this point.

But the better question would be “How Do You Love Them?” Just a feeling of love for another does little to make them better or happier. A quiet, silent longing only settles in one’s own soul with little benefit. Yes, the operative is “do”. Faith is dead without the doing; and so is love (James 2:26). It is also noteworthy that not everything I can do to make a loved one ‘happy’ is what I ought to do. That word ‘ought’ is an interesting word. It carries the idea of necessity; what one must do. Of course, Christians understand, and so teach, that we must do what God says to do. Not only is that right, it is safe! Not only does it make us happy, it saves us. It also has the potential to save those that we love. It has that potential over everyone with whom we have influence.

“But” is a word indicating a contrast. Something is being said and then there is the word “but”. What follows that word is in contrast to that which preceded that word. To illustrate this point one might say, “There is no longer any brain activity in your loved one and no chance for any recovery. You need to think about removing her from life support.” You respond, “But I love her.” Now what do you do? The circumstance demands an action, as do most like circumstances. Whatever decision is made should express the love that you feel for her and not the desires of self. Yet, the statement, “But I love them...” well expresses your initial thought. We want to examine what we must do in light of that initial thought.

Parents love their children. A parent that

lacks natural affection is an abomination to God (Romans 1:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:3). The same texts declare that disobedient children also displease God. Godly parents are children of God and ought to obey Him. Parents are expected by God to train their children in His ways. Training consists of teaching and disciplining consistently. These efforts must be extended through the avenue of love according to the child’s disposition. Parents have the feeling of love toward the child and they must extend this training to be right and safe.

The teaching effort toward one’s child is to be guided by the word of God. And its content must be the word of God. The word of God must be imparted to our children and is a commandment of antiquity, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). These lessons must be taught without provoking the child to anger and despondency (Ephesians 6:4). That sounds easy until you encounter the stubborn will of the immature. Parents often recognize, by life experience, the need to stay the course when their young children exhibit the stubborn will of resistance. But some give in to this resistance. They have their goals set far too short. They just want their children to be happy. This short term happiness may very well lead to eternal destruction! Some parents will not enforce attendance at all church services (Hebrews 10:25). Some will not read, teach or live Bible lessons for the benefit of their children. Some simply will not train their children because the children initially frown when they have to lay their video game or toy down for a few moments (Proverbs 22:6). The

long term goal of eternal life should guide every parent in the training of their children. Instead of resisting that which is right and safe by saying, “But I love them...”; think about this statement, “How do I love them...”. Then do what God says and you will have done well.

Parents, realize that as children get bigger so do the problems that attend them. Helping your children with problems will not someday “be over”, but “bigger”. Realize that the childhood of your children is not only their training ground, but yours. “How will you love your children” if one of them desires to just “live together” with the one for which they hold affection? It can be worse. What if one of your children desires to marry a person that does not have God’s approval to enter into His institution of marriage? Remember God sets the rules for His institution of marriage, even the entrance requirements (Matthew 19:1-12). If you, as a parent, all of a sudden realize that God agrees with you and you make a mighty stand on His word for the first time at this late date; do not be surprised if the child sees hypocrisy instead of God teaching through you. Yes, you must take the stand but the point is to do it betimes, early (Proverbs 13:24). The answer to a child desiring to marry someone that does not have God’s approval to marry must be, “NO! God forbids it and so do we.” (you may choose your own wording). Be prepared for all sorts of excuses, desires, maybe even threats in response. It is at this time that it must be clear to all that it is not “But I love them...” but “Because I love them...”. This is “How to love them...”, truly love them.

Sometimes children go against a parent’s love and direction. Sometimes your child will go against God’s will. Let’s think about your child that went ahead and married someone that did not have God’s approval to be married.

You taught them well. You stood upon God's truth at the decisive moment. The child forged ahead, without approval, and married this unqualified person. They probably said, "But, I love him...". But the truth is they did not show it. In truth, they went into adultery, taking "him" with her (Matthew 19:9). If "he" dies in this relationship, his soul will be eternally lost to the ravages of hell. You do not want that for your child do you? I know that you do not! In time and after the proper work has been rejected, you ought to be in fellowship with your congregation as your child has the fellowship of the body of Christ withdrawn from her as she has decided to live in the ongoing sinful state of adultery. There should be no words and no actions from you that communicate acceptance of this sinful condition. Yes, she is still your child. Yes, you still have deep and longing love feelings for her. Yes, you must follow this course, if you truly express love for her (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). "But, I love them..." is not the correct response when you truly have the long view and goal of eternal life for your children or anyone else.

Let's step back and reason together on the wisdom and will of God. He is not willing that any should perish but that all be saved (2 Peter 3:9). His words direct us heavenward and we express our love to Him by obeying Him (John 14:15). We must judge situations about us by the evidence (John 7:24). We must bear the burdens of others as we teach them the truth (Jude 22-23). Christianity is narrow (Matthew 7:14). The Bible, God's word, is our guide (Proverbs 6:23). Christians are lights set upon a hill, a beacon of truth (Matthew 5:14).

In the foregoing examples God is depending on you and your children are depending on you. There are many that you do not even know, and may never meet in this life,

depending on you. You are their guiding light into the harbor of safety. They are upon tempestuous seas and may very well drown if your light fails and their direction is lost. You cannot afford to waffle or waver. You surely cannot give in and quit.

Brightly beams our Father's mercy from His lighthouse evermore,
But to us He gives the keeping of the lights along the shore.
Dark, the night of sin has settled, loud the angry billows roar,
Eager eyes are watching, longing for the lights along the shore.
Trim your feeble lamp, my brother! Some poor sailor, tempest tossed,
Trying now to make the harbor, in the darkness may be lost.
Let the lower lights be burning, send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman YOU may rescue, YOU may save.

Philip P. Bliss

For the love of God and everyone else you love do not whine, "But, I love them...". Rather consider, "How I will love them..."

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the
29th Annual Mid-West Lectures,
"They Shall Be Turned Unto Fables"
To hear or view the complete lesson go to
www.39thStreetChurchOfChrist.org
or contact the
39th Street Church of Christ
15331 East 39th Street
Independence, MO 64055-4240 USA

**"They Shall Be Turned
Unto Fables"**

"But I Love Them!"

by
Randy Mabe

© 2011



*International Bible Studies
Tract Series*