

Love as a Life-giving Principle

As Seventh-day Adventists we place a large importance on correct doctrine. This isn't wrong. Jesus said:

John 4:24 "God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 8:31-32 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

We must worship in Spirit and truth and the truth will set us free. But lies come from Satan and they deceive us. We don't place importance on doctrine for nothing. Our books and brochures are many and varied.

Every kind of person comes among us but not everyone's intention is good.

2 Timothy 3:6-7 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Some people come, investigate our doctrines and accept that we are teaching the truth. They accept that God's law, including the Sabbath commandment, is still valid. They accept the idea of soul sleep. They accept that Jesus is in the heavenly sanctuary and is ministering in our behalf. They accept that pork is not to be eaten and that we should not smoke cigarettes. Some of the people who come may be talented and intelligent. But some of them never seem to come to a knowledge of the truth. Don't they know our doctrines? They know them. Then what is the problem? What is the lacking point?

Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

What is the love that Paul is talking about? Is the love he talking about a romantic feeling? It is not. The love that he is talking about is a gift from God. You cannot manufacture it. You can try to imitate it but it would not be real. True love comes from God. It is not simply an emotion, it is a life-giving principle.

1 Corinthians 13:4 - 14:1 ⁴ ¶ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all

things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ ¶ Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. ¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

In our relationships, whether that be our marriage or in our extended family, our feelings, our emotions can change. But the principle of love that we read about does not change with our emotions. God is love and God does not change. If the love of God lives in you by means of the Holy Spirit, the behaviors that we read about in 1 Corinthians will be seen in the life.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

So if a person accepts all of our doctrines but the fruit of the Spirit is lacking, what should he or she do? They must be born again.

In the Bible there are many doctrines and rules. But what benefit is it if there is no love? Some people say, "I love people, doctrines are not important." That person's love is based on emotion, not on the principle of love because love does not rejoice in iniquity. Righteousness and iniquity are based on doctrine and principle.

You say that you know all the doctrines but do you have love, mercy and compassion? Jesus said the Pharisees were like that:

Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

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Do not try to imitate true love in your own power. Sooner or later your love will be seen to be weak, selfish, seeking its own profit and in the end insufficient. Confess your lacking to God and ask Him for true love as a gift. This is not your doing, it is a miracle from God. Doctrine without love is empty. Love without doctrine is simply emotion. Because true love is a principle based on truth.