

Vol. 3 – Day 15: My Obedience to God Will Upset Others

Our most significant other often calls on us to do things that will inconvenience or distress others we love. Yet because we hold them **most** dear to us, we will let others be aggravated rather than disappointing our dearest. It is indeed our actions that demonstrate our true affections. We tend to stand up for, defend and otherwise support those we love. Yet, many times we cannot please everyone at the same time.

When we say we love God the most but our actions betray us in that regard, it is time to either draw closer to God or at least stop saying that He is our dearest love. Obviously, we must sometimes disappoint some in order to accommodate others. The important thing to recognize in all this is that every decision is a testimony as to who or what is of greatest value to us.

God never forces us to do His bidding over others'. He simply offers us the opportunity to be up close and personal enough with Him to be and receive enormous blessing. God's will is not a matter of His plan A and B or His perfect and permissive will. God's purposes will not be thwarted by either you or me. If I am not willing to be used in the moment to accomplish His purposes, He will simply dispatch another to get it done.

You are likely aware of this as well. In every situation when God offers you an opportunity to be of service to Him, there will be those who will be unhappy if you change your plans on the spot in order to do what He has asked. We always have the option to diffuse the anger of those in our presence but in so doing we will create sorrow for our Lord. His sorrow is that we love others more than Him.

The first of the 10 Commandments is "You shall have no other gods before Me!" God knows we have many others whom we worship (place great value on). Our quest is to make Him first in all things. When we inconvenience others, rest assured, "God will use their aggravation in order to mature their relationship with Him as well!" Simply obey and leave all the consequences to Him.

Volume 3 – Day 16: Love Is Pleasing

We have all been in love at some time in our lives. And those of us who have been madly in love with another person, know what it means to be madly in love. We cannot adequately describe the feeling with words. Nonetheless, we know it when we feel it. When you are overwhelmed with that kind of love, you will do anything your lover desires. And usually, when you know what they desire, you are already trying to fulfill their desire before they even ask.

Ultimately, we come to be able to finish one another's sentences. Many times we are already thinking a thought which they express, before they say it. And, so it goes. When you love someone deeply, you always want to please them. And the love story of the Bible is to show us how intimacy with God is the primary objective and romancing Him is essential.

One of the most appealing aspects of love, is that it comes without warning and without the baggage of manipulation or coercion. It is purely and simply an unadulterated, deep affection for another that creates an other-preferring desire for them. True love then is opposite of our natural inclinations to put ourselves before others.

One demonstration of this is the parent saving their child's life while sacrificing their own life in the process. The greatest demonstration of this on the landscape of God's creation of the universe in general and mankind specifically is sacrificing Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ. He did not sacrifice Himself to be a hero. He gave Himself for us because of His genuine and enormous love for us.

As opposed to the glory bestowed on the heroic individual, there was nothing but shame and disgrace heaped upon the Son of God. Yet God loves us so much, He allowed His only Begotten Son, to become a part of mankind and then be murdered by us in the most inhumane of all human punishments. When this love becomes posited within us, in the person of the Holy Spirit, we too can endure atrocities with joy at the hands of others who reject His love flowing through us.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 3 – Day 17: Emotion, Not Thought

Christianity differs from all other religions in that its central theme is **personal relationship with God** rather than adherence to religious creeds and confessions. Religion can be simply a process of thinking and doing. Religion does not require, nor encourage, relationship with one's god. It simply requires obedience to creeds of God. Actually the definition of religion is "bondage to a creed."

Christianity stands alone on several particulars. One of these is the relationship of individuals with their Creator, God. Relationship is not a thinking proposition. It is an emotional proposition. We cannot love with our heads. We can only love with our hearts. The inclusion of human philosophy and science in our religious practice and teaching has caused us to drift as a Christian culture far from the *Christ-In* culture which existed in the wake of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. *Christ-Ins* were overwhelmed by the love of God. That love was the distinguishing factor of their faith in Jesus Christ.

When we fall in love, our spirit connects intimately with another. No amount of intellectual study of my lover will endear me to them. Only a mutual attraction to each other's collective emotional gallery will draw us into a deep desire for each other. And nurturing relationship is only facilitated by consistent pursuit of greater caring for the one we love. As the emotion (love) deepens, the connection strengthens. As the connection strengthens we feel more secure. And as we nurture the love affair, it develops into greater passion for each other and greater selflessness.

One simple test may help you know where your affections lie. If what you are doing has no thought about what benefit there might be in it for you, then your affection is genuine and the action is a loving thing.

Volume 3 – Day 18: Love IS Emotion

Love **is**, after all, an **emotion**. We know the distinct difference between emotion and logic as it is common knowledge that emotional decisions are generally more risky than logical ones. Just as we thrive on emotions, so does God. So He used His rational mind to engineer the universe and us. He did this to facilitate His ultimate purpose, that is to establish a love affair with any who would respond to His overtures toward them. But we cannot have affection for God with our mind. We can only know God in relationship through our emotional connection with Him, and a deeply affectionate one at that.

Many these days say that love is action. However, this statement fails to take into account the myriad random acts of kindness which are done by benefactors who actually hate those toward whom they have acted kindly. You cannot judge any act or word apart from the motive for which it is expressed. The word hypocrisy might come to mind. Kindness can be appreciated even if it is done with an ignoble motive. But kindness cannot be love, if it is not accompanied by the emotion of affection. Many criminals donate large sums of money or valuable resources to charity to cover their crimes or to avoid prosecution. When such donations are done blatantly, we might even call it bribery.

I have observed that most recipients of kindnesses can usually sense the difference between being used as an object of someone's project as opposed to being an object of another's genuine affection. Good deeds do not generate affection in the doer. But genuine affection will automatically produce good deeds toward others.

If you are a generous or kind person, ask yourself if you are this way in order to gain the approval, respect and admiration of those observing you. If not, it is likely that you have genuine affection for those upon whom your generosity rests.

Vol. 3 – Day 19: Is Your Love for God a Passionate Love?

It seems that generation after generation drifts farther and farther from God. Some of this is purely the tendency of the natural man to cater to his own whims. But tragically, much of the drift is caused by the incorrect doctrines and practices of the *Christian* way. As we make idols out of the scriptures and altars out of Biblical artifacts, we replace the love of God with various forms of self-righteous behaviors which undermine His love.

Beware of your own propensity to *stand on the Bible* making it an idol to be worshipped above all else. This relegates the God of the Bible to a lesser place. And, if in reflection on your life, you discover that the Bible has not produced a lifestyle which closely resembles the unconditional love that Jesus lived, consider the most viable explanation. You have placed more value (worth; worship) on the commands and dictates of the **word** of God than on the enormous **love** of God. The Bible is myriad stories of deeply personal relationships with God.

If you do not believe that God wants your obedience to be born out of love rather than duty, you will not find yourself in love with God. Many have a love for God, but it is diminished for them by feelings of guilt, shame, or fear. God's plan of Salvation for you, was not only to cover the penalty of evil you commit, but also to remove all feelings of guilt or shame associated with that evil. Because, quite frankly, you cannot be intimate with anyone before whom you cower in either guilt or shame. God not only wants to be up close and personal with you. He also wants to be intimate with you, more so than you are with your most significant other on earth.

If you will abandon yourself to intimacy with God, you will eventually find yourself transformed into a most amazingly loving person. In order to **love like Jesus loves** you must unleash His Presence within you. It is actually **His love, not yours, that compels** others into a love affair with God for themselves.

Volume 3 – Day 20: Experience: Irrefutable Testimony

There is a radical difference between reading about someone or something and experiencing them. We all know facts about many people, but only those with whom we share a close relationship can we thoroughly enjoy! Experience always trumps logical conclusions.

Love itself is extremely illogical, but once smitten by love, one cannot dismiss or forget the euphoric feeling of that love! The deep affection of God can only be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit at the moment we are smitten. Thus a personal deeply intimate relationship with God is infinitely more valuable and satisfying than simply reading the Bible could ever be.

The Bible was written to convey the story of God's love and grace from beginning to end. It was also intended to be a proof text by which we can test our motives and complicity with the love of God. Vast numbers of people, including the very religious, are missing the best evidence for the existence of God and the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity has at its core a piece of irrefutable evidence. **Feeling is believing.**

When a person embraces Jesus Christ, according to the Biblical, historical record, he will feel the love of God as surely as he feels the love of another human being. Although the feeling cannot be described adequately with words, the feeling is unmistakably one of overwhelming affection. The purpose of God's introduction of His Son, Jesus, into humanity was to walk among us and communicate to us in human terms which we understand.

Once a person experiences the love of God, no amount of external coercion or manipulation can negate that experience or cause them to disbelieve. So if you want to experience the love of God, simply respond to Jesus' expression of love for you. It will produce in you a feeling of overwhelming affection that will never subside.

Volume 3 – Day 21: Standing on the Word of God

"God said it. I believe it. And that settles it." This trite and useless phrase is often spoken in 'so-called' Christian circles. Those who say it are extremely sincere in what they believe the Bible says on most issues. Yet much of what they believe the Bible says, comes from hearsay of others, whom they have trusted. Many of us have been misinformed on many issues.

It is senseless to say, "what I believe the Bible says settles it," for two reasons. 1) What you *believe it says* may be very inaccurate. Consider the opposing views of brilliant theologians who agree on very few interpretations. 2) *That settles it* presumes that you have all the right answers already which precludes any further pursuit of revelation (stagnation)! *Whenever the use of scripture denigrates relationship, its purpose is no longer being served and its message is abused by way of misinterpretation. Devoid of Jesus' love, the Bible is not God's Word.* — J. H. Alan

Many have talked about the Bible, studied it avidly and striven to comply with its very literal interpretation, but have missed the point altogether. If the scripture has only made points in your life, but no appreciable difference, it has surely become an idol before which you may bow, but through which you have not become as loving as Jesus was and still is.

The evidence of Biblical truth is human lives transformed into the image of Jesus as originally intended. God did not convey His word to us in order to spark verbal battles or to divide us from each other. The central theme of the Bible is redemption from evil (the selfish nature of mankind and its related carnage).

When you are up-close-and-personal with God; when you love others more than yourself and even show kindness to those who would hurt you, only then are you like Jesus! God **is** love.