

THE MEASURE OF TRUE LOVE

Valentine's Day is once again upon us. It is that time of year when men and women offer up some token of their love for their significant other. Sadly it seems that some express their love for their spouse or loved one only at this time of year. In this regard, Valentine's has become much like Thanksgiving, when most call to mind their blessings only once a year. Some attempt to make up for a year's worth of neglect by showering their beau with jewelry, flowers, candy or other more lavish and extravagant offerings. Love cannot be measured in carats, calories, carnations, car payments or Carnival cruises. True love is measured by a much different, but far greater, standard.

Jesus spoke concerning the apex of love: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Our Lord knew that the ultimate test of love for another is whether or not one is willing to lay his life on the line. Jesus went beyond merely teaching concerning this pinnacle of love—he showed us through the ultimate sacrifice of himself upon the cross of Calvary. In speaking of the sacrifice of Christ, the Hebrews writer proclaims, "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, **when he offered up himself**" (Heb.7:27, emphasis mine, SPM). Truly, no greater love can ever be shown that what was manifested on the hill of Golgotha.

How can we show this measure of love to those for whom we proclaim our undying devotion? Someone has well said that "love shown is love known." Certainly, this principle is Biblical, and well defines the measure of true love. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). It is not enough to say "I love you" (though we should say it often). It is not enough to buy baubles and mementos to express our love (though we should do so from time to time). The true measure of our love is the giving of ourselves completely to those we claim to love. It means spending time with our Lord, our spouse, our children. Can we truly claim to love the Lord, yet spend little to no time with him? How can we absent ourselves from the assembly where our Lord is present, refuse to study God's word as He speaks to us through it, and fail to communicate with our Father in prayer, and in all good conscience proclaim "Oh, how I love Jesus"? Husbands and wives, can you truly say you love your spouse when you spend no time with him/her, when no effort is made to communicate with him/her? Parents, can you honestly say you love your children when there is no time spent together? If we claim to love Jesus, we must proverbially "put our money where our mouth is" (see John 14:15). The death of Jesus becomes effectual only in the lives of those who are willing to comply with his commands: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you" (John 15:14).

As you reflect on your love for your spouse, take an accurate measure of your devotion to him/her. The real measure of true love is a total giving of yourself to the other. Don't be guilty of thinking you would die for your wife or children when you are not willing to live for them! Let it always be

remembered that the gift of yourself and your time will be treasured far more than the temporal presents you might give. This will hold true with your spouse and your children, and it certainly holds true in our service to the Lord (see 2 Cor.8:5).

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