

The Christian Life Lesson 1 2Q 2009

Love

INTRODUCTION to study guide

Read first three paragraphs – “One of the greatest..”

Thoughts?

- Do you think there is anything about God that is unreasonable? Irrational? Illogical? Inconsistent?
- If something is beyond our comprehension does that mean it is not scientific? If we can't understand something does that mean it cannot be measured, tested, and explained in rational terms?
- In the 15th century the Black Plague killed over 40 million people in Europe – they had no idea of such things as bacteria, infections, vectors so they concluded a wrathful God was punishing. They were sure that such things could never be explained scientifically.
- Are we in danger of taking a similar mindset – believing that because we are finite and have limited comprehension and knowledge therefore truth is not rational, reasonable, testable, scientific, explainable?
- Or should our attitude be that all truth is reasonable, scientific, understandable, explainable, testable, we are just, currently, too ignorant to even conceive of a possible explanation?
- What does God want for us, to understand as much as we can and to keep growing with open minds hungering to understand more or to take the attitude we are not supposed to understand?
- God intends that to the earnest seeker the truths of his word shall be ever unfolding. The mysteries it contains are not such because God has sought to conceal truth; **the inability to understand is not in his purpose**, but in our inability to understand. But it is impossible for

any human mind to exhaust even one truth or promise of the Bible. One catches the glory from one point of view, and another from another point; yet we can discern only gleamings. The full radiance is beyond our vision. It will take eternity to unfold it all. {The Southern Work, April 23, 1907 par. 10}

SABBATH

Read last paragraph – “God is love...” Well said, thoughts?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph – “We need...” thoughts?

Taking our lead from the quarterly, what happens to people who refuse to eat or refuse to drink?

Can there be life outside of love? So what happens to people who refuse on allow God to restore them to love?

Why is it commonly taught that what happens to people who refuse love is that God, in order to be just, must kill them? Why? Because Satan wants to destroy love and love cannot exist in an atmosphere without freedom. So, teachings that suggest God must inflict death, suffering, torture upon people who refuse love actually set up barriers to love and prevent the very healing God wants to provide.

I received the following in an email from Jon Nash:

STAND UP, STAND OUT
for March 11
from God Space
by Tompaul Wheeler

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. 1
John 4:18

Evil is easy. If it weren't, it wouldn't be so popular - on the battlefield, on the playground, at the movies. Evil is glamorous. Evil is fun. Evil means big bucks.

Standing up against evil. Now, that takes creativity and genuine guts. Everybody wants to save their skin. When Paul wrote, "After all, no one ever hated his own body" (Ephesians: 5:29), he wasn't kidding. Until we've been pushed beyond despair, we'll do anything to keep going in the face of evil, no matter the compromise, body or soul.

Evil is second nature, and so ingrained that it's easy to forget that it truly is our second nature. God created us noble, loving, wise, but we swallowed the bitter pill, so shrewdly sugarcoated, and ever since we've either battled or embraced the buzz.

If evil is easy, if evil is big business, what does it take for someone to stand up, speak out, and defy the powerful? What makes people willing to stick their necks out? Samuel and Pearl Oliner decided to find out. They studied people who risked their own lives during World War II to rescue Jews. They wanted to know why, despite the authoritarian environment, they didn't just toe the line. The Oliners discovered that those courageous people all had something major in common: their parents had not physically punished them. Instead of spanking, their parents talked things out with them, encouraging them to think for themselves.

Rescuers' parents "reasoned rather than threatened," Eva Fogelman wrote in "Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust". Instead of motivating their kids by fear of punishment, they taught them to think things

through and to do the right thing because it was the right thing.

Social psychologist Martin Hoffman has extensively studied what makes people compassionate. Hoffman found that "parents who explained rules and used inductive reasoning instead of harsh punishment tend to have children who care for and about others. After all, parents who voluntarily relinquish the use of force in favor of reasoning send their children a message about how the powerful should treat the weak."

Evil is easy. But love is eternal.

If you would like to read the story of Samuel Oliner you can visit his website at

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=482>

In his words, from his website:

Who are these people who put the welfare of others alongside their own?

They are deeply empathetic. We found a clear correlation between empathy and altruistic behavior—helpers simply could not stand by and see others suffer. We also found that altruists, unlike bystanders, had internalized the ethic of caring and social responsibility they learned from their parents and significant others. As children, they were likely to have been disciplined by reasoning and taught to consider the consequences of their misbehavior. The capacity for love and compassion was yet another important characteristic, as well as a sense of self-esteem and efficacy (a sense of self that tells them that they can succeed at some task, even dangerous ones). Ecumenically inclusive religious or spiritual beliefs,

such as regarding all people as children of the same God, worthy of protection and love, are other important factors associated with helping. We found that among certain rescuers, such as those in Holland, religious factors were more important than for those in Poland, where compassion for the victim was of greater significance in rescue.

Thoughts? What about concepts of a God who will use punitive measures to punish His children in the end? Do you think such concepts could translate into abusing our fellow man? What about such concepts that God doesn't want us to reason with Him, He only wants blind unthinking submission?

Martin Luther was a staunch anti-semite who, while moving out of darkness toward the light, retained much error in his thinking. He wrote extensively about how the Jews should have their property taken and didn't even deserve to live. Some historians believe his writings on these lines influenced Germans later to accept Hitler's final solution.

Read second paragraph "God's love..." thoughts?

It says, "True love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power." Is that scientific? Are principles constants that can be measured?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph "It is often..." thoughts?

The lesson gives us four examples of love in the Old Testament

- Creation
- The promised Messiah
- The Sabbath
- Prophecy

Any thoughts or questions about any of these and how they reveal God's love?

Are there any stories from the OT that you struggle to see God's love?

Read bottom pink section – thoughts?

When God told them to kill all the people, men, women, children, babies, cattle – was this God's preferred method of dealing with things?

What was God's preferred method? Friendship, conversion, unity, oneness – why didn't that happen? Can God force people to love each other? Can a parent force children to love each other? Will you get more love from your children if you increase your threats and beatings?

So why didn't God's preferred method win out? The people were too hard hearted, selfish and bigoted to actually be willing to love their enemies.

What was God's second method? To send in the hornet and pestilence and slowly drive out the occupiers so the Israelites would come into an abandoned land. But that didn't happen.

How can it be that killing everyone, given the circumstances, is the most loving course of action?

- God is working to bring people eternal life, not a few years of sinful life –
 - Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Mt 10:28
- God is working to restore the entire world, heal the universe and eradicate sin
- God was working to keep open the channel for the Messiah, without Jesus no human being would be saved.

- God is not constrained by time. He feels the pain of evil throughout the history of the universe with equal magnitude.
 - If Israel would have done as God said how many people would have been killed back then? And what would have transpired over the next 3500 years? Might Israel have been more successful in their mission? Is it possible less life would have been lost if Israel would have followed God's direction?
 - Would this have been loving, given the circumstances?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? What do you think about, “We are in no position to answer these questions”? What’s the point if we are in no position to answer these questions? In fact, God has done all of this so we will be in a position to answer these questions.

What answers do you have for these questions?

Why did Jesus have to come and die? In order to:

- Destroy him who holds the power of death (Heb 2:14)
- Destroy death (2Tim 1:9,10)
- Destroy the devil's work (1John 3:8)

How?

- What is the devil's power? Lies, Christ revealed the truth that destroys lies and thus the devil's power
- What is the basis of death? The broken law of love i.e. fear and selfishness, survival of the fittest instinct, Christ came and developed perfect character, lived in perfect accord with the law of love and in His humanity destroyed the infection of sin

- What is the devil's work? To destroy the image of God in man and place Satan's image in its place. Christ perfectly restored God's image in mankind!
 - The life of Christ is to be revealed in humanity. Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God; but Satan has labored to obliterate the image of God in man, and to imprint upon him his own image. LHU 48

Any questions on how Jesus did this?

Did Jesus have to die on a cross? No, He had to come and die, to destroy selfishness, to give Himself in perfect love, to restore the law of love into humanity. But it didn't have to be on a cross. Why does sin result in death? Does sin result in death because someone tortures and executes? Or does sin result in death because it severs the circle of love, which is the circle of life? Then, in order for Jesus, "to become sin who knew no sin" what did He have to experience? Separation from the circle of love without using His power to stop it!

Where did this experience occur? In Gethsemane:

- They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Mark 14:32-34

Christ fell down dying in Gethsemane when He accepted the cup of God's "wrath" which is God letting go, allowing the connection with the circle of love to be broken. An angel was dispatched to strengthen His human nature to be able to take more, to go through to the Cross to reveal more truth in order to ultimately win the war.

- He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:41-44

From the Desire of Ages we read:

Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And He will not turn from His mission. He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin. His prayer now breathes only submission: "If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." {DA 690.3}

Having made the decision, **He fell dying to the ground** from which He had partially risen. Where now were His disciples, to place their hands tenderly beneath the head of their fainting Master, and bathe that brow, marred indeed more than the sons of men? The Saviour trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. {DA 693.1}

But God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour's agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in

heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the **Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son**, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin. {DA 693.2}

The worlds unfallen and the heavenly angels had watched with intense interest **as the conflict drew to its close**. Satan and his confederacy of evil, the legions of apostasy, watched intently this great crisis in the work of redemption. The powers of good and evil waited to see what answer would come to Christ's thrice-repeated prayer. Angels had longed to bring relief to the divine sufferer, but this might not be. No way of escape was found for the Son of God. **In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake**, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis hour, and the mighty angel who stands in God's presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ. The angel came not to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it, with the assurance of the Father's love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved. {DA 693.3}

Christ's agony did not cease, but His depression and discouragement left Him. The storm had in nowise abated, but He who was its object was strengthened to meet its fury. He came forth calm and serene. A heavenly peace rested upon His bloodstained face. He had borne that which no human being could ever bear; **for He had**

tasted the sufferings of death for every man. {DA
694.1}

Thoughts?

Read second paragraph “God’s holiness...” thoughts?

If God’s holiness is His separateness then does that mean when Jesus, rather than separating from the unclean and profane, but joined Himself to us, was no longer holy?

Read bottom pink- thoughts? How does Revelation 14 reveal God’s love?

The three angels messages Revelation 14:

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. ⁷ He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

⁸ A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

⁹ A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, ¹⁰ he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.” ¹² This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

Do you see God’s love all the way through?

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph “If we truly have been converted...”
Excellent –thoughts?

Read third paragraph “If we truly have been changed...”
thoughts? What impairs us from experiencing the power of
God’s love from transforming our lives?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph “Jesus Christ is our...” thoughts?

“Why should He have loved these people?” “How could He love
them at those moments when they totally forsook Him?”
Because of who He is and who they are!

- Does a loving physician father love his child with fever,
with diarrhea, with vomiting? Why? Even if the child
vomits on his new suit? Why?
- Do we love parents with Alzheimer’s, even if they behave
badly? Why?

When God sees us does He see just the sickness of sin or does
He see what we can be if we let Him heal us? And if a child
with a terminal illness refuses life saving treatment, how does
the parent feel toward that child? Does the parent ever stop
loving the child? Does the parent ever need to torture or
punish the child?

How could He love them? They are His children!

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-3