

Loved and Loving Johns Epistles Lesson 13 3Q 2009

Power Struggle

SABBATH

Read memory text:

Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. 3John 11

Thoughts? Can anyone give a definition of evil? What does evil look like? How do you know what is evil and what is good?

Would evil be anti-love? And what does that result in? Love is the basis of life, then would evil be anything that destroys, that brings death? Live spelled backwards is Evil!

What kinds of things today would be considered evil?

- Murder – obviously is anti-love and brings death, who does murder bring death to and why? What does murder do to the murderer? Is the one murdered the one who actually dies?
 - “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
- Violence, abuse, rape, - are all evil because they hurt others, but what do such actions do to the perpetrator?
- Lying, stealing, embezzling, - why are these evil?
- Gossiping – is gossiping evil? Why? What does gossip do to relationships, to the gossiper?
- Believing lies about God, is it evil to believe lies about God? And spreading lies about God?

Does evil, doing unloving, selfish things, have impact on the perpetrator? What impact? Does it destroy the reason, sear the conscience, warp the character and ultimately result in death?

Is this what the Bible means when it says “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) and “sin when full grown brings forth death” (James 1:15) and “Evil will slay the wicked” (Psalms 34:21)?

If this is so, then why do so many teach God is the one who is the destroyer, that God inflicts death upon the wicked?

- Would teaching that God must inflict death upon the wicked be evil?
- Why would it be evil? Because teaching such things misrepresents God, cuts ourselves off from the channel of blessing and results in ruin and death!
- What would teaching such things do to those who teach it?

How can we avoid evil and participate in the good? Is it enough to study and know what is true? Why is intellectual understanding not enough?

In order to be a great musician is it enough to intellectually study music composition and theory? Does one have to actually play? What happens differently when one not only studies music but also plays? Does the brain wire differently? Does the capacity for musical appreciation increase? Is there a unifying aspect within the being of bringing mind and heart and emotions together – a synergy and harmony within?

Is it enough to know the theory of God’s love? Is it enough to know the facts about God’s character? Is there some place we must begin putting into practice the truths we believe? What difference does it make in our lives?

Read the two paragraphs beginning, “Power struggles...” thoughts?

Do we ever have power struggles in local churches? Why?
What is the basis of such struggles?

What does the Bible reveal is God's power, what power does
God use to win the war with evil?

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power
of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for
the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 1:16

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as
the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the
weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine
power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments
and every pretension that sets itself up against the
knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to
make it obedient to Christ. 2Cor 10:3-5

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the
day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground,
and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand
firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your
waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵
and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes
from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up
the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the
flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of
salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word
of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all
kinds of prayers and requests. Ephesians 6:13-18

What are God's weapons? Truth and love presented in
freedom!

Why does it take so long for the Almighty God, the Creator, to
deal with rebellion and eradicate sin?

Where does sin occur? What is the root of sin? Where is God working to remove sin? Our hearts and minds! What is the only way to eradicate fear and distrust out of the heart? Truth and love over time in a free environment.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? What do you think of the idea that a letter, coming from the desk of a person containing a certain title, thereby connotes or contains authority?

Earthly governments delegate authority and person's hold authority over other persons by means of their position, rank and title. Is that how God's government works?

If you get a letter from the President of the General Conference, does the title "President of the General Conference" mean what he communicates is authoritative?

If you get a letter from the pastor, elder, pope or any other person does the title the person carries mean what they communicate is authoritative?

How does God's government delegate authority? What is authoritative in God's government? Truth and Love! Not position!

Notice the difference between Christ and Satan:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Philippians 2:5-8

You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit

enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Isaiah 14:13-15

Did Christ seek “authority” based on the position He held or did He surrender position to seek authority based on truth of His character? How did Lucifer seek authority? By title, by position, this is not God’s method. The truth of God’s character is what makes God authoritative and worthy of our love, devotion and worship!

Christ wins the hearts of His creatures to lovingly, freely follow. He speaks with the authority that comes when every living being knows He is faithful, true, right, and loves them more than Himself and if necessary would leave His throne for everyone of them.

Depictions of God exerting authority by force of power or position or rank (even though truthfully and rightfully His to do) still misrepresent God and bring Him down to our worldly values.

Middle of the lesson asks, “How do we understand what it means, as Christians, to love each other? How do we show that love?”

How can we as a class put into practice more fully in our lives the love that we see in God? Thoughts?

WEDNESDAY

Read verse 12

Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

Thoughts about this verse? Is there a difference in being spoken well of by everyone and being spoken well of by the truth itself? What is the difference? Which do you prefer? Do they always agree?

I have patients who are completely preoccupied with what people think of them. They go into the world with their emotional radar up constantly scanning the environment to perceive what people are thinking and trying to influence what people think so they will be liked. Such people live in fear constantly worried they won't be liked, or accepted, or valued. They fear rejection so they spend their energy trying to get people to think well of them.

I ask them who they would rather be, a person who is thought well of by the majority of society, but in heart is actually selfish, evil and unchristlike, or be genuinely like Christ in heart and mind but have most people dislike them?

Would you rather be spoken well of by people or the truth?

Read bottom green section – thoughts?

- If someone writes a report about you what do you learn from the report? What the other person perceives or thinks.
- Does that necessarily mean what was written was accurate?
- What kind of report would Satan write about Jesus?

Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure

in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. ST Jan 20, 1890

What report did Satan give about God? Who has believed it? Notice this next powerful statement:

The Lord is constantly at work to open the understanding, to quicken the perceptions, that man may have a right sense of sin and of the far-reaching claims of God's law. The **unconverted man** thinks of God as unloving, as severe, and even revengeful; His presence is thought to be a constant restraint, His character an expression of "Thou shalt not." His service is regarded as full of gloom and hard requirements. But when Jesus is seen upon the cross, as the gift of God because He loved man, the eyes are opened to see things in a new light. God as revealed in Christ is not a severe judge, an avenging tyrant, but a merciful and loving Father. {1SM 183.2}

What was one of the purposes Christ came? To reveal the truth about God and expose Satan's version as false.

What about those who, from the pulpit, present God as severe and revengeful, and one who says "thou shalt not" a severe judge and avenging tyrant? One of the founders of our church said that such presentations of God come from those who are unconverted. Have you ever thought such things? Have you been converted to the truth about God that is revealed in Jesus, that He is a merciful and loving Father?

MONDAY

Read third paragraph, "What we see here..." thoughts? Do we agree with the need to support the spread of the gospel? What gospel? Does it make a difference? How do we decide whether a ministry is worthy of our support? Should we be particular in determining where we give our funds?

When we support spreading the gospel is there more involved than tithes and offerings? What other ways can we, here in our class, spread the gospel? Thoughts?

TUESDAY

Read Mark 9:35 at the top of the lesson, thoughts?

What does this mean? In the military a commander never eats before his troops, why?

What kind of leadership is Christ describing? How does this leadership style connect with the gospel?

Christ said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." Matt 16:25 – why?

Read 3John 9,10

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

What leadership style was Diotrephes practicing?

Read second paragraph, "Whoever this Diotrephes was..." thoughts?

What impact does controlling leadership have on the church? If someone does get enough earthly authority such that they can put people out of the church, fire pastors from their jobs, demote elders or deacons, what impact will transpire?

Will such leadership foster the growth of members? Will people experience freedom to think, ask questions, disagree, have honest loving debate? Which types of personalities or people

will be the ones likely to be put out or leave? Those who are capable of thinking for themselves, articulating truth clearly, and those willing to stand firm for their convictions, who are likely to stay?

Will controlling leadership tend toward mental and spiritual development or the opposite, paralyze the mind, darken the faculties and infantilize the congregation? So do people become unthinking followers, “God said it, I believe it that settles it” or “We don’t ask questions we take that on faith”?

Do we see this leadership in cults? Does it have to be in a cult?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? Can you have a crisis in leadership, someone who has personal ambition, without having a problem in theology?

It is a law that by beholding we become changed. We become like the God we admire and worship. Therefore, if someone is ambitious and governs with power over methods it is likely they worship a god who is authoritative and power mongering. Those who worship a God like Jesus will practice His servant leadership methods.

Read third paragraph, “Instead, all believers...” thoughts? Does the fact God does call people to leadership positions mean that everyone in leadership was called by God? Can some people be in leadership of the church because they were called by Satan? Who called Annas and Caiaphis to leadership of the church in Christ’s day?

Read last paragraph “Leaders must indeed...” thoughts?

Are such sentiments more than verbal accolades? What about in our church today? If all have received spiritual gifts for the running of the church, if the early church were led by people

who were gifted by God, but not schooled in the schools of the prophets, why does our church only allow ordained pastors into leadership roles? Would our church be healthier if we had spiritually mature people, from other vocations, (teachers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, home makers, hospital administrators etc) in leadership roles of the church (i.e. conference presidents etc).

FRIDAY

Questions 1, 3, 4 and 5 read and discuss