



# REFLECTIONS

July 24, 2016

**"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

*John 13:34-35*

## Loving the Sinner—Part 1

Such an act sounds so difficult—loving the sinner regardless of the nature of the sin. Most of us believe we can't do it. Maybe most of us even believe it can't be done. Yet the command Jesus gave us contained no qualifiers. "*Love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another.*" He added nothing more. Even confession or repentance are not a condition of it.

Then just to make sure we wouldn't exclude anyone from the list, Jesus told us to *love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back... Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.* (Luke 6:35-36) Now that's hard to do especially amidst the turmoil in the world today. It's hard to love mass shooters and suicide bombers or the rebels with no national affiliation who encourage them.

But what is love anyway? It's a question we've pondered before, but maybe it's worth another look. So you may remember in his book *A Second Touch*, Keith Miller explains Christian love by recalling Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He discovers:

"...Jesus was evidently *not* filled with a warm *feeling* of loving desire to die for man. As a matter of fact, our term for extreme discomfort, 'sweating blood' likely came from His experience that night. He evidently 'sweated blood' and prayed three times for a way *not* to perform this most loving act. And when He did agree to go, the love was expressed not by His *feeling* but by the fact that he acted out of love for His father *whether He felt like it or not!*

Wow! If this is true, then Christian love is not based on the *feeling* I had always longed for. Christian love is simply an act of the kind God wants performed for another person's health and wholeness to help fulfill His will for that person. And my *performing* that act in Christ's perspective and concern is the *love*, not my warm feeling *about* it."<sup>1</sup>

So love is an action, not a feeling. Apostle Paul tells us love manifests in humble, unselfish acts of patience and kindness. It finds no joy in evil nor does it keep score; rather love rejoices in truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes. And because it never gives up, love never fails. (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Loving the sinner does not require warm feelings toward them. Only caring about them. And if loving the sinner is still too difficult, begin by praying for them. Jesus did.

*You are the light of the world,*

*Richard* +

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Keith, *A Second Touch*, Word Books, 1967, p. 86

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