**Love is the Key**

There are two primary motivating factors in life: one is *selfish* and therefore *self-serving, arrogant, immature,* and based on *instant gratification;* the other is *selfless* and therefore *others-serving, humble, mature* and based on *long-term good.*  One is *lust* (*epithymeo-* to desire greatly), and the other is *love* (*agapeo-* to *love*). Lust desires based on perceived value; it *requires* a value. Love *creates* a value rather than requiring one.

Lust says, “I *want* this person because they are valuable to me.” Love says, “This person is valuable to me because I love them- I want good for them.” These two primary motivating factors of life originate from the two principle forces in the universe. Satan uses lust to destroy and kill; and God uses love to enlighten, uplift, and save.

Thus, your life being characterized by *lust* and its resulting attributes and actions (Gal.5:19-21) is the manifestation of your allegiance with Satan; while your life being characterized by *love* and its resulting attributes and activities (Gal.5:22-23) is the manifestation of your alliance with God, cf. Gal.5:13-17,24-26 (also Rom.6:15-23). It’s really just that simple, because…

**I. God is love, 1John 4:8b**

A. Love is the very essence of His being.

Love, therefore, is what makes Him God (along with, of course, *omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence,* and His *eternal* existence), 1John 4:16a.

B. Love dictates His actions.

He would not be God we without this supreme love, and its manifestations toward His creation, 1John 4:9-10 (cf. Rom.5:6-11).

**II. Therefore, to belong to Him, we must *feel, think,* and *act* the way He does.**

1. Love must be very essence (core) of who we are.

It must be at the center of being, 1John 4:7b-8,16.

It is what makes us *godly,* Matt.5:43-48; in other words, it is what distinguishes us from those allied with Satan by allowing us to *feel, think,* and *act* like God. So then,

1. Love must dictate our actions.

It must not only motivate us to the right actions, 1John 4:20-21; but,

It must also *control/constrain* us from the wrong actions, 2Cor.5:14. The Greek word for *control/constrain* is *synecho-* “to restrain”.

In mechanical terms, love is the *governor*. On an engine, the governor’s job is to increase activity to meet pressing needs (speed the engine up to bear an increasing load), and to decrease activity to regulate speed (slow the engine down to prevent over-revving). Love is the great *governor* in our lives. It *speeds up our activity* to meet excessive needs/loads, and it *slows us down* to prevent our running away into *unlovely* activities.

**III. Love being our essence, and therefore governing our emotions, thoughts, and actions, should dictate them in every relationship and circumstance.**

1. “Love” isn’t just for God and marriage, though it should certainly dominate these relationships.

Certainly, our love *for God* should cause us to think, feel, and act properly toward Him, John 14:15, 21,23.

And, we should likewise assuredly *love our spouses* and thus be caused to think, feel, and act properly toward them, Eph.5:25,28,33; Titus 2:4.

But these are not the only relationships in which love is required, 1John 4:7a,11-13,20-21.

1. Note that ICor.13:4-7 is neither specifically applied to our love *for God,* nor *for our spouses.*

In v.3, two relationships are implied for the application of love:

1. *Fellowman-* i.e. *“the poor”;* and
2. *The Cause of Christ-* i.e. *“deliver my body to be burned”* (as a martyr).

But perhaps the lack of specified applications for love means that the characteristics of it that follow are to govern **all relationships** and **circumstances** of/in our lives. Therefore, these attributes of love are to dictate our thoughts, emotions, and activities in every association and situation we encounter (with brethren, family, co-workers, friends, strangers…with everyone!):

* Patient (tolerant)
* Kind (gracious, tender-hearted)
* Not Jealous (or envious, but rejoices in object’s success or benefit)
* Not Boastful (does not gloat or brag)
* Not Arrogant (which stems from an elevated opinion of self)
* Proper Acting ( not untoward or unbecoming)
* Not Selfish (self-serving, which is *lust*)
* Not Easily Provoked (temperate, self-controlled)
* Does Not Keep Score (does not take into account wrongs suffered)
* Does Not Rejoice in Unrighteousness
* Rejoices with Truth
* Bears All Things (forbearing)
* Believes All Things (not naïve, but trusting)
* Hopes All Things (positive and encouraging)
* Endures All Things (long-suffering)
* Never Fails (constant and steadfast).

**IV. Conclusion**: This is not only *who* God is, but also how He *thinks, feels,* and *acts.* If we are to be His, the same must be true for us.