**Appreciation: The Tie that Binds?**

**I. Understanding Appreciation**

Appreciation is the *perception* (and may include the *acknowledging*) of value. In the NASV, our English word is used once to translated the Greek term *oida:* to *perceive with the eyes* or  *senses;* to *pay attention to* or *observe;* thusto *know* and/or to *honor,* cf. 1Thess.5:12.

“Love is the tie that binds.” OK- but let’s think about it for a moment. Perhaps this is an over-simplification, but love is an emotion that causes us to act in a certain way. But what is the basis of love? I “love” Sea Salt Carmel ice cream (especially the kind that has the bits of broken up chocolate). Why? Is it not because I *appreciate* the taste and combination of those flavors?

What causes us to “love” a certain person? Is it not that we, at least on some level, appreciate the qualities, characteristics, and/or capabilities of that particular person? Don’t we first come to *appreciate* their mind, heart, sense of humor, or even their looks? Perhaps these things also lead us to appreciate the way they conduct themselves. Isn’t there a recognition/perception of traits, qualities, or characteristics that *appeal* to us (*i.e.* that we *appreciate*) **before** we begin feeling love for them?

It seems that the exception to *appreciation* being the basis of love, is *divine* love, Rom.5:8. It is able to love where there is no *appreciable* value other than that which is created by the love itself. This type of love we should seek to emulate, Matt.5:43-45,48, but often fail to do so, vv.46-47.But is it not true that God simply *sees* or *appreciates* a “value” that is not readily apparent… like the value of our souls despite our outward actions or appearances?

To use a more spiritual illustration, think about this: Why is it that God wants us to memorialize the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ each Sunday through partaking the emblems of communion? Is it because we *love* Him- *i.e.* as a manifestation of our love? Though such should be true, is it not more accurate to say that He wants us to *see/perceive* and *appreciate* the sacrifice so that we might *love* Him more deeply and fully so that we then are properly motivated to act in an accordant way?

**II. Applications of Appreciation**

* **Dating.** Be sure your “heart” doesn’t get too far ahead of your “head”! The person you date more than a few times to get to know them had better have qualities of character that you can and do appreciate ***before*** your heart decides you love them, cf. Prov.13:20. Please, notice, acknowledge, and compliment *character* before the external frivolities of looks and charm.
* **Spouses to each other.** Self-sacrifice and putting the needs and desires of your spouse (or the family) before your own should always be appreciated, Eph.5:22-27. But this appreciation should be *communicated!* Tell her how much you appreciate her love and all she does for you (and the children), Eph.5:33a. And tell him how much you appreciate his dedication to provision for you (and the family), and his leadership, Eph.5:33b. Love and self-sacrifice that goes unrecognized, and is thus never acknowledged/communicated, usually doesn’t last very long!
* **Parents to children**. This usually is not a problem- unless it’s being *overdone* or based on *illegitimate* “accomplishments.” Acknowledging and excessively praising *minor* (or non-existent) feats only serves to *devalue* the *major* accomplishments should they occur. It also promotes a sense of *entitlement* and lowers *self-expectations* and goals.
* **Children to parents**. Children, instead of always wanting and crying for more, should be taught and learn to *appreciate* what is already being given, Prov.30:15-17. Parents do their children no favors by “spoiling” them with endless and unearned privileges and favors. But children must also learn to curtail their desires and expectations through *appreciation* and *contentment,* 1Tim.6:6ff. Children without contentment and appreciation are *created,* not born.
* **Brethren to leaders.** Obviously, we’ve already noted 1Thess.5:12 in this regard, but also note v.13 now. The admonition to *“esteem them very highly in love because of their work”* is joined to *“Live in peace with one another.”* The latter is at least a partial response to the former. (\*Note: Personally, it is very moving and inspiring to hear the words of appreciation and thankfulness expressed publically to the Father in prayer for the leadership here at Southport- and the petitions in their behalf. So for the elders, deacons, bible class teachers, myself, “thank-you” for your support, encouragement, and petitions to God for us- it really does mean a tremendous amount to us all!)
* **Leaders to brethren.** As human beings, we tend to notice the failures more than the successes, the “needs improvement” more than the “still improving,” the absentee more than the present, etc. As leaders, those present, improving, and succeeding spiritually need to be noticed, recognized, and commended, 1Cor.16:15-18.
* **Christians to God.** True gratitude, thankfulness, and contentment stem from *appreciation.* We must first *appreciate* and acknowledge what all He has done for and provide us with in true *appreciation* before we can be thankful, Eph.5:20; 1Thess.5:18.

**III. What Prevents Appreciation?**

Perhaps more than anything else, self-centeredness prevents proper appreciation. It does so in this way:

* Self-centeredness sees only what *self* has done/accomplished and ignores the contributions of others that enabled that “personal” success.
* Self-centeredness points out the failures/short-comings of others, but rarely acknowledges personal failures or successes in *self*.
* Self-centeredness causes a sense of entitlement that, even when seeing the contributions of others, prevents any true appreciation or acknowledgement of them.

**IV. How Does “Appreciation” Bind Us Together?**

1. It promotes and leads to genuine love rather that fickle infatuation, cf. 1Cor.13:1-7.
2. It allows love to flourish and grow in marriage, rather than demanding it constantly overcome obstacles such as feeling unappreciated.
3. It enables parents to properly *measure* their praise and provision to their children.
4. It promotes healthy self-images in children, as well as the proper regard and respect for their parents.
5. It is the greatest reward church leaders receive on this side of eternity.
6. It is likely the single best motivator for church members.
7. It allows us to have the proper regard for and thankfulness to our heavenly Father.

**In each of these relationships, *appreciation* is the basis for and glue of love!**