

Monday, October 23, 2017 - You Can Make the Difference

The month of November is my favorite month of the year. The weather begins to cool down, God's beauty is seen in the changing leaves of the trees and, seemingly, our focus tends to turn toward family.

Unfortunately, there are many who feel the pains of loneliness throughout the year and these feelings are exacerbated when the holiday season approaches. What should our attitude and approach as Christians be toward those who feel alone?

In Genesis 2:18 "the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Continuing in verse 21 we see that "...the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." God does not desire us to be alone. He understands the importance of human, emotional support.

Christians should be able to find this support, in addition to their physical family, in their Christian family. Companionship/fellowship is best fulfilled in the Christian life. In the Christian life one can have communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 2:1, 2; 2 Cor. 13:14) and one can have full association and participation with fellow saints in living the Christian life (1 John 1:7).

Peter, in 1 Peter 1:22, points to unfeigned love as a product of obedience. The phrase, "love of the brethren" is from [*agapē*], which means "brotherly love" and here refers to the love among spiritual brethren. It is further described as "unfeigned," an affection for brethren which is without hypocrisy. This sincere affection is promoted by one's obedience to the entrance provisions of the kingdom of God, an entry also marking the beginning of one's membership in God's household as His spiritual child and as a relation to His other children.

Our spiritual ties as brethren in Christ are similar to our physical families, but far more significant because the blood we share flows in the spiritual body of Christ, the church. As faithful children of God we expect an eternity of blessed fellowship (Eph. 1:21; 5:23; 1 Thes. 4:13-18). In the new birth one acquires new brethren as well as a new Father. Our common Father, common goal, common journey, common enemy, and common adversity, all contribute to an affectionate regard for one another.

Love is that which made possible the fellowship of the Christian with God. Had God not chosen to show love and compassion upon his creatures, then fellowship with God would have been impossible. But God did love us. He "so loved" us that he "gave his only begotten Son" for us (John 3:16). He gave His Son to be a sacrifice to make

satisfaction for our sins (1 John 4:10). Our Lord laid aside his riches, took upon himself poverty, became obedient unto death on the cross, that he might taste death for every man (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:9). He gave "himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). This is the greatest possible demonstration of love for us (John 15:13), for it was done not when we were friends but while we were yet enemies and without strength. (Romans 5:6-10.)

When a person has within him such love for God, that love will manifest itself in that person's life. This love for God will also manifest itself in our association with the brethren. Love for the brethren is the badge of discipleship (John 13:35). Brotherly love is the sign by which we, and the world, may determine that we have fellowship with God (1 John 3:14). This means that if a brother is in need, we will not shut up our "bowels of compassion from him" but will share our material blessings with him (1 John 3:17, 18). This participation in the needs of others is beautifully illustrated in the Jerusalem church when they considered not their possessions their own but sold them and gave "to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45; 4:32). This "fellowship of the ministering to the saints" is also an acid test in proving "the sincerity of our love" (2 Cor. 8:4, 8). For if our brother's welfare depended upon it, love, both God's and ours, we are morally obligated "to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ drives home this point in Matthew 25:34-40 when he states, "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'"

Let us, not just in this season, but always be mindful of those brethren who need that show of love and concern that might be missing from their lives. You can make a huge difference to them and I promise it will bring a sense of joy to your life.