
Are You Being “Taught of God to Love One Another”?

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— Keith R. Blades

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

(1 Thessalonians 4:9)

Love in its various forms and expressions is probably one of the most talked about, written about, sung about, and mused or dreamed about subjects that there is; as well as being one of the most hoped for, longed for, sought after, needed, and even beneficial sentiments that there is in a person's life. And this is only natural for a number of reasons, not the least of which are: (1) the fact that God originally designed man to love and to be loved, which even though this has been adversely affected by sin's entrance into the world and even largely cheapened, it has not been expunged or destroyed or completely corrupted; and (2) the fact that in “time past” God mercifully made some significant changes and alterations to the nature of this world, and even to man himself, for the purpose of retarding man's devolution, which alterations included enhancing certain sentiments in man like that of love.

Wherefore it is not surprising that the subject of love has naturally occupied man's mind and heart, and still does today. Likewise it is little wonder that it has been constantly extolled for being both man's greatest asset and distinguishing virtue, as well as what he needs the most of at any given moment. Hence love is generally considered ‘the quintessential sentiment and capacity of the human heart,’ as well as ‘that of which man can never get enough, or have enough, or give enough.’

Natural Love

Man, therefore, has a *natural* capacity to love and to be loved. It is part of his make-up as man, being the specific kind of creature of God that he is. As such man not only can do things on the basis of love, but in so doing he can actually do things that are genuinely good and beneficial to others and also to himself. Along with this he can also respond to love that is bestowed upon him unto the same end.

Wherefore even when we simply think about love solely within the confines of it being a ‘natural’ sentiment and component of the human heart, (disregarding any of its debasement or distortion or corruption through the perverseness of sin), it is easy to recognize that it is the best and most noble sentiment of all. For it is Divinely-designed to be the source and fount of all goodness, benefit, profit, help, and cooperation among men; as well as to be the ultimate reason for man's genuine happiness, rejoicing, and joy in life.

Hence as the saying goes, ‘Love is a many splendid thing.’ Which is true even when it is only ‘natural love’ that we are talking about.

Supernatural Love

However as the Christians that we are; or more particularly as the members of God's “new creature,” the church the body of Christ that we are in this present dispensation of God's grace; our love should not be confined or limited to that which is merely natural. For God has both purposed and provided something better for us. Instead our love should move out of the realm of

the natural and into the realm of the supernatural. In other words our love should move out of, and go beyond, that which belongs to purely 'natural love' and that is 'common to man,' to that which is Godly.

And indeed God's love is supernatural. In other words it goes beyond that which is natural to man, exceeding it in all areas and in every way. For it is not only devoid of being adversely affected and restricted in any way by the corrupting effects of sin, (as man's natural love is), but by its very nature it also possesses features and characteristics that are greater than, or surpass, what God originally instilled in man. Hence God's love is supernatural compared to man's 'natural love.'

Moreover God designed that the greater and surpassing features and characteristics of His love be acquired by man as part of his godly education. This means that God designed that man should learn His supernatural love, and thereby come to possess it. Or in other words God designed that man should be taught by Him to love to the same extent and degree that He Himself does.

However what God originally designed is unable to occur with unregenerate, unjustified men. With the exception of what God has mercifully done to retard men's devolution, ungodliness not only characterizes and embodies all that man is by nature, but it is also the sum and substance of all that he can do and can produce. Hence acquiring and operating upon God's supernatural love — upon Godly love and charity — is 'beyond unjustified men's reach,' so to speak. By default they are limited to 'natural love.'

But such is not the case with us, who having believed "the gospel of Christ" have been justified and sanctified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We do not have to remain limited to the 'natural love' that is common to man, and upon which we operated while we were unjustified, and maybe

have simply continued to operate upon since we became justified.

Our Phenomenal Privilege

In accordance with our sanctification "in Christ," (and particularly in accordance with the sonship aspect of our sanctification), God has honored us with the privilege of learning, possessing, and operating on His supernatural love. The godly creature that He originally created man to be is actually able to be fulfilled in us through our "godly edifying," including the acquisition of Godly love and charity and walking therein.

However we are not only privileged with the opportunity to be taught of God to love as He does, *it is also expected of us*. For in accordance with granting us this phenomenal privilege God has also made full provision for us to be so taught. Moreover God has actually dedicated Himself to teaching us His godly love and getting it operating within us. Not only because it is naturally an essential component of godliness, but also because it is imperative that we learn to love as He does. For if we do not, the truth of the matter is that much of our Christian lives and walk may be in vain; no matter how much else we might learn and do 'in the name of Christ.'

The Question

Since we have this wonderful privilege and great expectation; and since it is also imperative for us to operate on Godly love; the question that forms the title to this article is certainly worth asking. *Are you being "taught of God to love one another"?*

Now before you answer make sure you understand that this is not a foggy or nebulous-type question. It is not a question that 'delves into the realm of the intangible or the inexpressible.' It is not a speculative or abstract question in the sense that it cannot be answered with any real certainty, or with any real concrete

understanding and conviction, that being “taught of God” is actually taking place. Nor is it a question that can only be answered on the basis of feelings, or impressions, or vague assumptions, or default suppositions, as if we do not possess the ability to understand enough about the issue so as to answer the question with any clear comprehension of how it takes place.

Instead it is a perfectly logical and reasonable question, to which we should be able to give a clear and intelligent answer. An answer that comes from sound and real knowledge of the process and procedure by which God teaches us to love as He does. An answer which, if it is “yes,” cannot only intelligently and confidently explain just how it is occurring, but also can explain in detail just what is being taught, and learned, and why it is being taught and needs to be learned.

Wherefore your answer to the question should be neither vague, nor hedging, nor uncertain. You should not simply say, “I think so”; or, “I assume so”; or, “I hope so”; or, “I don’t know.” For just as the apostle Paul knew for sure that the Thessalonian saints were being “taught of God to love one another,” (and likewise also knew for sure that some other saints were not desirous of being so taught), so you should know for sure one way or the other.

With this being so, let’s postpone answering the question for the time being. Instead let’s first make sure that we understand and appreciate some of the fundamentals on this matter, so we at least know the gist of how it is that we are supposed to be “taught of God to love one another.” Then having done so we will be in a better position to ask ourselves this question again, and to intelligently answer it.

A Caveat

Needless to say we can only give brief consideration to a few of the issues pertaining to being “taught of God to love one another.” In fact

we will only look at three of them, yet they will be sufficient for our purpose. Moreover as we take note of these three issues we will focus our attention primarily upon one simple thing in connection with them — i.e. the thing that identifies and defines what is necessary for learning Godly love, which in turn will allow us to clearly determine and acknowledge whether or not we are being “taught of God” to love what He does and to love as He does with charity.

The First Issue: Our Provision for Learning Godly Love

As Paul described when he commended the Thessalonian saints for their “brotherly love,” our provision for learning Godly love resides in God Himself teaching us to love as He does. For, as Paul said, the Thessalonians were “*taught of God to love one another.*”

This means that resident in the very curriculum for our “godly edifying” in this present dispensation of God’s grace is the provision for God to be able to teach us to love what He does, to love as He does, and thereby to particularly love one another with Godly love. For when Paul speaks of us being “taught of God” he is not speaking of some abstract or ethereal or indefinable activity by which God mysteriously, or mystically, imparts knowledge to us. Rather Paul is speaking about the very concrete, substantial, and clearly definable activity of God *educating us through His written word*; and more particularly through the specific curriculum for our sonship education and edification that is set forth in Romans through Philemon.

Wherefore there is a tangible and identifiable and knowable means by which God teaches us to love what He does and to love as He does with charity. God teaches us Godly love *as an integral part of our sonship edification*, and we learn to love what He loves and as He loves as we intelligently and purposefully receive our sonship edification.

In connection with this it is very important that we understand that our “godly edifying” — our sonship edification — is not the issue of us simply learning things from God’s word. In other words “godly edifying” does not result from learning random Bible information, or even from learning a series of categorical or topical Bible doctrines. For “godly edifying” is just what it says it is. It is edification *unto godliness*. And in view of what godliness is this means that it is the issue of us learning very specific information from a particular curriculum of knowledge that has been purposefully designed by God to materially affect not only what we think, but also the very way that we think. And by the effectual working of this curriculum of knowledge God has provided for the complete range of our thinking process, (from the conception of thoughts, to the formulation of ideas and intentions, to the consideration of responses or reactions, to acting upon our thinking, and to dealing with the aftermath of it), to be the same as His. For through the effectual working of the curriculum of knowledge for our “godly edifying” God has provided for us to be “godly,” which means that He has provided for us to think like He does, to live like He does, and to labour with Him in the things that He is doing in the operations of His business.

Wherefore “godly edifying” does not occur through random Bible reading and/or Bible study. It does not occur by going through a systematic theology, or by amassing and going through a great database of various doctrines on Biblical topics. Nor does it occur by default in a Christian’s life, or by some form of ‘spiritual osmosis,’ as if it just automatically happens or happens in some mysterious way as long as a Christian is sincere and reads his Bible and goes to church.

Instead “godly edifying” occurs in us by the only way that it can occur — by us deliberately learning the ‘mind renewing’ words of God that comprise the curriculum for our sonship

edification, which God has specifically designed to enable us to think like He does, thinking both what He does and as He does; and then by learning them have them effectually work within us unto the production of actual Godly thinking, Godly living, and Godly labour in the details of our lives.

Therefore with respect to us being “taught of God” to have Godly love and charity, it takes place as we intelligently partake of our sonship edification. For it is integrally built into the curriculum for our “godly edifying.”

Consequently throughout the curriculum for our “godly edifying” we regularly encounter a number of progressively developing forms of doctrine that have been specifically designed by God to teach us to love what He loves and to love as He loves. They teach us to actually think like He does, and the way that He does, having the very same kinds of cogitation that He has, with the result that we value and esteem what He does and do so in the very charitable way that He does and for the very same reasons that He does.

Wherefore as we learn these forms of doctrine and they effectually work within us as God has designed for them to work, we are successfully being “taught of God” to love as He does. His word effectually works within us to generate the very components of Godly love within us. Then having done so it effectually works within us to give us the capacity to knowingly think and act on the basis of Godly love in the details of our daily lives. Hence to knowingly walk in genuine Godly love and charity.

So then when it comes to truly knowing if we are being “taught of God” to love what He does and to love as He does with Godly charity, one of the first determining factors is whether we clearly know that we are receiving our sonship edification unto “godly edifying.” If we know that this is so, then it provides us with the first measure of confident assurance that we actually are being “taught of God” to love what He does

and to love as He does with Godly charity. But if not, then we have reason to doubt.

The Second Issue: Our Specific Course of Study for Learning Godly Love

Naturally enough another determining factor is found in the very forms of doctrine within the curriculum for our “godly edifying” by which God specifically teaches us to have His love and charity.

If in addition to knowing that we are receiving our proper sonship edification we also know that we are being taught, and are learning, the very forms of doctrine contained within our curriculum that are designed to generate and to breed the thoughts and thought-processes of Godly love within us, then we have all the more reason for being assured that we are being “taught of God” unto Godly love.

Wherefore we should not only know that God teaches us Godly love as we go through the curriculum for our “godly edifying,” but we should also know what our course of study for learning Godly love is composed of. In other words we should at least have the understanding and appreciation for such things as its general scope, along with the logical sense and sequence to its structure. Moreover we should also understand the edifying, or building process nature, that there is to what God teaches us, so that we truly know what is involved in our Godly love ‘increasing’ and ‘abounding’ as we are told that it should.

Therefore, for example, if we are being “taught of God” to love as He does then we should readily understand and appreciate that our instruction in Godly love has a logical beginning to it — i.e. God logically begins it with a ‘first-thing-first’ component — and that this ‘first-thing-first’ component is the most fundamental component to God’s own love. Hence God logically provides for it to be generated within us first and foremost.

Plus in accordance with this we should also understand and appreciate that generating this most fundamental component of Godly love within us is what the effectual working of the beginning of our sonship edification is all about. Or in other words when our sonship edification pointedly gets underway beginning in Romans 12:3, this is what it begins with. It begins with God teaching us information by which the most fundamental component to His love can be effectually generated within us so that it exists within us just as it exists within Him, and so that it can then become effectually operational within us unto the shaping of our thinking just as it is effectually operational within Him and shapes His thinking.

Since this is what you should know I will directly ask, Do you understand and appreciate that when God begins your sonship edification by having Paul say to you...

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

(Romans 12:3)

... that by what He says He is providing for its effectual working to begin to generate His love within you? Or more to the point I should ask, Do you have the words of God in Romans 12:3 effectually working within you unto the production of the first component of Godly love?

You should be able to say “yes” to both questions, if you are being “taught of God” to love as He does.

Likewise you should also know how it is that as the beginning of our curriculum for “godly edifying” progresses on in Romans God provides for the further fundamental components of His love to be generated within us by the effectual working of the specific things that He teaches us to know and think. What’s more, in accordance

with this you should also understand how it is that God has provided for His Godly love, (in particular “brotherly love”), to not only fundamentally exist and operate in you, but to also “increase” and “abound” in you; just as Paul expected the Thessalonian saints to know. For as Paul said...

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

(1 Thessalonians 4:9–10)

Not only did the Thessalonians know that they were being “taught of God to love one another,” but Paul also saw the evidence of it, and he also knew that they knew how it was that God had provided for their Godly love to “increase more and more.” Hence when Paul beseeched them to have the “brotherly love” aspect of their Godly love “increase more and more,” he knew that they were not going to ‘scratch their heads’ wondering what in the world he meant, or be perplexed as to how to go about doing it. Rather the Thessalonians knew exactly what Paul meant, as well as exactly how to go about doing it. For they knew how God was teaching them “to love one another,” and they knew how God had provided for their “brotherly love” to “increase” and to even “abound.”

Wherefore if you are being “taught of God” to love as He does, then you should know these things too.

The Third Issue: The Necessity of Acquiring Godly Love

The third determining factor is probably the most telling of all. For if we are being “taught of God” to love as He does, it is also because we know that it is imperative that we be so taught. And we know this because we have been ‘hit between the

eyes,’ so to speak, with the truth that we absolutely cannot afford not to be “taught of God.” Then having realized this, it has caused us to make being “taught of God” unto Godly love and charity a top priority in our “godly edifying,” just as it should be.

Wherefore as I said this third determining factor is probably the most telling of all. For if we do not recognize the necessity of acquiring Godly love and charity, and of operating upon it in the details of our lives; and if in accordance with this we are not making the learning of Godly love and charity a priority; then obviously it is most unlikely that we are being “taught of God” to love as He does.

So then it behooves you to give special heed to this determining factor. For if you have not already been ‘hit between the eyes’ with its truth and responded accordingly, you need to be.

In I Corinthians 13 the apostle Paul pointedly confronted the saints at Corinth with how necessary it is for us to acquire and operate on Godly love and charity when he said...

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

(1 Corinthians 13:1–3)

What God has Paul say here is designed to be very, very sobering. And indeed it is, if you honestly deal with what it says. For as Paul makes plain and clear, if we are not operating on Godly love and charity in our walk and lives then in essence we are pretty much operating in vain; especially with respect to any genuine benefit accruing unto us.

What's more, as Paul makes evident this is true even in the noble contexts of us participating in the operations of God, and of learning and knowing much knowledge of God, and of doing good works. Without having the "charity" of Godly love behind what we do, (and hence it being our reason for doing what we do), then we 'become' something other than God intends, as well as 'being nothing' and 'profiting ourselves nothing.' Wherefore we pretty much do operate in vain if we do not operate upon Godly love and charity.

Little wonder, therefore, after confronting the Corinthians and us with the reality of our need to acquire and operate upon Godly love and charity, and also after fully exonerating it and extolling it as the abiding and greatest operation of God that it is, that God has Paul fervently exhort us to "follow after charity." Moreover as Paul concludes I Corinthians God has him pointedly exhort us saying...

14 Let all your things be done with charity.

(I Corinthians 16:14)

Wherefore since Godly love and charity is indispensable to us; and since we should not want to 'become' something other than God intends, or 'be nothing,' or have what we do 'profit us nothing'; then possessing and operating upon Godly love and charity is an absolute necessity for us, and 'following after charity' must be a top priority so that 'all of our things can be done with charity.'

It follows, therefore, that if we are being "taught of God" to love as He does then we are knowingly 'following after charity' in our "godly edifying." We know both what that means and how to do it, and we are doing it. For we know how imperative it is for us to operate upon Godly love and charity.

The Question Revisited

Despite the very simple consideration we have given to the foregoing issues, and also the narrow focus of our attention in connection with each one, nonetheless you should now be in a somewhat better position to answer the question, *Are you being "taught of God to love one another"?* What's more, in view of what God has Paul teach us in I Corinthians 13:1-3 you should certainly want to know the answer, and for it to be "yes."

Another Caveat

Needless to say only you know your heart and know the honest answer to this question. But as you and I also know, we are not always completely honest with ourselves. For this very reason more than once we find Paul telling us not to deceive ourselves, as for example...

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

(I Corinthians 3:18)

33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

(I Corinthians 15:33)

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

(Galatians 6:7)

In fact there can actually be a strong tendency for us to be less than frank and candid with ourselves especially when it comes to God's word 'reading us' as we read it. Or in other words especially when the probing capacity of what God says to us deliberately takes a hold of our spirit to make it effectually function as that 'candle of the Lord that searches all the inward parts of the belly.'

When the results of that search reveal to us such things as inconsistencies, inadequacies,

shortcomings, and the like, and we are 'point-blank' confronted with them, our flesh responds like the true 'spin doctor' that it is. It quickly composes a number of responses for us to give to ourselves, each of which endeavors to comfort us by 'putting a good spin' on what God has found wanting.

So then with these various 'good spins' to choose from, we can easily be less-than-completely-honest with ourselves. And if we are, then we will simply dismiss the unpleasant results of God's word 'reading us' by responding to them in one of many ways, which can range from flatly denying that the results are true, all the way to admitting that they are true but determining to rectify things 'one of these days.'

Wherefore when during the course of progressing through the curriculum of our sonship edification we encounter the effectual working of our Father's 'searching of the inward parts of our belly,' it is not surprising that we also frequently find an accompanying caution or admonition for us to be honest with ourselves as we respond to the search. For it is not only needful for us to hear this admonition, but it is also the natural thing for our Father to do upon concluding His search. For our Father does not 'search all the inward parts of our belly' for any other reason than for our own good. He has designed the 'searches' to be for our benefit and profit; not to our shame or embarrassment.

As the loving Father that He is God 'searches' to evaluate the effectual working of our sonship edification, and if necessary to expose to us what is lacking and needed, so that we can appropriately deal with these things as wise "sons," and thereby be able to fully benefit from all that He has designed our sonship edification to do for us, both for now and also for our vocation yet to come.

All the more, therefore, it is only natural for our Father to frequently admonish us to be honest with ourselves when we respond to the results of any of His 'searches.'

A Fitting Admonition

In view of this I am going to borrow one such admonition from our curriculum and apply it to the probing question, *Are you being "taught of God to love one another"?* What's more, this is an appropriate admonition to apply. For it comes from Galatians where among other things Paul had to deal with the saints about lacking things in their "godly edifying," including being taught of God unto Godly love and charity.

Hence when He admonished the Galatians to respond honestly to all of His reproofs, rebukes, and corrections, God had Paul say...

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

(Galatians 6:3-5)

Wherefore the onus is indeed on us to make sure that we are honest with ourselves, and to make sure that we are learning from the curriculum for our "godly edifying" — for our sonship edification — all that God has designed for us to learn.

The Question One Last Time

On the basis of what Paul declares in I Corinthians 13:1-3 you know that you should not want your answer to the question to be either "I don't know," or "No." Or to put it more bluntly, you know that you really cannot afford to have your answer be anything less than a resounding "Yes."

So then what is your answer to the question, *Are you being "taught of God to love one another"?* And if your answer is not "Yes," what are you going to do about it?

— *K. R. Blades*