

The Wonder of Jesus

The Tenderness of His Love

Lesson #9 for May 31, 2008

Scriptures: Matthew 5:44-48; 19:13,14; 23:37; Luke 10:38-42; John 8:2-11; Acts 6:7.

1. This lesson is about living a life full of love and compassion. In our day, so many people operate based on hidden agendas. Everyone seems to be looking for a way to get ahead! But Jesus operated on the motive of “pure love.” Have you ever experienced a relationship with another human being that was based on “pure love”?
2. What is implied by “pure love”? Could a person in our day live a life in which their first concern was always for other people? Or, in our day, is it necessary for us to fight for our rights? Do we need to stand up for “number one”? Jesus was so concerned about other people that even after raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead, His first request was to give the girl something to eat! (Luke 8:55)
3. What does it require for a human being to actually develop that kind of love? How do we learn to be concerned more about others than about ourselves? Can parents teach this to their children?
4. We know that Jesus voluntarily fasted for 40 days in preparation for His mission. But whenever He saw human beings that were hungry, He immediately set about to try to feed them! Could we actually learn to be like Jesus in that respect? Read Matthew 25:31-46.
5. In the life of Jesus it seemed that the worse a person’s position or condition, the more Jesus reached out to them. Read again the story of the woman caught in adultery. (John 8:1-11) The circumstances suggest—and Ellen White’s comments confirm—that this woman was caught in a trap set by the Pharisees to try to condemn Jesus. They were certain that no matter which way Jesus tried to answer the question about how to deal with this woman, they would have Him in a “bind.” But Jesus, in His usual unflappable, calm way, did something totally unexpected! He began to write in the dust with His finger. We have no direct evidence from any inspired source as to what He wrote. But the response gives us a very strong clue. Her accusers began to leave beginning with the eldest! Clearly, Jesus was writing something in the dust that condemned them individually. Considering the fact that this same Jesus was the God of Mount Sinai who wrote on tables of stone with His finger, what would have happened if He had spelled out the sins of those church leaders in the stones of the temple wall or floor? It is almost certain that they were all guilty of the same sins of which they were accusing this woman! Considering the wording of some of the passages by Ellen White about that experience and also considering the way that story was handled by the early church fathers, it seems likely that this woman taken in adultery was Mary Magdalene! There is no proof for that but it seems fairly likely.
6. When all the accusers were gone, Jesus turned to the woman and asked, “Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?” (John 8:10, *GNB*) With His infinite foreknowledge, Jesus could have stood up and spelled out the details of the lives of everyone present on that occasion. But God has no desire to unnecessarily embarrass His children. What would your church do with this story if it happened today? If one of your church members were caught in the very act of committing adultery, how would he or she be handled? What if it was a pastor?
7. How do we draw the very thin line between being overindulgent because of love and standing

up for the truth and the moral imperative? In the case of this story, did the accusers of the woman go away feeling condemned?

8. Can we be like Jesus and speak the truth to people who have been sinners without condemning or belittling them? Would that require more than love or require a love beyond human capacity?
9. Jesus became famous for His approach to children. Think of all the ways in which children have been misused—even abused—down through the generations. Not able to stand up and speak on their own behalf or to defend themselves, children have suffered terribly in wars, famines, various kinds of conflicts, even family feuds! Whole groups of boys were killed in biblical history to try to prevent the birth of the Messiah! (Exodus 1:15,16; Matthew 2:16) When Jesus learned as a child about the children who died because of Him, how do you think He felt? How would you feel?
10. Jesus said that we must become as little children if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:2-6; 19:13-15) How did Jesus specifically relate to children? They seemed to feel very comfortable with Him. Why do you think that was? Ellen White suggested that children fell asleep in His lap as He was preaching! “The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach him; even little children were attracted to him. They loved to climb upon his lap and to kiss that pensive face, benignant with love.” (3T 422.1; SC 11.2; GW92 261.3) How do you think those encounters with Jesus affected the children of His day? Children are often used as political footballs in our day. They are kissed by politicians in an attempt to win their parents votes!
11. Does God expect us to reach out to children today? Jesus had very few personal “friends.” There were thousands of people who wanted to be near Him to benefit from His healing powers, etc., but very few that He could trust to the point of relaxing with them and being completely free. (John 2:23-25)
12. On one particular occasion, Jesus and His entourage visited Bethany. There Martha—probably the oldest of the siblings—felt responsible for providing a meal for them. She was very busy in the kitchen trying to prepare everything. But Mary, her younger sister, was sitting at the feet of Jesus “taking in” His every word. Naturally, especially considering taboos present in their culture, Martha thought Mary should help her and not be sitting near Jesus. (Read Luke 10:38-42) But Jesus understood that He would only be with them for a short while longer, and He commended Mary for her desire to learn as much of the truth as possible.
13. What do you think Jesus would have done if both Martha and Mary had “sat at His feet”? Would He have arranged for the meal? It would be incredibly helpful if we could hear His voice and see His facial expressions as He spoke those words to Martha. Someday, that will be possible!
14. The Sermon on the Mount given by Jesus is full of the most incredible claims and statements. What should we do with Matthew 5:44-48? Is it even possible for selfish human beings to love their enemies? Abraham Lincoln is reported as having once said, “Shouldn’t we destroy our enemies by making friends out of them?” Did Jesus think that He was living His entire life in a world full of enemies? And what is the relationship between loving your enemies and being perfect? How can we possibly explain the kinds of love that we read about in Luke 22:50,51; Matthew 26:25; and Luke 23:34?

15. Was Jesus showing love for His enemies in His discussions with them in Matthew 23 and John 8? Can you truly love someone while you are calling them a son of the Devil?
16. How does Jesus feel as He looks on a world full of sinners and realizes that most of them are trapped in their sins?
17. Read Acts 6:7. How can we possibly explain the fact that many priests later became Christians, and thus, followers of Jesus after having so roundly condemned Him while He was alive? What factor or factors do you think caused them to change their opinion?
18. Try to imagine the scene with the Passover approaching and literally millions of Jews gathered around Jerusalem and then a huge entourage of them leading Jesus on a donkey to be crowned king of Israel. They were certain that all their bad times were behind them! They knew that Jesus could do everything they wanted Him to do. All they had to do was to get Him to cooperate! But in the middle of their parade, He brought on the “rain”! Great drops of tears fell from His eyes!
19. They thought that the Jesus they wanted was exactly what Jerusalem needed! But the real Jesus was what they needed, and Jerusalem did not want Him at all! What does that tell us about God and His relationship with His misbehaving children? How would Jesus be received by the Christian church in our day?
20. In what way can we be examples of the love of Jesus reaching out to our immediate associates, friends, coworkers, etc.? The example of Jesus seems so far beyond us, and yet, He calls us to be like Him.

He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He never made truth cruel, but ever manifested a deep tenderness for humanity. Every soul was precious in His sight. He bore Himself with divine dignity; yet He bowed with the tenderest compassion and regard to every member of the family of God. He saw in all, souls whom it was His mission to save.--*Gospel Workers*, p. 117. {*RH*, December 16, 1884 par. 17; *SC* 12.1; *DA* 353.1; *ChS* 231.2}

21. The “great controversy, trust, healing” model of salvation suggests that “our minds” are the “battleground” of the greatest “war” of all eternity. We are daily choosing to become more and more like one side or the other. Satan’s side is completely motivated by selfishness. Look at the world around you. How many people operate based on that same motive. Jesus Christ challenges us to outgrow our childish selfishness and become Godlike. Could we do that? Jesus said, “If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.” (John 13:35, *GNB*) Are Christians the only ones who know real love?
22. Are we demonstrating real love to the world around us? Are they praising God because of what they see in us? (Matthew 5:16) If not, when should we start?

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