

The Love Correction

THE CHRISTIAN'S TASK

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-1G; 1 Peter 4:8-19

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How do you think God sees you? Do you cringe at the thought?

God's estimation of your beauty comes from His great love for

You - not as a result of any inherent goodness or beatify of your

own. (God is not the cold, aloof, rigidly legalistic being that religion has made Him out to be. He is not the demanding,

impatient God so many of us have struggled to please. Oh, how the Lord longs for (you and me) His church to receive a revelation

of His ravished heart - utterly overwhelmed with delight for us -

even though we may not like or believe in ourselves. How His heart

aches for us to become aware of His fascination with our beauty

and respond to His yearning glance (Ps. 45: 11).

Our God is not a

thing or an it. He is an affectionate, loving, deeply passionate

being. Today's church desperately needs a renewed understanding

of the nature of God's personality and a deeper comprehension of

His extravagant passion.

Pastor Mike Bickle wrote these words in a devotional entitled **Passion for Jesus**. Mike is right. God is zealously impassioned about you. There is not a speck of apathy over you. God either is full of delight over your faith in him, or full of hurt over your rejection of him. Either way, God longs for you with a passion unmatched by the most dream-driven lover.

2 us. He stalks us not to fulfill a personal need, but to supply our need. Wherever you turn, there is God.

King David wrote:

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I use; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You bent me in-behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. It here can I go front your .Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my tied in the depths, you are there If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (Ps 139:1-10, NIV)

David understood that we cannot escape God-s presence. This isn't bad. God loves us. God=s pursuing love is so gracious that it corrects the spirit of those who are found by it, those who receive it. We then see ourselves differently and soon we see others differently as well.

As believers, who struggle to know the truth, we argue and debate on occasion. However, the more we see ourselves from Gods perspective, the less we will be tempted to dishonor or belittle one another. Paul wrote the Ephesians:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, hearing with one another in loves Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond r of peace. There is one body and

3 There is only one Spirit. We either unify or

we grieve God's Spirit in us. Unity requires commitment, humility, patience, and a vision that values and loves people.

In every church I've served I have had people come because they were disappointed or mad at their pastor or church. They didn't like the way their pastor was treated, or they didn't like their pastor. In every church I've served I have had people leave because they were disappointed or angry with me or the church. No doubt, God uses this pain occasionally to reshuffle the deck, to redeploy his children in different teams or congregations. However, when relationships are broken, when anger goes unresolved, when differences are irreconcilable, we

betray God's embracing love. We grieve the holy Spirit. God **may redeploy** us from time to time; but God never intends for our friendships to end. Nothing is greater than our friendship in Christ, and no matter how strained our friendships become whether differences or sins drive us apart our friendships are God-given, our friendships are God-based, our friendships are God-ordained. They are not by accident, and they are never, never, never to be discarded.

In the midst of a conflict, we often don battle armor. We do this most often in our marriages and families. We focus on an issue and then deflect all other comments in order to keep the focus on that issue. As long as we are in battle armor, we don't have to worry about the bullets of the opposition. We are defending ourselves and pursuing whatever issue we desire. However, only when we take off the armor and stop defending, can we really hear the people we love. For example, Jill is a 16 year-old whose duty is to take out the garbage. Mom reminds her to take it out at 7 pm, 8 pm and 9 pm. Of course, the 9 pm voice seems shrill to Jill. Jill says "Mom, why must you "spaz" over such little things. You don't respect me." Jill remembers doing garbage the past two weeks with no problem. Mom remembers Jill forgetting to do garbage three

4 weeks ago. Mom puts her battle armor on. "Don't talk back. I shouldn't have to remind you three times." Tempers flare as each defends herself and attacks the other. The truth-value of each issue is never explored until both take off their armor and stop defending themselves. Frequently, that doesn't happen.

In the latter part of Ephesians four, Paul says that there is a unity of faith and a maturity of love we are to reach. Such unity and maturity does not come unless we patiently bear with each other as we discuss rather than ignore our differences and problems. Moreover, it doesn't come unless we go a step further and confess to one another our sins and also forgive those that sin against us.

Some of us grew up in families where this never happened. We grew up in situations where there was never a healthy **model to deal with conflict and pain**. Most issues never were discussed. The church is to live differently. In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul told believers to submit to one another out of fear of Christ. In other words, we are to hear each other out. Sometimes, that is difficult, especially if you feel mistreated or condemned. However, when we do submit to one another, we honor Christ and embrace his love for others. We also grow in patience, a key ingredient in love.

Peter wrote:

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Pet X1:8, NIV)

This statement reveals three things. First, it shows us that the call to love is primary. "Above all" Peter wrote. Above feeling comfortable, above getting your way, above exercising your rights,

5 Christ gave us is to love. That's our task. We're to

love, above everything else. Second, God commanded us through Peter to love each other deeply. In the movie, *The First Knight*, Sean Connery said, "I don't love people in slices. I take the good with the bad." To love deeply is to embrace a person, both the good and the bad. The bad may require painful confrontation. The faults may be horrifically harmful and require separation for a time. To love deeply, however, is to commit yourself to bless the person even though their behavior hurts you. To love deeply, we must stick with one another and be "long-suffering," the old word for patient. **Third, the reason we are to first and foremost, love each other** deeply is that love covers over a multitude of sins. Sin still lives among us. Sin is going to hurt us. It is going to divide us. Sin is going to separate us. In the process of our redemption from sin, in the process where we are cleansed from our sins, love is critical. Love doesn't excuse sins. It doesn't ignore them. It like Christ recognizes them. That is the only way we can ever get free of them. We must recognize sin in order to repent from sin. You've heard the nightly prayer, "Lord, forgive me from any sin I might have committed today." That prayer is ineffective. It allows you to go on and on ignorant of the harm you sow. Instead, it would be more prudent to ask, "Lord, show me my sins that I might repent, be forgiven and be cleansed from them." Love wants to know how we harm others. Love also recognizes how others harm us. However, love goes even further. Love not only recognizes sin, love forgives sin. It supplies you with the spirit to forgive.

Corrie Ten Boom suffered deeply in a German Death Camp. Her sister had died there. At one of her speaking engagements, a man forced his way to the front of the crowd to see her. As she caught sight of him, all those painful memories and hurt returned. She felt hatred overtaking her heart as she looked at a man who had been a guard at her camp. However, something else

G spoke to her. There were words of Jesus and a desire to forgive. Corrie had to make a choice. God's love had found Corrie. Now would Corrie listen to that love and let it heal her wounded heart? Would she let that love correct her spirit and release forgiveness?

Corrie chose well and consequently has affected thousands. Will you let God's love find you and correct you? Is God's love changing you? Do you need to take some armor off and listen to someone? Do you need to forgive somebody? Do you need to ask forgiveness from

