

Jesus Said by This the World Would Know We Are His Disciples

When God sent Moses to the children of Israel in the book of Exodus, He gave him miraculous signs to perform so that the people would believe that God truly sent him. In the same way, when Elijah the prophet spoke to his unbelieving nation, he called down fire from heaven to prove that God had really spoken through him. Yet Jesus said to His disciples that it was by our love one for another, not by our miracles, that the world would know that we are His disciples. Isn't that striking?

To be sure, signs, wonders and miracles were and are important. When they are performed in Jesus' name, they point to the fact that He has risen from the dead. They demonstrate that He is still alive and working in power. They vindicate the message we are preaching. (For a wonderful, contemporary story from Nepal, see [here](#).)

But those miracles, in and of themselves, do not demonstrate that we are the disciples of Jesus. Instead, it is our love for one another that demonstrates this. Why is that so?

Simply stated, it's because God can work miracles through anyone. Supernatural gifts can work through us whenever God desires, even if our own lives are not right with Him. But to have real love one for another speaks of a changed life. It speaks of having been with Jesus.

As Matthew Henry explained, "Brotherly love is the badge of Christ's disciples. By this he knows them, by this they may know themselves (1 John 2:14), and by this others may know them. This is the livery of his family, the distinguishing character of his disciples; this he would have them noted for,

as that wherein they excelled all others—their loving one another. This was what their Master was famous for; all that ever heard of him have heard of his love, his great love; and therefore, if you see any people more affectionate one to another than what is common, say, ‘Certainly these are the followers of Christ, they have been with Jesus.’”

This really is the heart of the matter. Jesus has a certain reputation in the world. Even unbelievers know the story of His great love. Many of them have heard that He died for the sins of the world and that He taught us to love our enemies. And many understand that He practiced what He preached.

That is how Jesus is known to the world. And that means that the world expects those who claim to be His followers to be different than others, even faulting us for falling short of the mark. In the words of the Indian philosopher Bara Dada, “Jesus is ideal and wonderful, but you Christians, you are not like him.”

The world expects us to have His traits. Consequently, when we demonstrate that extraordinary quality of love that He demonstrated toward us, when we love each other as He loved us, the world recognizes that we are His disciples. We remind people of Him.

“There is something different about those Christians,” people think to themselves. And that’s why they are drawn to our message. As the Christian apologist Tertullian noted in the second century, “The heathen were wont to exclaim with astonishment: ‘Behold how these Christians love one another, and how they are ready to die for one another.’”

In the words of Bruce Milne, “A loving community, says Jesus, is the visible authentication of the gospel. Love is the ‘final apologetic’ (Francis Schaeffer) ... To love like Jesus is to love inclusively, indiscriminately and universally. When that kind of love flows within a congregation the world will

take note that ‘they have been with Jesus’ [see Acts 4:13].” And, Milne notes, in the early church, “Their mutual love was the magnet which drew the pagan multitudes to Christ. It has the potential to do so still.”

This magnet will still draw people today. Even mockers, skeptics and people of different faiths are attracted to authentic love. Conversely, as G. Campbell Morgan put it, “The measure in which Christian people fail in love to each other is the measure in which the world does not believe in them, or their Christianity. It is the final test of discipleship, according to Jesus.”

That’s why Jerome tells us that when John the apostle was asked in his old age why he constantly said, “Little children, love one another,” John replied, “Because this is the precept of the Lord, and if only this is done it is enough.”

Jesus prayed to His Father on our behalf, saying, “I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfect in unity, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:23).

In ourselves, this kind of love is completely unattainable. But empowered by grace and birthed out of intimate fellowship with God, it can become a reality.

Let the whole world see Jesus—in us. {eo}

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.