

The Difference Between Believing in God and Loving Him

There is a difference between believing in the Lord and loving Him.

God loves everyone unconditionally, but how you respond to His love is what marks your Christian life. Let me illustrate this point with a little parable the Lord gave me. A father had three sons living under his roof, young twin boys and an older son. One day the twins got themselves in severe trouble which required a severe punishment from their father. They were grounded for an entire year. That's a very long time for any boy. But it came to pass that the older brother had compassion on both of them and propositioned to the father that he would take the punishment for them. Now watch this very carefully. Upon hearing the great news of their deliverance both of the twin boys expressed appreciation, but one was so grateful that he remained to serve his older brother for the entire year. Which of the twins believed his older brother? Both of them did. But which of them loved him? The one that served him. The difference in the twin boys was in their heart, and in their depth of response to their elder brother's love and sacrifice.

"We love Him because He first loved us" (John 4:19).

I believe the above verse is the great key to loving and serving God. We love and serve God according to the measure of revelation we have of His love for us. Love is pure because of choice. In our little parable, the elder brother did not require the twins to love him, but only to believe in what he did for them. Believing set them free. But in the light of the elder brother's sacrifice, the one twin saw his own value and worth, and responded with love. His servant's attitude and

willingness to give back to his brother distinguished him from the other twin. This too is what distinguishes a loving Christian from only a believing one.

Furthermore, while we understand that God is no respecter of persons, we must understand that He has favorites. Sounds contradictory, doesn't it? Let me explain. Those of you who have children will understand this clearly. Any normal parent loves his children equally, but will have a more determined love toward the obedient child. A parent will naturally want to extend himself and his own goodness more to the obedient one. Compare the following two verses and set your own understanding.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father. And I will love him and will reveal Myself to him" (John 14:21).

God loves the world unconditionally, but has a determined love for His obedient children. The loving Christian obeys God, not because he has to but because he wants to. Obedience is not based on law, but on love. God is not interested in perfect deeds but in a perfect heart. The one who truly loves God is guaranteed God's determined love and manifested presence. How wonderful is His beauty and grace!