

HOW LOVE BEHAVES

Sometimes you find the most powerful of truths in the most unexpected places. A little boy named Dave, age 8, said about love: “Love will find you, even if you are trying to hide from it. I’ve been trying to hide from it since I was five, but the girls keep finding me.” Has love found you? One of the most wondrous (if not THE most wondrous) things we read in the Bible is this: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The divine love that compelled Jesus to embrace a cross may have lost its luster to some people. But the apostle John was over-awed by the power of the love that brought Jesus to earth to seek and save the lost. About 60 years after he stood by Jesus’ cross (John 19:26-27), John is still experiencing the effects of that most awesome event in his own life. As he writes the book of First John, he is seeking to motivate the brethren near the end of the first century to love one another. After warning them that “He who does not love does not know God for God is love” (I John 4:8), he then points them to the most powerful symbol of love the world has ever seen. “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Love for John was defined most clearly and demonstrated most powerfully by the cross. In First John, yea in all the New Testament, love is defined not just as a feeling or an emotion but as something concrete and tangible. Love in the New Testament, as demonstrated by the ultimate expression of love at the cross, is a matter of deeds and actions. The cross reminds us that rather than always feeling good, there may be times when love will demand we do things for the sake of others that don’t feel good to us at all.

I received a calendar as a gift for the year 2005. At the top of the page for the month of November is this statement: “Love is not a feeling, it’s a behavior.” I have no doubt Jesus Christ loves us. And I have no doubt He feels very deeply for us. But the love He modeled in His life from His inconvenient and humble birth in a manger to His excruciating and humiliating death on a cross, teaches us that love is so much more than just a good feeling. True love, the God-like kind, is defined not by how it makes us feel, but by how it makes us behave. Clint Black’s beautiful country song a few years ago told the truth about love: “Love is not something that you’re in - it’s something that you do.” How is your love behaving?

Dan Gulley
Smithville Church of Christ