

COGA NEWS



"If You Love Me..."

By Bishop Cecil Reid

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- A few words of love to show that the month of February is more than a time to celebrate Valentine's Day

Love is an important theme in the Gospel of John; it is used as a verb or noun a total of fifty-six times. One of the uses of this word is when Jesus used it to challenge His disciples. "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Jesus is preparing his disciple for the dreadful days ahead. The cross was on the horizon. His faithful followers were heavy with grief as He tells them not to be afflicted at his leaving them, nor to lose courage. That if they placed their confidence in God, he would protect them.

However, although they might see him mistreated, they should believe in him more firmly, as his suffering, death, and resurrection should be to them the most positive proof of his being the Messiah, the savior of the world. It was in the face of heavy hearts and tear-stained cheeks, Jesus made the provoking statement, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

In layman's terms, do not be afflicted at the thought of my being separated from you. The most solid proof you can give of your attachment to and affection for me, is to keep my commandments. This I will receive as great proof of your affection than your tears.

OBEDIENCE is pictured in Scripture as a love response. True obedience is not dutiful conforming to an external standard but rather is a joy-filled reaction to the awesome manner God has taken in showing us His love in Jesus. Love and obedience are so intimately bound together that one who does not love God will not truly obey. They are so bound together that obedience is an indication of the reality of our love for the Lord.

*"If you love me,
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(John 14:15)*

What is love?

God's Word says that God is love. That's sufficient for some of us. Others of us need more words. Perhaps the best way to understand love is to look at love in action. Does it have a common denominator? Something you can see? Point to? Yes. It's something you can see in every expression of love. Every time. Everywhere. By everybody. It's the fiber from which love is formed. And you can say it in a single word.

GIVING: The act of giving is the act of loving. And the act of loving is the act of giving. God proved this. For God so loved the world that He gave ... Giving says it all.

Far too many people take God's work for granted. They think it can be done without their help. It can't. God needs your help, your gift of love. When you do less than your best in giving to God, you lose.

It hurts God. His work. You. Sure, God can work alone. But He doesn't want to. He wants you as a partner. On His team. In His church. Our church is His way of getting things done. It lets us pull together. Work together. Give together.

*God
never
puts
you off*

The Scriptures reveal that our gifts of love should equal 10% of the first fruits of your labor. The tithe-the-tenth gives you an idea of what God wants. What you do over that is between you and Him. Whatever your decision, God is counting on you as a member of His team to do your part.

If you give less than your best, God is disappointed. His work suffers. And you sacrifice a fellowship with Him that cannot be expressed in words. And waiting until you have more income or until some bills are paid off is not a reason to put off supporting God's work. God never puts you off.

 He'll support you. He'll make sure you make it just fine. He never holds back. He will bless you and love you beyond all understanding. But he longs to be loved in return. God's gift of love is your reason for giving. Jesus' words are timeless, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

He is asking for our love to be expressed in the only way that love knows, by obedience. And He does not leave us as orphans to struggle with the obedient side of our love. But provides for us the support of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter (Paraclete), one that is called alongside, with an admonition to help us through any and all situations. The Holy Spirit is not given to us on a temporary basis but is to abide with us forever! (John 14:16) Why? To help us with the obedient side of love. *"If you love me ... " Think about it.*