

1 John 3:10

Live Righteously and Love One Another

What is morality? Morality concerns the principles by which right and wrong, or good and bad behavior, are distinguished. How do we know what is right or wrong or good or bad behavior? Do we ourselves determine that? Furthermore, as we become a more advanced society should we be willing to update the moral index?

On the matter of love, does loving God/Jesus Christ ever require us to harm our neighbor? Let me ask it this way. To truly love our neighbor as Jesus did, must we at times lay aside that which honors God? Listen! Genuine love for God/Jesus, and to love God is to obey God, will never require us to abuse, dehumanize, or deliberately injure our neighbor. It may require us to speak an uncomfortable truth, but we must always do so with humility, compassion, and concern for that person's eternal good. Never forget this biblical principle, love and truth are inseparable. Several witnesses here.

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death." **NLT**

2 Tim 3:16-17 "¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." **NLT**

Matt 22:37-40 "³⁷ Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: 'Love

your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” **NLT**

John 13:35 “³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” **NLT**

We cannot genuinely love God while refusing to love our neighbor. We cannot love our neighbor as Christ commands until we first know the love of God revealed through His Son. And before we can truly love Jesus, we must first believe in him, and to believe in Jesus is to trust in his perfect life, death and resurrection as the means of God’s forgiveness for your sin (it must be personalized). And lest we forget, this is all the result of God’s grace at work in our hearts through faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The spirit of this world tells us that truth is relative, that all paths lead to God, there is no such thing as hell or the devil, that love is whatever you make it and that love requires us to affirm whatever another person declares to be true. The spirit of this world says draw no lines in the sand! But scripture will not allow us to separate love from truth or faith from transformation. This fact remains, genuine faith in Jesus is marked by righteous living and love for the community of believers.

There is a crisis in the church of our Savior and Lord Jesus in America. That crisis is nominal Christianity, a profession of faith without genuine transformation. It is so commonplace that genuine zeal for Jesus makes other professing disciples, nominal though they may be, uncomfortable. Why? Because they fail to understand fully the magnificence, the majesty, the costliness and the power of the gospel of Jesus. Many American pastors and teachers are to blame for this.

Too often, we are more concerned with keeping people comfortable and being liked than with lovingly calling people to repentance, faith, and transformed living. I confess that earlier in my ministry I too often valued being liked more than speaking the whole counsel of God. But John does not have that problem. He calls it out, and his willingness to do so demonstrates love for both God and neighbor. **V10** “So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God”. Notice John does not say that righteous living and love make us children of God. Rather, they reveal whose children we already are. John's concern is not perfection but identity. John is not calling us to manufacture righteousness. He is describing what inevitably grows in those who have been born again by the Spirit of God. At the heart of John's word is the truth that Kingdom citizenship through genuine faith in Jesus is evidenced by these two things. So, since we profess to be in the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus are our lives marked by these two, righteous living, and love of our brothers and sisters in the faith? To help us discern faithfully let's define these two critical things.

To live righteously is to live under the lordship of Jesus. Is Jesus not only your Savior but the Lord of your life? Is there a strong desire in you to do that which glorifies him? The question isn't do we always do that which glorifies him, but rather is there a true desire in us to do so? Is there any area of my life that is off limits to his Lordship? My career. My business. My money. My sexuality. My family. My politics. My opinions. You fill in the blank. No doubt there is opportunity for us all here. To live righteously is to live for Jesus recognizing that there is no area of my existence that is not subject to or under the rule of the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Have we come to the

realization that when this life is over, we will give an account of ourselves to God, to Jesus. We too often live as if this life is it.

Hebrews 4:13 “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” **NIV**

Romans 14:11-12 “¹¹for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” ¹²So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.” **ESV**

To love other believers is to do to one another what Jesus has done for us. It is to die to ourselves metaphorically and, if necessary, literally for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in Christ. To love other believers is to be willing to give freely of everything we have that they might prosper in the faith, too. Love is not simply something we say but do. John writes later in this chapter, "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." (V18). In other words, if we have the ability to meet the genuine need of a brother or sister and deliberately refuse to do so, how can we claim to love God? When we truly love the community of believers, we will forgo our possessions, our reputations, our comforts, our passions, our stations in life, even life itself that they might grow and prosper in the faith as we do. **The reason we do this is because we love Jesus more than anything, and nothing brings more delight to us than seeing others prosper in him.** Now, this is hard and I am far away from where I want to be and should be on this. But having written this message, I pray that the Holy Spirit will bring me and you, if you are not already here, to this place.

I want to close with **Phil 2:3-8** because I believe it sums it all up: “³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others

more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” **ESV**

Church, at the cross, righteousness and love meet perfectly. There, Jesus’ righteousness and his love for us are made unmistakably clear. The perfect lamb of God, crucified for the sin of the world, crucified for you and me. What love! Those of us who genuinely believe in and love him, will we not desire to live likewise? Live righteously and love one another. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**