

King's Way Church
Message for Jan. 7, 2007
Written by Roger Miller

DEVELOPING A NEW HABIT: A HABIT OF THE HEART
1 John 2:1-11

In the second chapter John tells us that what we know is connected to what we do. In the time that he was writing this letter there was a heresy moving through the church called **Gnosticism**. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means knowledge. One of the many dangers of Gnosticism is that it taught, in effect, that spirituality was a matter of what you know. They taught that there was a separation between the physical world and the spiritual world. A relationship with God, they taught, is a spiritual relationship, and we can be connected to him spiritually regardless of what we do with our bodies. They used this not only to justify sexual sin, but to ignore other foundational principles of the gospel as well, such as caring for the poor, the hungry, the widows and orphans. John's letters were written, in part, to refute the teachings of the Gnostics. That's why he makes it clear in chapter two that what we know is connected to (or, perhaps, proven by) what we do. He says...

“And how can we be sure that we belong to him? By obeying his commandments.”
(1 John 2:3)

Walking as Jesus walked begins with loving others. We have tried to make Christianity more difficult than it really is. John makes the progression unmistakably clear: We know that we know him if we obey him; obeying him means that we walk as Jesus walked; walking as Jesus walked means that we love others.

Three things happen when you start loving others. First of all...



1. YOU FIND YOURSELF LIVING A LIFE THAT MAKES SENSE.

“Anyone who loves other Christians is living in the light and does not cause anyone to stumble. Anyone who hates a Christian brother or sister is living and walking in darkness. Such a person is lost, having been blinded by the darkness.”
(1 John 2:10-11)

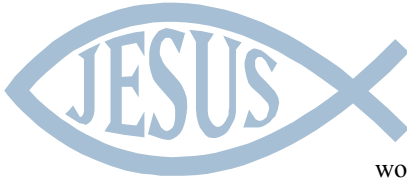
When you love others, it's easy to find the purpose for your life. Loving others gives you direction. Love brings light into your life, as opposed to hatred, which brings darkness. Have you ever known someone so full of hate, so set on revenge than he or she couldn't see straight?

Do you see how hatred clouds our vision? Do you see how it distorts our priorities? Do you see how it brings darkness into our life? I have known people in the church like this—people who seem religious because they speak the right jargon, but they don't really walk as Jesus walked. John makes it clear: if you hate your brother, you do not know God and you're living in darkness. On the other hand, if you love your brother, your life is filled with light.

Another thing that happens when you start loving others...

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2. YOU BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE STABILITY IN YOUR CHRISTIAN WALK.



Think about this: How much of our sin is the result of not loving others? Greed. Rage. Deception. Sexual immorality. These are the result of not loving others. If you love others, you won't short-change them in business, you won't lash out in anger, you won't lie to them, and you won't treat them like a sexual object. When you begin to love others the way you should love others, sin loses its power in your life. It also loses its appeal. Here's why. When you sin, you're thinking only of you. Sin is the ultimate act of selfishness. Not only does it drive a wedge between you and God, it drives a wedge between you and others. That selfish attitude cannot co-exist with a genuine love for people. Loving others is foundational to a stable Christian walk. You will never be consistent in living the Christian life until you learn to love others as God loves them.

3. YOU HELP OTHERS TO EXPERIENCE A CONNECTION WITH GOD.



When you love others, you create stability in their lives as well, because your actions aren't knocking them down spiritually. In his book, *The Twilight of Atheism*, Oxford theologian Alister MacGrath said, "*What propels people toward atheism is above all a sense of revulsion against the excesses and failures of organized religion.*"

There's a sense in which the world, better than the church, understands that the church's top priority is to love people. When we battle it out over insignificant issues, when we define ourselves exclusively by what we're against, rather than the One we are for, they see through our façade. And they're less than impressed. The world doesn't want to hear about our faith unless they can see it, too.

CONCLUSION

This series is about knowing what God wants you to know. He wants you to know where you stand with him. He wants you to be secure in knowing him. In order to know this, you have to know something else: People matter to God more than anything else in the world. If you want to know God in a life-changing way, then you need to learn to love people the way he loves people. What you know is connected to what you do. We know that we have come to know him when we obey him; we obey him by walking as Jesus walked. Walking as Jesus walked begins with loving others. It begins by developing a new habit – a habit of the heart.

“Our vision is to make a change in our community by being a *life-giving* church that is *true* to the Bible and *relevant* today by helping You find *Your way!*”

-King's Way Church

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