

John 3:19-21 This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is.

John 13:34 Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another.

LOVE AND THE GOD-LIGHT CRISIS

Love one another. Can any command be more simply put? Only three words. Not a systemic statement of philosophy; not even a list of does and don'ts. Just, love one another. The only clarification that Jesus made was to say, "in the same way I loved you, you love one another."

And how did Jesus love them? He loved them right through their lack of understanding. As recorded in John 5:39-40. "You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you'll find eternal life there, but you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about me! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren't willing to receive from me the life you say you want." Jesus loved them even through their denial. Remember John 13: 37 and 38? "Master," said Peter, "why can't I follow now? I'll lay down my life for you!" "Really?" You'll lay down your life for me? The truth is that before the rooster crows, you'll deny me three times."

And still He loved them! Just as He still loves us in spite of our sins and imperfections. We are to love one another without limits. We can't say, "if you do this, I will love you." It is a love that has no limits. One theologian has recently said, "When you get to heaven you will even find Hitler there." For those of us whose formative years were during WWII, that takes a real leap of faith. When I think of Hitler and those who believe like him, I really like to think that an Old Testament version of Hell exists, complete with sulphureous flames burning for eternity. Obvious, I have a long way to go in the love and forgiveness department.

Fortunately, Jesus commanded a love that transcended anger, annoyance and irritation. Jesus certainly showed his anger with the bankers in the temple and often showed annoyance with officials, particularly with the religious keepers of correctness. That does give us all a little room for some well-chosen negativism. But, even when angry, we are to let love temper our anger. This is not a complex theological issue. Anyone who has raised teenagers understands the complex relationship between anger and love.

What Jesus is telling us in various ways in all four Gospels, is that all social relations should be infused with love. This is not impossible. Even in negative situations we can accomplish this through the words we choose, the inflections in our speech, in body language and in facial expressions. With practice this interpersonal style becomes automatic. Instead of putting sand in the gears of personal interaction, it would be using honey. We all need to try a little Jesus psychology, I assure you, you will like it!

The God-light crisis: Love is the prime element in God-light. With the love of God so powerful and available, it is reasonable to ask why do people run for the darkness? John's Gospel gives us two

powerful reasons: First of all, there are people who make a practice of doing evil. It might even be said that they are hard wired for evil and under certain conditions will commit evil acts. Radical free-will Christians need to look at this and question some of their assumptions about human behavior. Fortunately, it seems that the hard-wired villain is not too common.

The great marathon run for darkness is much more likely to be peopled by those of us addicted to denial and illusion. Both in our inter-personal relations and in civic action we all fall prey to taking actions based on denial and illusion. Most of the time these actions have little to do with our spiritual lives. My denial that eating a serving of ice cream every day contributes to my weight problem does not have profound spiritual and social consequences. It is a run for the darkness that provokes more amusement than alarm. Some of my illusions I cherish even though they certainly require running in the darkness. The illusion that I can still do the same things now that I did in my fifties is one of them. Denial of the realities of aging is a widely shared dark walk.

It is when we become addicted to denial and illusion to create meaning in our lives that those activities constitute a denial of God-light. Such a run toward darkness has profound spiritual and social consequences. The illusory world that is created replaces the God-light of love with the darkness of hate. The consequences range from war to the destroying of interpersonal relationships.

John's Gospel tells us that if we are interested in working and living in God-light we need to pursue truth to the best of our individual and institutional ability. It is this pursuit of truth that allows us to construct a spiritual and secular reality that, seen in God-light, reveals our efforts as God-work.

Carl Sandburg caught the reality of God-light in this poem.

Between the finite limitations of the five senses

And the endless yearnings of man for the beyond

The people hold to the humdrum bidding of work and food

While reaching out when it comes their way

For lights beyond the prison of the five senses,

For keepsakes lasting beyond any hunger or death.

This reaching is alive.

The panderers and liars have violated and smutted it.

Yet this reaching is alive yet

For lights and keepsakes.

AMEN