

Counting the Cost of Love

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Jno. 3:16, ESV)

What does it mean to love someone?

Parents and children, brothers and sisters, friend and friend, spouse and spouse, defender and defended, each love one another. Above all of this God loved the world. He loved the world so much that he gave that which was most precious to him, his one and only Son. We understand that in order to benefit from the scheme of redemption, we must not only profess our faith in Christ but live a life of obedience to God, bearing fruit through our faith. (Rev. 2:10)

Yet, with respect to his own showing of affection, let us ask, "Did God's love for humanity have anything to do with humanity's ability to reciprocate?" Paul reminds us of the following: "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." (Rom. 5:6-9) While we were still sinners, the Apostle says, Christ died for us. Again, when we could do nothing to save ourselves, God sent his Son so that we would have an avenue to be forgiven.

Let's apply this a bit further. When Paul says that husbands are the saviors of their wives, what does he mean? (Eph. 5:23) Paul applies the love that Christ had for us to the love of one spouse for the other: "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." (Eph. 5:28-33)

If each of us love Christ and his Father so much that we will be willing to suffer for them, will we be willing to suffer for our physical spouse? What about our physical family? What about those in the world, whom God loves but who do not yet know God?

Will we be willing to suffer for them as well?

Is it possible to save someone without loving and suffering for them?

Does our love have anything to do with another's ability to reciprocate?