

Dear friends,

February brings thoughts of love. Love can be a splendid thing but I am afraid that many people have turned it into a mushy sentimentality that doesn't even represent true love. Some, mostly men, blame greeting card companies for a conspiracy to abscond with their money and it is true that lots of money is spent around Valentines but, I think it is sad that we have to have one time in which many people feel pressured into expressing some small amount of affection for their spouse or some other loved one.

Do you know that love is mentioned over two hundred times in the New Testament? The best known are:

**Love Verse = John 3:16;**

**Love Chapter = I Corinthians 13;**

**Love Book = Ruth**

Actually the whole Bible is a book dedicated to love and how it can go wrong.

Now before you get upset with me for this statement let me finish. It is God who initiated love and care for Adam and Eve only to be spurned. God counseled Cain to be careful about his anger toward his brother and His advice was ignored. The Old Testament is full of God's overtures to mankind only to be rejected repeatedly by the vast majority of people.

The New Testament isn't much better once again God reaches out in love sending His Son to love and restore mankind and He is cruelly murdered.

When asked to summarize the Old Testament's Law Jesus said; "Love God, and love your neighbor." Matthew 22: 35-40. In John 15:12 He renews this, saying, "This is my commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you."

Later Jesus confronts Peter with those pointed questions "Simon... do you love me?" Peter answers, "Lord you know that I have affection for you." This is repeated three times; Jesus is asking Peter if his love for the Him is God's highest form of love and Peter answers that he has brotherly affection for Jesus.

I am sure that we all struggle, as Peter did, to love the Lord and others with a love fitting our calling as God's Children.

God's love for us is kind, patient, unending as mentioned in I Corinthians and we are to aspire to give that love to others. In I John it say we are not to love the world in chapter two and then most of the rest the book is about our need to love God and one another. I am not sure about you but I still struggle not loving the world and I definitely struggle to love others in a way that pleases God!

*The Amplified Bible – I John 4:7-11 Beloved, let us love one another, for love [springs] from God, and he who loves [his fellow men] is begotten (born) of God and is coming (progressively) to know and understand God – to perceive and recognize and get a better and clearer knowledge of Him... He who does not love has not become acquainted with God – does not and never did know Him; for God is love.... In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us so (very much), we also ought to love one another.*

May God fill your heart with His love and I hope you share His love with others.

Thank you for sharing your love and prayers with the needy who come to Alpha.

*Richard and Debi*

"Am I prepared to be identified so closely with the Lord that His life and His sweetness will be continually poured out through me? Neither natural love nor God's divine love will remain and grow in me unless it is nurtured. Love is spontaneous.....Oswald Chambers

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