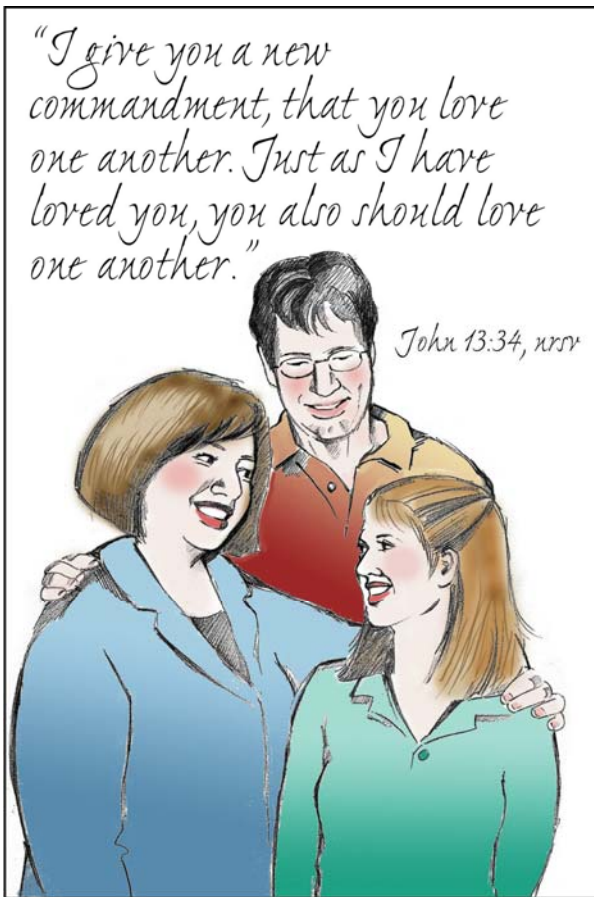


# LOVE IS A TRIANGLE

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, June 25, 2006



**Our first Biblical lesson** took place, just yesterday afternoon in a dollar store in Orlando. My wife is dealing, **even now while we speak** with a little six year old girl with wide beautiful blue eyes. A few days ago she was found in a drug infested house ~ and just dropped of to be cared for. The other kids were shopping ~ they had two dollars each and that is a fortune for them. The little one has only known this woman for a few days ~ and was now crying bitterly ~ right there in the dollar store. Suddenly, unexpected -- **Miss Tienka, are you going to die? Yes dear, one day I will ~ like all people do.** The tear filled little blue eyes looked up ~ **"do you love me? "** **"Yes, I do"** **My granny also loved me and she died.** **"Will you stay with me, please?"** By now both of them were crying. The Gospel is all about love ~ and therefore this true real life incident that took place just yesterday was our first reading today.

**Luke 10:25-28:** Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. **"Teacher,"** he said, **"what must I do to inherit eternal life?"** He said to him, **"What is written in the law? What do you read there?"** He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and

with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." and he said to him, **"You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."**

The answer that Jesus gave to the first question of the lawyer has become a cornerstone of our Christian faith. Love is what real life is all about! But love is a loaded word, differently understood and often misinterpreted, leading to disastrous consequences.

**I have a favorite story about Christian love:** A distinguished actor and an aged retired minister were introduced to one another at a gathering. The famous actor was asked to give a recitation and decided to recite Psalm 23. **He really did a great job and he received a huge applause.** The actor then turned to the aged Minister and said: **"Now let us hear you say Psalm 23.** The minister felt uncomfortable to speak after such a famous man, but he did so when the people applauded and kept calling on him. When he was done .... There was no applause, but silence. The actor was amazed to see that there were tears in many eyes, for this time Psalm 23 had spoken to their hearts and souls. The actor wiped his own tears and said: **"Sir, I know the psalm, but obviously -- you know the Shepherd."**

On a different note: Have you heard about the **love** letter that one young lady wrote to her **former fiancé:** "Dear Henry -- No words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you'll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you ~ so much! Yours forever, Marie. **PS "And congratulations on winning the state lottery."**

It is said that ~ "Love is a ticklish sensation around the heart that can't be faked or scratched."

What does it mean to be alive -- really alive? Jesus was answering a lawyer's question about the great commandment:

"You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. **Do this, said Jesus, and you will live.**"

Why did Jesus say; 'you will live'?"

- The lawyer was already alive physically.
- Was there more?
- Was he missing something?
- Is there an aliveness that goes beyond simply existing?

Jesus made it clear that **new life is possible** through the power of love:

- Love for God,
- Love for our fellow human beings,
- Love for ourselves.

Jesus was saying **that the secret of existence is found in the triangle of love between us, God, and other people!** No one is more alive than when he or she is in love. Do you remember your first experience of being in love? **Poets and songwriters have employed millions of words and melodies to celebrate the transforming power of love.** "It's love, it's love, it's love that makes the world go 'round." Or as a popular song put it some years ago, **"If you ain't loving, then you ain't living"** Poor grammar, but great theology!

**Love is at the center of our lives.** The power of love has driven persons to climb mountains, cross-oceans, start wars, and give up thrones. **Love brings a glow to the face, a twinkle to the eye, a lightness to the' step.** No other force in this world can do that. Withhold love from a small baby and it will be sickly and without motivation to live -- **no matter how many vitamins and minerals the child may be fed.** Without love we die from the inside out. We were made for community, for sharing, for belonging. There is no force in the world that moves us and motivates us **as does love.** Love tells us who we are. Love tells us we belong. **The power of love.** It is love that brings us alive, for it is love alone that affects us in heart, soul, strength and mind. Love demands our all -- our emotions as well as our reason.

Some people just never understand! **There is the story of a certain professor who discovered two doors, one of which, when opened led directly to love and paradise and the other which led to an auditorium where a lecture was being given on love and paradise.** It is said that there was no hesitation on this professor's part. He darted toward the door to hear the lecture.

Some of us are afraid of any kind of emotional involvement -- whether it is **romantic** or **religious.** Some of us have attended enough lectures on love. How about entering thru love's doors for a change? **Do it rather than talk about it!**

Jesus teaches that the secret of our existence can be found in the triangle of love between us, God and other people.

The term "Loving God" has become **inflated misunderstood and abused** in our time. Most of us certainly do not agree with, nor feel attracted to the sickly, sentimental love demonstrated on many television broadcasts -- *usually just before the 800 number is displayed on the screen.*

**I am not talking about emotionalism in religion, all heat and no light. I'm talking about a state of being that claims all we are. Loving God with all our heart, body and soul!**

Remember when you first fell in love? Observers teased you and predicted that you would get over it! Know what? **That is exactly what happened with God's people in the church of Ephesus in the first century. They got over it.** That is, they ceased loving Christ, and after that they were a church no more! **May we in this church never-ever "get over it!"**

To love is to live. To love God is the beginning of life. Here begins the triangle containing the secret of life. Love for God always leads to love for our fellowman. "Who is my neighbor?" asked the lawyer. Jesus answered with the story of the Good Samaritan. For many people such an answer is idealistic – For them, it will not work. Why should we help a stranger with great needs that knock on our door?

The measure of our new life in Christ is our ability to love. To love the person who takes your order for lunch, to love the mechanic who fixes your car, to love the stranger who blows his horn when your car is stalled at the traffic light, to love even the radical who tramples upon you most precious beliefs.

Christian love includes loving even the unlovable. To love is to come alive. Love for God, love for our neighbors, and a healthy love for ourselves. Obviously we are not talking about sick selfish self-love. A healthy respect for one's own uniqueness as a creation of God is essential to new life. When I feel secure about myself, then I no longer have the need to demean or exploit others.

**When I love myself, accept myself and believe in myself,  
Then I can love my Neighbor.  
Then I can also respond to the Love of God in Christ Jesus.**

**AMEN**