

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth

August 16, 2009 - 1 Corinthians 13:6

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Is our rejoicing wasted or faithful? It is harvest time, which for us city slickers means the crops around St. Albert are ready to be harvested. The combines are out in the field threshing the grain. Then when it's full, it dumps the grain. There is a truck that pulls up beside so that the auger can carry the grain from the combine and dump it into the truck box. When the truck is full, it takes the grain to the granary.

One time I was driving the truck for my cousin while he was in the combine. I was driving along beside him at the same speed so that the grain would fall into the truck box. We came to a hill and as I went up I kept going the same speed, but the combine slowed down. So I went beyond where the grain was falling out and it went on the ground. My cousin was mad at me and we went back to try and pick up the grain off the ground. We got our shovels, but the grain was dirty and spoiled.

God gives us a gift to offer others, the gift of rejoicing and celebrating. We get to offer this gift to others around us. There are some great opportunities to rejoice.

Weddings; Birthdays; Graduations; Baptisms; Anniversaries; Touchdowns; Finish Lines; Retirement; Dedications and Parties; they all provide opportunities to celebrate; to rejoice; to laugh and have fun. It's great to celebrate. It's a privilege to rejoice. We need to rejoice when we can because there are way too many opportunities in this world to despair, mourn, cry and suffer.

Most people readily join in on opportunities to rejoice. Most of us like invitations to celebrate. "Come hear this great joke. Come

celebrate my child's wedding. Come honor our friend's graduation. Come cheer on your buddy in the race."

But did you ever think that rejoicing might be inappropriate sometimes? Is rejoicing ever wrong? What do you do when you receive an invitation to rejoice at something questionable? Might there be times when we dump our rejoicing on the ground!

The Bible tells us of times when rejoicing WAS wrong. The Israelites made a golden calf when Moses took too long on the mountain. The Bible tells us they sacrificed offerings to this idol. Then they ate, drank and got up to indulge in revelry – celebration. (Exodus 32:6) But God was not impressed with their rejoicing. By the time Moses regained control, 3000 people were dead.

Another time, there was celebration going on outside the gates of Jerusalem. Three men hung on crosses. The Bible tells us the soldiers, some religious leaders and people who passed by celebrated the apparent end of the man on the middle cross. They taunted, mocked and hurled insults at Jesus. They enjoyed this downfall of their nemesis. God did not approve of this. Jesus even prayed for the forgiveness of the ones taunting him. They did wrong in rejoicing.

Sometimes rejoicing is wrong. It is a truck with a hole in the box. Sometimes we have to stop and think about whether or not we're going to join in with the celebration. But it's not so easy to figure out or live out. Our world contains lots of invitations to rejoice in wrong things. Sometimes, our craving for acceptance is so great that we will join in to get in. "Sure I'll laugh at that dirty joke or listen to the gossip so I can be part of the fun."

Sometimes we might even celebrate something questionable because we think we're showing love. We can think that if another person has found happiness, we should automatically join in the celebration. But what if their happiness is found in something wrong in God's eyes? "I've met the love of my life. He's already married, but we're so happy. We scored that big contract and beat out the competition. Sure we twisted the facts a little but we've all got work for months." Should we celebrate?

We need something to govern our rejoicing, to let us know there is a truck with a solid box ready to receive it. That something is Biblical Love defined by God. He shows us a way to determine when we should say no to rejoicing and when we should say yes.

This comes from the Love chapter in 1st Corinthians. We're nearing the end of the summer and the end of this chapter. We have seen Paul, the author emphasize that great acts done without love amount to nothing in God's eyes. We saw Him describe love as patient and kind. Then we've went through the many descriptions of love. Last week, we saw what love looks like in dealing with evil in others directed towards us. The next description of love can help govern our rejoicing.

So we'll go through this today by seeking answers to these questions: How can Biblical love govern our rejoicing? Within that discussion, we're going to also consider the question how to respond in love when someone we love makes wrong choices. Once we discover how Biblical love can govern our rejoicing, we will look at what we need from Christ to ensure our rejoicing loves.

(Let us pray together).

First we need to remember **the essence of Biblical love**. It is simply love defined by the Bible. In this passage, Paul uses the word "agape" for love. Jesus' actions on the cross redefined this word to mean "a self-sacrificing love for the benefit of others." Biblical love is

not a feeling-based love but a decision to love. It is not a blind love but it's a quick to offer grace love. It is not self-centered but self-sacrificing. It comes not from us but from God Himself. Biblical love goes much deeper than warm fuzzy feelings.

How can Biblical love govern our rejoicing? We see how in the first half of verse 6. "Love does not delight in evil." The English Standard Version puts it like this: Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing." So Biblical Love does NOT rejoice AT wrongdoing. It is not happy when others do wrong or go wrong. If something is wrong or evil in God's eyes, then a person showing Biblical love will not rejoice or delight in it.

Now it seems Paul is talking about evil or wrongdoing done by others. The NIV says "love does not delight *in* evil." That could mean evil in others or evil done by ourselves. But the ESV translates it a little more literally with "it does not rejoice AT evil," the evil we see around us.

If this was Paul's intention, he could be addressing the situation in 1st Corinthians 5. There he writes, "a man has his father's wife – and you are proud." In other words a man was in a love relationship with

either his step-mother or one of his father's wives. The pagans didn't even engage in that kind of wrong living. But it happened in the Corinthian church. This couple came to church and the church took pride in this couple. It seems they even rejoiced in this. Perhaps they thought that by rejoicing with this happy couple, they were in fact showing love to them.

But this was misdirected rejoicing. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5:2 – “shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief (the opposite of rejoicing) and put this man out of your fellowship?” But they rejoiced! When a church or a society rejoices in evil, they're way off track. Romans 1:32 declares this: “Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also *approve of those who practice them*” 2 Thessalonians 2:12 talks about those “who will be condemned who have not believed the truth but *have delighted in wickedness.*” Rejoicing at wrongdoing is serious stuff that does not show Biblical love.

But it's so easy to slip into it. “Did you hear the news about so and so?” Gossip is one of the most common forms of rejoicing in sin. One

Bible commentator writes “Gossips would do little harm if they did not have so many eager listeners. This sin, is wicked, not only because it uncaringly reveals the weaknesses and sins of others, but because the heart of gossip is rejoicing in evil.” (MacArthur). The essence of gossip is gloating over the shortcomings or sins of others.

The human heart left unchecked can find evil in others interesting, intriguing and even attractive. It might be a warning sign if we love horror, crime details and identify with characters of darkness. Or a delight in evil might show up in our entertainment choices or the music we listen to. And when we pass on a rumor that slams someone we can subtly rejoice in wrongdoing.

But how do you respond in love when someone you love does evil? What do we do when someone we love makes choices contrary to God's law? I've heard so much from so many of you. Your loved ones used to walk with Christ. Now they've made choices to walk away. How do we maintain a relationship yet not celebrate unrighteousness? I remember one time we were in a mall and ran into a girl who formerly attended our church. Lori commented on how this girl looked better than she had looked for a long time. We asked how

she was doing. “Great! I’ve moved in with my boyfriend. And we are so happy. We have such great plans!” How do you respond? Great – I’m happy you’re happy. Or “don’t you see how far you are from Christ you idiot?”

There are no 3 easy steps to show love while not rejoicing in wrongdoing. But perhaps we can find a pattern from Jesus’ life. In John 4, he met the woman at the well. She had 5 husbands and the one she lived with was not her husband. Christ exposed that. Yet he didn’t condemn her. He invited her to taste His living water.

In John 7, there was the woman caught in adultery. They brought her to him to stone her. He exposed their hypocrisy and showed her love. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus went to eat at the home of Zaccheus, a notorious cheater. Jesus did not go rejoice in the wealth Zacheus gained by robbing the people. Yet by the end of meeting Jesus, Zaccheus’ life was turned around. Jesus did not rejoice in people’s sins. But He did not reject them either. He called them to Himself. Our task is to direct people to Christ.

Somehow, we must walk that line where we continue to engage them in dialogue; we don’t rejoice in wrongdoing but instead point those we

love to Christ. Sometimes that involves tough love and prayer. But there is some sort of middle road between condemnation/cut off option and the total acceptance/tolerance/celebrating sin option.

Biblical love helps govern our rejoicing. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing. When does it rejoice?

Biblical Love rejoices with the truth. 1 Corinthians 13:6 again – “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.” That means to rejoice when others do right or when right prevails. That love rejoices when others walk God’s way; make choices that honor God and follow Christ.

What might a love rejoicing with the truth look like? It rejoices more in our child’s demonstration of strong character rather than in their good grades, nice clothes or looks. It rejoices more in what our friend learns about God than in what they purchased on a shopping trip. It celebrates God’s blessings with others and the fact that He’s present with us even in tough times. It affirms those who make a courageous stand for truth.

At last week’s Leadership Summit, we heard the President and CEO of Compassion International, Dr. Wes Stafford tell his story. His

childhood experiences helped contribute to his huge passion for children in need. His parents were missionaries in Africa. As a missionary child, he was sent to a boarding school for 9 months of the year. At this school, he and 50 other children endured physical, emotional and sexual abuse. From the ages of 6-9 he kept the silence, fearful that if he spoke, his parents would be shamed. He tells of learning math and averages at school. So he decided to practice averages by counting up the number of times he got beat every week. After several weeks, he discovered he was beaten an average of 17 times a week.

Finally, when he was 10 years old, it was time to go back to boarding school. Just before getting on the plane, he cupped his mother's face in his hands. His mother said "Wes, what are you doing?" "I want to remember your face Mommy. I want to hold on to you as long as I can." Suddenly the floodgates opened. "Mommy, please don't send me back there. They beat us there. They hurt us there. Mommy, don't make me go back." His mother was filled with horror and shock. But Wes was swept away with the boarding call. It was time to go.

He wept on the plane relieved that finally someone knew. But his fellow missionary kids dared not talk to him. They looked at him like a dead man walking wondering what would happen when they found out at the school that Wes told. He broke the code of silence.

While Wes flew, his father and mother took a ship across the ocean to their posting. They were tortured and in anguish about their son's claim. His mother had a breakdown. Immediately upon arrival, his father wrote him a letter to determine whether Wes complained about discipline he deserved or something more serious. All letters were first read by those in charge.

So that evening a special meeting was held. The administrator gave Wes a candle with a wick at either end. He made Wes stand on a chair in front of the whole school. He talked about how Wes had broken the silence and now his parents would be in trouble. Then the man said, "Africans will go to hell because of this boy. He's Satan's tool." Then he lit the candle. "Here Wes, you want to serve both God and Satan. Try it!"

Dr. Stafford then writes – "I stared incredulously as I contemplated what this would mean in just a few moments. . . . My

fear was deafening. As the flames flickered closer and closer to my skin, the children's eyes grew wide. Mr. Edwards looked back at me, showed surprise that I still held the candle, but then continued speaking all the louder and faster.

Suddenly I again found myself. In a brief flash of reality, I saw the great evil that was going on. I was not Satan's tool. I was just a little boy with a broken heart who had tried to be rescued from this evil place. I loved Jesus and was my daddy's partner in ministry in the villages. Mr. Edwards was lying and all of my friends were but frightened little lambs.

I dug deep in my soul and said to myself: "Not this time. They won't win this time! I gritted my teeth. I am not . . . I will not let go of this candle." I could only vaguely hear his words as I watched the skin on both sides of my fingers grow first red and then begin to bubble. In the background, I could hear vaguely "Satan's tool . . . Africans in hell." Now a trace of smoke came up from my fingertips. The flames were touching my skin. "No!" I exclaimed through clenched teeth. "No!"

Just then a first grader in the front row jumped up and slapped the candle out of my blistering fingers. It was over. The meeting broke up as the children rushed forward to hold and comfort me. The children had had enough. They could bear no more. They had recognized evil at last."

As Wes Stafford shared that moment, there was spontaneous applause throughout the church. It was like people everywhere recognize that moment of truth. They celebrated with Dr. Stafford, affirming his decision to stand for truth. That was a moment of Biblical love when many rejoiced with the truth. (You can read the complete story in his book [Too Small to ignore](#).)

God calls His people to offer a love that rejoices with the truth when others do right or stand up for truth. God calls us to figure out that middle ground of living in the world but not being of the world; he ate with sinners and had contact with them but did not join in their sin or rejoice in wrongdoing.

What do we need from Christ to ensure our rejoicing loves?

First, we need Him. We need Christ as our Savior! Christ came to rescue us from a life of misplaced celebration. He came to release us

from the torturous line of reasoning that try to deny God's truth or argue that what used to be wrong is now right or there is no right. He came to save and enable us to offer this kind of Biblical love to the people around us – a love that in a graceful and respectful way, does not rejoice in wrongdoing; – a love that goes crazy with celebration when someone decides for God's truth.

You can receive that rescue by putting your personal trust in Christ as your savior and Lord. You can't trust yourself, your works or your intelligence. You must completely trust Him and the moment you accept His call, God will save you. You begin the Christian life.

What else do we need from Christ to ensure our rejoicing love? We need Him to reprogram our rejoicing patterns. Some of us need to stop rejoicing in wrongdoing. We need to learn to rejoice in that which honors God. Philippians 4:8 lists 8 opportunities to rejoice along with God. "Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." So we need to find out God's descriptions of that which is true, honorable, just, pure,

lovely, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise." Then when we see that around us rejoice in it.

Biblical love does not rejoice AT wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. God is the ultimate giver of this kind of love. He does not rejoice when we engage in wrongdoing. He does not wink at it. But He also didn't leave us to wallow in it. He came up with *the* rescue plan to release us from the bondage of rejoicing in unrighteousness.

He rejoices with the truth in our lives. Every unseen act of kindness you have done; every time you've stood up for truth; every time you've done something honorable; every time you've done something just – or made a decision for purity or made something lovely or done something commendable in his eyes, He rejoices. Last week we learned that the Lord does not keep a record of wrongs once we're covered by Christ's sacrifice. But it seems He does keep a record of rights. The Bible talks much about rewards and responsibilities in the new heaven and earth for Believers. So when you live in His truth, walk in His truth and proclaim His truth, He sees and rejoices and loves.

May the Holy Spirit move among us and make us into a people whose hearts grieve along with God over wrongdoing and rejoice in with God in the truth.