

JJ¹

A friend fails you. Your spouse disappoints you. Your children challenge you. Your parents push your buttons. It's especially these relationships that put you to the test. Love is testing. Love is not always an easy thing for us to do. That is, loving honestly and with a true love—a love that always puts the other person first in everything.

And that definition of love is so very important for us to understand and to cling to especially in this day and age. Real love, God's love, the Christian love is a love that to the world's eyes doesn't always look like love. Real love goes far beyond emotions. It's a willing choice to love and care about someone and to put their best interests first, even if it means doing things you don't want to do, things that upset them, things that serve the other person that might even cause you grief and pain.

It's so very important to understand this because this is not how the sinful nature defines love, and you can see this so very clearly as you look at the thinking and path our culture is taking. Beyond the sinful heart that always loves me first, is the world's definition of love that gives people whatever they want.

We see this in our culture's thinking that is coming to the point of saying that you

can't tell anyone that they're wrong. They say that love is to let people do whatever they want. To the world, love is not testing. Rather, the world says love is accepting, no matter what. The world says anyone can have their own truth. We used to hear that we were to tolerate different views. But now we are told to accept, but the use and definition of that word "accept" is often misused and abused. Many who talk about acceptance now mean that we are to acknowledge a person's thinking and lifestyle as totally legitimate and not speak against, warn or condemn. But if every person can have their own truth, then there is no truth, only opinion. Then every aspect of life, and most importantly God's holy truth and our eternal destination is no different than the differing camps like Ford or GM, Packers or Vikings, Democrats or Republicans.

But this is not how our Lord speaks to us. He doesn't say, "Well, that's just my opinion. Take it or leave it, or even change it. It makes no difference to me."

Where does this all stem from? It comes from a heart that doesn't really want to love and even rejects real love. **LOVE IS TESTING.** It puts you to the test to put others first and their true best interests. And one way in particular that love is testing is that it tests the teachings of this world and especially those who preach,

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

teach, write about and claim themselves to be messengers of God and his Word.

John writes, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ... They are from the world. That is why they speak from a worldly perspective and the world listens to them. We are from God. The one who knows God listens to us, but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. That is how we can distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

God calls on us to have a testing love because there are many in this world who claim to have truth, even God’s truth, and yet speak lies in his name. The way we watch out for false teachers is to put their teaching to the test—the test of God’s holy Word. If what they teach doesn’t agree with what God says, they’re speaking from a different spirit. They’re not speaking from the spirit of truth, but the spirit of error. And it doesn’t matter who that person is. You don’t accept what someone says simply because they seem to know what they’re talking about or have a degree or title like “pastor.” John is telling you to be like the Bereans. Not even the reputation of Paul and title of Apostle was going to

stop them from putting Paul’s message to the test to authenticate it as God’s truth (Acts 17:10-15).

Think of it like this: On a nuclear missile submarine, they always authenticate the message to launch to make sure it is the truth. Imagine what would happen if someone somehow transmitted a false message to launch the missiles and they didn’t authenticate the message! World War III would probably follow with millions, even billions of lives being snuffed out in a matter of hours! Now consider that the Word of God is a message of spiritual and eternal life and death for the entire population of the world! How foolish we would be if we did not put people’s message about God to the test of his Word!

Friends, our loving Lord says there is only one truth—his truth. At the heart and core of that

truth is this amazing and beautiful truth: “God is love. This is how God’s love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

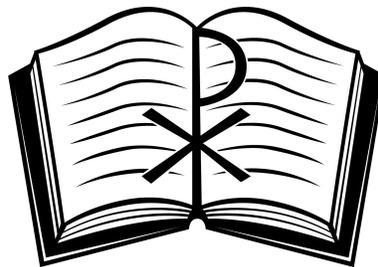
Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross is the center of all of Scripture. Christ crucified



is God's power to forgive the world and he makes it known through his Word and his Word alone. It is God's Word that works in hearts lost in sin and sets them free. It is God's Word and that alone that did the real work at your baptism. It was God's holy Name that marked you as his child, bought with the precious blood of Jesus! It is God's Word that continues to work in your hearts today. It is God's Word that will do all the real work in the Lord's Supper to grant the forgiveness of sins to all those who come properly prepared, according to God's Word.

"Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another."

LOVE IS TESTING. It stands on guard and protects those around you from the false teachings that surround you in this world. God's revealed, written Word is how he has chosen to communicate with us. Why would you want to mess with the only way he has promised to communicate with us? (Jn. 5:24; 8:31; Heb. 1:1-2) And consider this as well, if the heart and core of Scripture is Christ crucified for us, why would you ever want to mess with that either!? Why would you ever want to jeopardize your eternity and that of someone else's just for the sake of human acceptance and peace? **LOVE IS TESTING.**



Love and works of love that are real love come from a connection to Christ through faith. Anything that looks like love but does not have Christ and his Word as the source is only plastic fruit. It's not the real thing, no matter how good it may look on the outside, or how reasonable it may seem in your minds. Real love in God's eyes stands on the truth of God's Word. That's why real **LOVE IS TESTING.** It wants to know and hold on to the truth for itself and for others.

It is on God's Word that we must stand and that alone! Because only there is found the promises of God. Only there is the forgiveness of sins. Only there can there be certainty. Only there are our hearts turned to Christ and his work for us. Friends, let God be God and let his Word stand in your hearts so that his love would fill your hearts and flow out from you as you show that same love to others. Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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