

LOVING GOD

“ If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 Jn. 4:20).

There you have it! This Scripture is crystal clear. If you do not love a brother whom you can see, you cannot Love God Whom cannot see. Loving your brother is therefore essential to loving God. Let us prayerfully consider what is there about loving a brother that prepares us to love God? Remember! John was writing to believers who already had an “anointing” from the Holy One.

Let’s start with the physical world and your own family. When a new baby brother is born he is not always easy to love. He may cry when you want to sleep. He will invariably need his diaper changed when you are busy. Initially, he provides no help and is often a nuisance. Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller’s teacher, offered this insight into the development of a child: *“Every child begins life an eager, active little creature, always doing something, always trying to get something that he wants very much. Even before he can utter a word, succeeds in making known his desires by cries and grimaces. He invents and devises ways to get the things he wants. He is the star performer in his little world; he is the horse, the coachman, the policeman, the robber, the chauffeur, the automobile. He will be anything that requires initiative action. The one thing he never voluntarily chooses to be is the grown up personage that sits in the car and does nothing.”*

It is easy to extrapolate lessons from our physical family. Cain, for example, couldn’t love God because he didn’t love his brother. Joseph, by contrast, was able to relate to God because he learned to relate to his brothers. Obviously, we should not be like Cain (1 Jn. 3:12).

Good soldiers are not trained by easy assignments, and neither are good Christians. Obstacle courses have a purpose, they train us to overcome obstacles. Our loving Heavenly Father ordained families with that purpose in mind. They help us prepare for eternity! By submitting to parents and loving our brethren we are developing character that will help us to be like Christ.

Simon Peter was once a small package of conceit almost completely absorbed with his own importance. Typical of his arrogance was his boast **“that even if all fall away on account of you, I never will” (Matt. 26:33)**. Jesus knew better and predicted his denial on that very night, Peter dared to continue his disagreement with Christ and announced: **“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Matt. 26:35)**. How sad! How childish! The cure for his immaturity involved his brethren. Jesus said it like this: **“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22:31-32)** Self absorbed and immature people can be helped by strengthening their brethren. In this regard, the “only child” is at a disadvantage. Peter, as you know, not only developed into the “Rock Apostle” whose name heads each listing of the 12, he was also an elder who was a shepherd to the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1). Three times Jesus asked him “Do you love ME?” and each time this love for Christ involved feeding the SHEEP (Jn. 21:15 - 19). Peter learned this lesson and wrote to the brethren that when our faith is placed in the furnace, we are somehow empowered to love the God Whom we cannot see (1 Pet. 1:3 - 9).

There are many things wrong with abortion. Not only does it snuff out an innocent life, but it also robs the family of the inconvenience and discipline that enable us to love God. Rivers are crooked because they take the easy way around obstacles, and people get crooked the same way. Remember! The path to God is not crooked, it is straight and narrow!

When a butterfly struggles out of the cocoon it produces a fluid that inflates it’s wings. Without this struggle it will never fly. Whatever struggles you face in your family need not be wasted. By struggling to love those whom we can see, we are strengthening our wings to lift us from earth to the very presence of God!