

Love & Hate

By: Jim Golden

These two words cover a wide range of human emotions and are among some of the strongest and most commonly experienced emotions on a daily basis. Do you believe that it is possible to love someone and hate them at the same time? Well, maybe not at the exact same time, but do you? Well, if you don't then you are probably in one of three categories: very young, deluded or an unmarried hermit. I am neither very young and I hope that I am not deluded, but I am married. To be perfectly honest there have been moments in my marriage when I have absolutely experienced the emotion of hate. Dislike would not be a truthful or honest term. Anyone who has been in any kind of intimate relationship, not necessarily sexual, knows what I mean.

Once we get passed the initial stage of mutual respect and move on to the stage of honest revelation or the "feet of clay" stage we begin to find out that there are things about our wife, husband, father, mother, sister, brother or friends that we dislike. However, because we are in a relationship with them we seem able to balance out the emotions on the scale of time, taking the good with the bad.

In the life of the Christian the word hate is almost taboo. I say almost because Scripture does commend the hatred of evil or iniquity. We are taught that we must love the "sinner" but hate the sin. The problem is that the root of the word sinner is sin and often the line that distinguishes one from the other is too easily blurred. Now what about our relationship with God? Here we move into the areas where angels fear to tread! But, if we are in a meaningful or communicative relationship with God we will, from time to time, experience the "Love—Hate" enigma. Don't worry a lightning bolt is not going to strike you dead, if you have the courage to admit that you know what I am talking about. If that were so I would not be able to write this, I would be dead.

The journey of life alone will produce enough challenges to cause us to experience the emotions that I speak of within our human and divine relationships. Let me give you an example. I heard a man say that God does not care what the truth is He just wants to hear it, so honest communication with Him is on the top of His list. I have come to believe that God would rather hear what you really want to say to Him rather than what you think He wants to hear. I used to tell my daughter that I only wanted her to tell me the truth about herself. If she lied to me about whom she was and presented me with a "package" or "image" of herself she thought I wanted to see then I would love the image and not the child. Is it any less true in our relationship with God? It is a draining experience to live a lie and to know deep down inside, if people only knew who I really was they would probably hate me. Knowing that I am accepted for who I really am by God and my fellow man is a powerful healing force for my wounded soul. My mother used to say what is good for the goose is good for the gander. I assume that means that if it is true for me then it is probably true for you too.

In my life I know that I have tried to be the "good Christian" never asking why God, why? Why did my mother have to suffer for 18 months from cancer, going from a portly woman to a skeleton before she went home to be with you? Why did I have to have half of my right foot amputated and part of my left foot amputated before the doctors realized that I wasn't getting sufficient blood flow to them to heal properly? Why did a loving pastor have to suffer and die from stomach cancer? Why is a woman who loves you, a mother and an incredible artist, a giving, caring person on her death bed dyeing from cancer? Why do we seem to be so impotent against the power of the enemy's attacks of disease that are killing so many in the household of faith? I do not have a problem with someone dyeing. I figure when someone dies

it is just their time to go. What I struggle with so much is the matter in which they die. It is hard for me to reconcile God using disease to take someone home as His perfect will when Jesus already bore our sicknesses and diseases in His own body on the tree to heal us and destroy the works of the devil.

Sometimes I feel that God is being to me the kind of father I was to my children just to punish me. You know the kind of father, one who is never wrong, holier than thou, his way or the highway! He will only talk about what he wants to talk about, somewhat of a task master and never truly able to tell his children how much he loves them personally. The hardest thing about being a child of this kind of father is seeing how much he express his love to those who are not even a part of your family.

Wow, do I still have some unresolved issues or what? I thought all these things were dealt with long ago, but I have found out that unlike God we are not privy to a sea of forgetfulness. It is not easy for us to just take an issue like a perceived wrong or injustice and throw it over our shoulder into this sea, forgiveness is a daily conscious effort on our part until the Holy Spirit has finished the work He has to do in us, fully healing us turning the scar tissue of pain into a badge of love and honor.

How about you? Do you still have some unresolved issues? It is so easy to think that we are being “good Christians” by sweeping these unresolved issues under the rug of veiled, unanswered questions thinking that maybe one day we will know the reasons or that they will just go away, resolving themselves. All the while we are hindered in our ability to experience the thing we need the most, the intimacy of being held in the arms of our heavenly Father’s love, truly experiencing His unconditional acceptance. There are many questions in our lives that will probably remain a mystery, but there is one mystery that I believe God wants to reveal to all of us and that is the intimacy and depth of His love for us, you and me personally. It shouldn’t be a mystery—God loves me, deeply, personally. He is not just love, but He loves ME!

Do you long for this experience to become more than a fleeting moment that takes place in a worship service? Do you desire, as I do, for it to become your moment by moment hour by hour daily reality and not just Scriptural or head knowledge? Something deep inside, almost hidden, tells me that God wants the same thing more than we can imagine. Perhaps we have stumbled upon something that truly matters to Him. If we are to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves then these unresolved, hindering issues must be on the top of God’s agenda for our lives. Perhaps He will give us the grace to embrace His agenda and make it our own. I believe that this inability resulting from our unresolved issues with God is a major contributing factor to our spiritual impotence and recurring sin in our loves.

There is only one thing needful, will we like Mary, choose the better portion and allow Jesus to take these hindering unresolved issues off the back burner of our lives and bring them into the light of His glory? I used to tease one of my son’s about his constant looking at himself in the mirror. I thought, boy he really loves himself. I was raised to think of that as a bad thing. In a sense, that may be true, but equally “bad” and far more destructive is self-hatred. How can we love our neighbors, our God or anyone for that matter if we hate ourselves? We are sometimes the hardest ones to forgive. Only the light of the Lord can expose the depths of self-hatred within us. Only His scalpel can remove this type of cancer from our lives. God is calling us to allow Him to bring resolution to those issues in our lives that spoil the vineyards of our love. It is time for the Bride to make herself ready!

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live! (Deu. 30:19 NLT).