

# **A Study on Cliques and Virtue Love**

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# Table of Contents

<b>FOLLOWING GOD.....</b>	<b>3</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	3
OUR TRUE ROLE MODEL.....	4
THE PROBLEM OF FALSE HEROES.....	6
CLIQUES DEFINED.....	7
DISTINCTION BETWEEN A CLIQUE AND A NORMAL SOCIAL LIFE.....	9
IT BEGINS IN THE HOME.....	9
CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTING AUTHORITY.....	12
<b>WALKING IN VIRTUE LOVE.....</b>	<b>13</b>
UNDERSTANDING VIRTUE LOVE.....	14
RELATING LOVE AND HAPPINESS.....	14
THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF PROMISCUITY.....	16
THE SOURCES OF MOTIVATION.....	19
CONCLUSION.....	20
<b>GOD'S BIBLICAL TIMELINE OF HISTORY.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## **Following God** **(Eph 5:1-2)**

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. (KJV Eph. 5:1-2)

### **Introduction**

Being a “follower of God” is the lofty endeavor set before us. The Lord also asked this of us in Matthew 5:48:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (KJV Matt. 5:48)

This mandate is given as the solution to a life that has been fragmented by arrogance. Paul gives some of the negative aspects of arrogance in Ephesians 4:17-32.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of

redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (KJV Eph. 4:17-32)

In Ephesians 4:17-18, we see that we are not to walk in the vanity of our minds with a 'darkened understanding'. In other words, we are not to walk in 'ignorance' of God's ways. In this passage, he also presents the 'old man' or sin nature. In Ephesians 4:19, Paul teaches that the sin nature gives itself over to 'lasciviousness' or 'sensuality' with 'greediness'. The word 'greediness' is a reference to having a desire to always have more. Next, in verses 20-24, we discover the nature of the 'new man'. Then, in verses 25-32, we learn what the 'new man' practices. Paul states in verse 25 that we are to put away 'lying'. Verse 26 teaches that we are not to let anger outlast the day. Further, verse 28 states that the Christian is not to steal, but instead should work and share with those in need. Paul then continues in verse 29 where he admonishes believers not to speak harmful words but only words that will help build others up. Finally, he finishes this section with verses 31-32. In verse 31, he exhorts us to get rid of all 'bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking' and 'all malice'. Clamor is a reference to angry shouting and malice has to do with harboring hateful feelings. Instead, in verse 32 he tells us we are to show 'kindness, compassion' and 'forgiveness' one to another.

As we will discuss later, we are to avoid subjecting ourselves to all these forms of arrogance by following Ephesians 5:1-2, to be 'followers of God' and to 'walk in love'.

## **Our true role model**

To begin our study, let us do a brief exegesis and afterwards work from there. In Ephesians 5:1 the word 'be' is translated from the Greek verb *ginesthe*, from *ginomai* meaning 'come to be'. The word means to become something. The present active imperative of *ginesthe* means to become something you were not before. The tendential present indicates a mandated action that is not taking place at the moment. The active voice implies that the believer in a state of Christian degeneracy produces the action, the action of becoming something that he is not at the present time. The imperative mood is a command, in which God makes a direct positive demand on the will and the life of the believer in some stage of degeneracy. The imperative mood implies a command, not a suggestion.

Therefore, the command is to become something that is seen in the next words of verse one, the words, 'followers of God'. In particular, the word 'followers' needs some clarification.

The word 'followers' is translated from the Greek noun *mimetai* and means, 'an imitator, one who is like another'. We get our word 'mimic' from this word. So, this noun implies that there is a true role model for all Christians to imitate. This role model is definitely not some false hero image of ourselves or others that we may create in arrogance. Looking in the mirror of arrogance can give individuals a deceitful image of themselves. However, as Christians we should always remember that we do not have to compensate for our perceived inferior attributes by constructing a false image of ourselves. Our sanity depends upon seeing ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, which helps keep us in touch with true reality towards ourselves.

Seeing ourselves in the light of God's grace always makes the difference and overrules everything else, whether it's an inferiority complex to one extreme or a superiority complex to the opposite extreme. Of course, we must permit God's grace to determine our self-image as we always have the option to choose. Yet in arrogance we always create a false image of ourselves, which is often based upon what is popular according to existing cultural trends of the time. However, we need to remember that just because something is popular does not mean that it is right.

Our role model is found in the genitive of relationship from the definite article *tou*, which is used as the possessive pronoun 'your' and the noun *theos*, translated 'God'. *Theos* is in the genitive case and here it is indicating possession. A proper translation should be 'your God'.

Therefore, Ephesians 5:1 should be translated, 'Be becoming therefore imitators of your God'. But is it possible to imitate God? Obviously there is no way we could ever be omnipresent (present everywhere) or omniscient (knowing everything) because we are beings with limitations. Hence, our role model is not to be the deity of the Lord, since this would not only be impossible, but utterly blasphemous. We are, however, commanded to imitate the Lord's humanity as He resided in God's power sphere under the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit.

In light of the aforementioned mandate, it should be abundantly clear that we are not to imitate other believers or other individuals whom we admire. Thus, we do not (as mentioned previously) create a false hero image of ourselves, which our proclivity for arrogance will cause us to do. Observe Romans 12:3, where Paul declares that we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we should:

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than

he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (KJV Rom. 12:3)

## **The problem of false heroes**

The word 'soberly' in Romans 12:3 refers to a sane mind. Self-conceit is actually a form of insanity. Therefore, it is imperative that we as believers and members of the royal family of God have something that is far greater than any image of ourselves that we can create in arrogance. Having a false image of oneself leads to having a false image of others. This is exactly how we end up creating heroes. Arrogance tends to make heroes of someone whom we aspire to be like. According to Ephesians 5:1, the Christian is to have one hero and one hero only. That hero is the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why would we want to settle for anything less when we have the best? The answer to that question can be summed up in the concept and condition of arrogance.

A few years back a survey was administered to young Americans (aged 18 to 24) inquiring as to whom they considered their heroes. By far, most of the responses centered on entertainment or sports figures. Their choices are certainly understandable in light of the tremendous appeal of the money, fame and excitement associated with celebrity. And while there is nothing wrong with appreciating the outward expression of an individual's abilities in the areas of sports and entertainment, it should be understood that this is for our enjoyment and entertainment only---nothing more. Our lives do not undergo lasting transformation as a result of seeing a particular box office hit, or hearing a number one billboard song or even watching some major sports event. Reflect upon our typical response to these diversions: afterwards we go right back to the real world and its mundane, daily routines. And while most people have sufficient sense to distinguish between the human being and the crafted image of any celebrity figure we might be exposed to, the influence of "stardom" is often powerful enough to cause individuals to make heroes out of these images.

Now another question that logically arises out of this discussion relates to the legitimacy of embracing more acceptable role models, such as a respected teacher, a model community leader or perhaps a successful business individual. Once again for the Christian, Ephesians 5:1 tells us to be imitators of 'our' God and Him alone! In the following sections the pitfalls of following other people will be discussed. These pitfalls may be demonstrated by examining the social unit we commonly refer to as a 'clique'.

## Cliques defined

By definition, a clique is a narrow and exclusive group of individuals held together by an accepted set of interests, or by an abnormal loyalty to a particular person or persons. A clique can be broken down into three basic parts:

- The first part of a clique comprises individual(s) who hold leadership role(s).
- The second part is composed of individuals who are close to the clique's leader(s).
- The third part of a clique includes the individuals who are considered the pawns (defined as members who are used or manipulated by the leadership group).

A clique is generally composed of a person in a dominant role and at least one who is placed in an adaptive role whereby any conflict or tensions between the two are removed when their focus is turned toward someone else. For example, this would be a person who needs help in a certain situation and is vulnerable to their influence. Usually, this is someone who needs help in a disastrous situation or the individual may have some real or imagined complaint. Regardless of which of the two it may be, it is nevertheless a complaint in his or her mind. Thus, the person becomes vulnerable to the influence of a clique, which is nothing more than a web that entangles individuals who have these types of problems, simply because within the clique they are able to find a sympathetic ear. However, the solutions that a clique offers are short-term in nature. Short-term solutions only lead a Christian to sidestep the principles that the Bible offers, which are correct and permanent solutions (solutions that don't eventually fail). God's biblical solutions allow a Christian to live a victorious life, which comes only by the Christian using God's problem-solving methods of the confession technique of First John 1:9, and by maintaining an adjustment with God's grace and Word. In addition, the victorious Christian life necessarily involves a consistent preoccupation with the one we are mandated to love, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The short-term solutions used by cliques only offer results within their control, manipulative techniques, or dependency within the clique. Those who lead the clique are in control of those who are following. As a result, the dominant leader ends up counseling the followers, which allows for a steady increase of social dependency

within the clique. Incentives such as flattery, attention and approbation (a pat on the back) are provided. As a result, there is a fear of rejection that becomes stronger and takes precedence over authority orientation toward parents (in the case of children). As a result, children will typically undermine the authority of their parents when the clique takes priority. This type of orientation basically creates a family within a family. The authority of the parents is transferred to the authority of the clique leader; thus, the authority of the parents is undermined.

This same problem occurs in marriage when there is a clique dependency that is stronger than the wife's orientation to the authority of her husband. The result creates a marriage within a marriage. The husband's authority is undermined when the wife's friends take priority over her marriage.

In like manner, a church clique would cause the erosion of authority orientation toward the pastor. Therefore, a church within a church would be created. Take the case of First Corinthians 1:12. Some of the Corinthians believers had developed cliques along personality lines. Paul wrote in this letter that he had received a report concerning divisions in the church. In this case, there were some who said, 'I am of Paul...I of Apollos...I of Cephas...' (1Cor. 1:12).

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (KJV 1 Cor. 1:10-13)

In First Corinthians 1:10-13, it is demonstrated that our dependency should be rooted in the Lord and not in people. However, it should be understood that a congregation is dependent upon the pastor/teacher to indoctrinate biblical principles and to teach believers as individuals.

Of course, another exception in regard to dependency on people is that of children recognizing parental authority and their dependence on parents for their orientation to life. This leadership role of parents is by God's design established in the divine institution known as family. But when there is a failure in this authority orientation, teenagers, young children (as well as single lonely individuals and unhappy wives)

are often victims of cliques. This neglect of authority orientation is the result of not having a personal sense of destiny, tranquility of the soul, and preoccupation with Jesus Christ.

In a clique you will either have your eyes on yourself, on other people, or on things. This is a wrong focus that results in having a human or worldly perspective instead of having the mindset of Ephesians 5:1—that is, having your eyes on ‘your God’, not on people!

## **Distinction between a clique and a normal social life**

We would do well to remember that a clique is simply an abnormal emotional dependence on a group in contrast to having a normal social life among Christians. There is never a true friendship in a clique because true friendship always involves intimacy and advice, as well as encouragement, understanding and communication. True friendship never involves being controlling, manipulative, possessive or codependent. In contrast to true friendship, in a clique the leaders have a lust to control the dependents, and in return the dependents have a lust for approval from the leaders. The two lusts actually feed off each other, the lust of having the power to control others working in conjunction with the lust of needing approbation or approval.

The components of self-esteem and spiritual autonomy (independence) inside the normal social life of a Christian enable us to avoid manipulation and help us to execute God’s plan, having invisible impact. This is the point in our spiritual walk when the Lord becomes our best friend, and is the stage when He becomes our role model. These are the stages of spiritual growth where we remain righteous without becoming self-righteous. We are all products of God’s grace; self-righteousness tends to forget this. This stage of the spiritual life also involves the maximization of one’s spiritual maturity where there is a maximum contentment and capacity for life as well as an expansion of our problem-solving spiritual assets that God has provided for us. This is the stage where the Christian has maximum control of their personal life and circumstances. The Bible calls it being ‘...filled with all the fullness of God’ (Eph. 3:19).

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,  
that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. (KJV  
Eph. 3:19)

## **It begins in the home**

God designed the maximization of the spiritual life to begin in childhood with the mandates given in Ephesians 6:1-3.

Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise), That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (KJV Eph. 6:1-3)

For children, these mandates come with a promise. God uses our adjustment to parental authority to prepare us for all other forms of authority that we will encounter in life. Such authorities would include those found in school, at the job, in law enforcement, as well as authority in marriage.

Notice that the mandate in Ephesians 6:1-2 never commands children to love their fathers and mothers, but rather to obey and to honor them. Of course, true love for father and mother comes in time, but before that happens, there first has to be respect for their authority. It will be that respect and honor for father and mother that will prevent children from judging, criticizing or even being ashamed of their parents. It is this orientation to parental authority that is the basis for social and cultural freedom as well as spiritual growth. Notice that children are mandated to honor parents and not a clique leader that they have appointed as a surrogate father or mother.

Therefore, because of these mandates from the Lord, children are to reject the authority from all sources of clique leadership, which undermines parental authority. This is exactly why the Bible mandates a child not to have any role models except Jesus Christ. From childhood we are to learn to do things as unto the Lord, and not as unto some clique leader, so as to prevent this pattern from continuing into our adult life (Col. 3:23-24).

And whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. KJV Col. 3:23-24

Obedying and honoring parents gives children the highest motivation they can have before actually reaching adulthood. Thus a child develops a sense of honor, integrity and a sense of justice, simply because 'this is right', (Eph. 6:3). The sooner a child learns this concept, the better off he or she will be, as the only true love that exists in life must have its basis in integrity. A child can develop this integrity during their formative years when they are under their parents' authority.

The developmental stages which are most important in an individual's life occur first from childhood, ages one through twelve, and then in adolescence, from approximately thirteen to nineteen years of

age. If there is an improper emotional development during these stages, the results are detrimental, resulting in individuals with excessive social needs. These needs would include having a lust for approval, as is the case with pawns within a clique, and lusts for power and control, as is the case with cliques' leaders. There is a resultant self-esteem when children revere their parents as opposed to some clique leader who is full of flattery and negative attention. Consequently, this gives children their highest motivation before entering adulthood. Likewise, this same integrity from which children honor their parents will motivate these children to say no to things like drugs, alcohol, and sex, as well as prevent them from being controlled by such sins of arrogance that include hatred, anger, gossip etc. From a biblically-based integrity, a child can understand to do something because it is the 'right' thing to do, and also avoid doing things that are the wrong things.

A child has failed the integrity test when he or she begins to be critical, judgmental or even ashamed of his or her parents. Likewise, a wife can also be guilty of this same failure when she undermines her husband, or when a worker undermines his or her boss. As Christians we are mandated to do everything 'as to the Lord and not unto men' (Col. 3:23). We do all things from an integrity modeled after the Lord, which should begin in childhood. A lack of integrity signifies that the individual will not have any capacity to love. Emotions are not love; anyone can emote, but we need integrity to truly have the capacity to love. This is the very reason that most adults do not have any capacity for love, simply because they were destroyed as teenagers by having authority disorientation and getting involved in the lust pattern of their sin nature. When a lust pattern is developed in the formative years of a child, it carries over into their adult lives. Simply put, a fragmented child makes for a fragmented adult.

Therefore, obedience in childhood is the initial development of integrity, which is what gives us capacity for life and love. There is no integrity if a person places a clique or anyone before his or her parents. Young people who possess virtue and integrity in the formative years may sin and fall occasionally, but they will not have the problems of emotional instability that are so widespread today. They will enter adulthood stabilized with the capacity for life, love and true happiness, with the confident assurance of a long life—as expressed in the mandates of Ephesians 6:1-3:

Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise), That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (KJV Eph. 6:1-3)

Verse three lets us know that a child who disobeys and dishonors his or her parents will reap the consequence of a short and miserable life. It is imperative that every child understands these mandates because the child's adulthood is dependent upon it. This is the child's first step to walking in love, as the Lord did from following a virtuous position of integrity and honor (Eph. 5:2).

## **Consequences of rejecting authority**

One of the worst decisions that a person can make in life is to reject parental authority. This is the first system of authority that we are all put under, and maladjustment to parental authority is quite damaging, as our attitude toward our parents will determine whether we ever grow up or not. When there is a culturally predominant trend toward the rejection of parental authority, society is adversely affected, and this is obviously the situation today.

Rejection of parental authority results in an inability to adjust to other forms of authority, such as that of teachers, coaches, law enforcement, management, government and husband. A person who rejects all forms of authority actually has the potential to become a criminal. This condition results in a miserable individual who tries to impose his or her misery on other people.

It is also important to remember that although parents have authority over their children, it is absolutely useless apart from training and discipline. This will eventuate in the child accepting their authority. As a result, the child will develop love and respect for their parents at a later time when they have developed the capacity for it. Otherwise, they will be misfits in society; they will be maladjusted when they enter into marriage, when they become parents themselves, when they work at a job, or whatever other aspect of society they may eventually function in. The responsibility of Christian parents includes not only providing food, shelter and clothing, but also training and discipline in the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (KJV Prov. 22:6)

In order to be properly oriented to life, we have to be properly oriented to all authority. We will be subjected to all forms of authority throughout our lives. No matter how high we rise in life, there will always be a higher authority. This is how God perpetuates humility within us and it is humility that is the foundation of all virtue. Without virtue love as your motivator in life, you will be miserable, unstable, distracted and reacting will be your primary response to life. You will be

distracted by having the demand syndrome and from being disillusioned. You will be constantly frustrated over situations and circumstances in your life. This will be the case unless you imitate the humanity of our Lord and walk in virtue love as we are mandated to do in Ephesians 5:1-2.

## Walking in virtue love

The first word in Ephesians 5:2 is ‘and’, translated from the Greek conjunction *kai*, which is connecting Ephesians 5:1 with Ephesians 5:2. In verse one we’re mandated to imitate the humanity of the Lord and in verse two we are told how to achieve this goal. We imitate the Lord by walking in love as He walked in love to the point of giving Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf on the cross. Let us therefore try to understand the mechanics of the type of walking that the Lord set forth as our example.

The word ‘walk’ is translated from the Greek verb *peripateite*, which is the present active imperative of *peripateo* meaning either to, ‘go or move about; to live’, or ‘to conduct oneself’. The imperative mood, once again, expresses a command from God relative to the will and life of the believer. The present tense lets us know that it is an ongoing action portrayed as occurring in the present time, with no assessment of its completion. In other words, we are to continually keep doing this, as a habit. The active voice implies that the believer produces the action of walking. We have to make the conscious choice from our freewill to continually perform the action of conducting ourselves in love.

The reason for this continual action is because, even after being saved, we continue to possess a sin nature and this means we will continue to sin. Even upon reaching maturity, we will still sin. It will be sporadic or occasional sinning, but still sin nonetheless. For someone to say that believers are sinless after salvation is unrealistic. The Bible declares in First John 1:8 and 1:10 that such a person deceives only himself because the truth is not in him, and he makes God a liar. Thus, we are to continually conduct our lives in the sphere of love.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (KJV 1 Jn. 1:8-10)

## Understanding virtue love

There are many misconceptions that accompany the subject of love, primarily because people cannot accurately grasp the concept that the word truly connotes. What exactly is this thing called love? To ask individuals to describe the concept of love would probably result in a variety of subjective interpretations. This author has heard it defined as being the feeling to never have to say you are sorry. Yet, Ephesians 5:2 calls for the child of God to walk in a specific type of love, and it is imperative that we understand what constitutes this love.

In Ephesians 5:2 the word 'love' is translated from the Greek noun *agape* meaning 'love (primarily of Christian love), concern, interest'; or 'the sacred meal shared by the early Church (Jude 12)'. This type of love is not based on human standards, but on divine standards. It is a love based on God Himself, and is the first step to understanding true love. Our next step is to realize that our love for the Lord is never based on emotions or human affection; nor is it based on any visual attraction. This is obviously the case, since God is not visible.

Therefore, having love for God is based on knowing Him by capturing His thinking; of course, His thoughts are only found in the pages of Scripture. This is the reason First Peter 1:8 states:

Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (KJV 1 Pet. 1:8)

The unspeakable joy described here, and the love for God that's directly proportional to it, are designed to go together. And for the Christian, this happiness is based on the Lord. So it stands to reason that if a Christian is unhappy, that state of unhappiness is linked to (or connected with) their failure to develop love for the Lord, as can be seen in First Corinthians 16:22:

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maran-atha. (KJV 1 Cor. 16:22)

## Relating love and happiness

The word 'anathema' in First Corinthians 16:22 means 'cursed' and 'maran-atha' is an Aramaic phrase meaning, 'the Lord comes'. In other words, the believer who does not love the Lord is under a curse

until the Rapture\* of the Church. The curse is a result of a believer failing to acknowledge that love and happiness are based upon the Lord. Personal love as a virtue is always directed toward God the Father and toward God the Son. As a result, millions of believers throughout the Church Age have lived under this curse. They are in a state of cursing simply because they live by their impulses, which ultimately results in conditions of bitterness, unhappiness and misery.

Associating happiness with the Lord is also how one has a balanced life in relationship to people, values and principles. This points to the reason why Christians have an unbalanced life in these areas. For example, consider the area of romance. One of the reasons we are deceived by people who allege to love us is because their words may be bound in hypocritical and false motivations. Simply put, they have no capacity to truly love. This is the reason it is so difficult to accurately discern the thinking of individuals. It is also one of the many reasons that the Bible prohibits premarital sex. Avoiding sexual intimacy in romance allows for an objective interpretation of the other individuals' motivations and capacities. Sexual intimacy is not love, but an expression of love between one right man and one right woman in marriage (Heb. 13:4).

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. (KJV Heb. 13:4)

The problem is that most of us fall in love based on compatibility, but in the back of our minds we are actually assigning perfection to that person we love. Of course, when our perceived object of perfection falls short of our expectations, we develop a problem with our 'love object'. We end up wondering how in the world we could fall for such a person while simultaneously forgetting or ignoring the fact that we have our own imperfections. This is the arrogance that is pervasive in our sin nature, which corrupts human love and becomes the basis for a staggering number of problems in life. As it turns out, arrogance manifested through lust and sensuality can result in a pattern that contaminates one's ability to experience genuine love and happiness in relationships with other people.

In other words, deriving your love and happiness from the Lord protects your personal love for people from such corruption as jealousy, hatred, bitterness, vengefulness, and even self-pity. Some of the most

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\* *The Rapture* occurs when the Church or Body of Christ is removed from the earth before the seven year tribulation period. See God's Biblical Timeline of History, p. 20.

horrendous acts in human history have occurred as a result of such attitudes. In fact, if you look to the beginning of destructive relationships, many of them started with the words 'I love you'. The core problem is rooted in the fact that the person uttering those words had no virtue since his or her love was corrupted by such attitudes as the ones Paul lists in Ephesians 4:31.

Let all bitterness, and wrath [rage], and anger, and clamour [angry shouting], and evil speaking [slandering] be put away from you, with all malice [desire to injure]. (KJV Eph. 4:31)

All of these factors of the sin nature weaken the quality of personal love and hinders its perpetuation, since without virtue expectations for reciprocation of love will be unrealistic, with an undercurrent of demand. Of course, if the attention is not returned, the reaction is often frustration and disillusionment. Finally, one of the major pitfalls of personal love operating without virtue is promiscuity. Its destructive effects are legion.

### **The destructive effects of promiscuity**

Promiscuity destroys a person's skills of discernment and causes an emotional revolt to occur in the soul. As a result, love is based on emotion, affection and visual attraction, which are nothing more than values based on sensation. When one's values are based on sensation, not only does the individual seek gratification in the area of sex, but also in drugs and excessive alcohol. Such misguided, goal-directed behavior does not lead to happiness, but disillusionment! Consequently, there may be resultant depression, self-pity, and even suicide.

Today, people seem to forget that man has a soul and not just a body. Virtue always emphasizes the soul. There has to be a unity of souls first and this is why God calls for virtue, not sensation! Men and women of virtue will always emphasize the soul and not the body. Emphasis on the body prevents one from ever entering the compatibility and rapport stages of romance. After the attraction stage comes the compatibility stage, when the man and woman are both born-again believers and both live by virtue, not by sensation. This is what Second Corinthians 6:14 is referring to with the command to not be unequally yoked.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (KJV 2 Cor. 6:14)

Once the compatibility stage has been determined, then the two believers proceed to the rapport or relationship stage. This is when a relationship is established, when souls are harmonized. This is the basis for building a marriage on virtue love and the reason (as we have seen in Hebrews 13:4) that sex outside of marriage is forbidden. This is why Ephesians 5:3 also states fornication should not be part of a believer's life.

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; (KJV Eph. 5:3)

Therefore, we will do well to remember that a man of virtue will never take a lady past her own volition in the area of intimacy. Likewise, a woman of virtue should not respond to a man's sexual advances; this is not the right man for her. Remember that being motivated by one's libido does not proceed from virtue at all because such motivation has no conscience and no stability; nor is it rational. Personal love without virtue is unstable and creates a tremendous amount of problems.

Contrary to popular belief, abstinence is a virtuous condition because it protects one from soul damage and from the physical destruction of sexually transmitted diseases as well. Promiscuity and premarital sex prevent one from entering the compatibility and rapport stages of a relationship. Premarital sex abandons the virtue that is necessary for true compatibility and a soul relationship, and also causes the fornicators, who are in a state of deceit, to base the relationship on either romance or just plain lust. A relationship should never be based on sex or on emotion.

Premarital sex also handicaps an individual, rendering him or her ineligible for the role of "the right person" for marriage, simply because there is no understanding of genuine love, which is never sensation-based. Premarital sex also causes difficulty adjusting to one person in marriage, and it contributes to a lack of sexual energy in the marital relationship. This may offer an explanation as to why there are so many lifeless, lackluster marriages today, as well as the prevalence of impotent men and frigid women. Another issue of concern is that sexual diseases often result from promiscuity. Just because "everybody" disregards biblical constraints on sexual behavior (whether exemplified in the movies, on television, at school, or on the job) does not legitimize such behavior. Small wonder the United States' divorce rate has soared to at least fifty percent and is steadily escalating. We have become a society living on sensation rather than on virtue.

Today, sexual intimacy is portrayed as a normal healthy function of life; however, this is only true within the boundaries of marriage. God has designed sexual intimacy for one right man and one right woman within the context of marriage as a beautiful reflection of Jesus Christ and His Church. Sexual restraint might seem impossible in this day and age, but it is entirely possible for the child of God who walks in virtue love. There are so many “loser believers” when it comes to the area of sexual restraint, and because they lack virtue, they are under the curse of First Corinthians 16:22. They are born-again believers destined for heaven, but will spend their lives here on earth living by the curse of their impulses. This is a sad thing when you consider all the wonderful spiritual assets that the Lord has made available to every believer in the Church Age. Yet many miss out on God’s grace provisions because they have wrong priorities. Most believers never learn and understand what they have available in Christ because they simply allow the details of life to take precedence over their relationship with the Lord.

We are called to base our motivation on our personal love for God the Father and God the Son. This is what will insulate us against mental attitude sins and lead to a life of virtue. We can get to the point in our lives where we base our decisions simply on whether it is the right and honorable thing to do. Not only do we know it is right, but we also understand why it is right, as in the case of avoiding premarital sexual activity (2Cor. 5:14).

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: (KJV 2Cor. 5:14)

The word ‘constraineth’ in this verse is translated from the Greek verb *synechei*, meaning, ‘to surround, to control, to hold prisoner, to rule’. This is the love that gives us the proper motivation to be victorious. It is this love for the Lord that is supposed to control or dominate our thinking. This is where we are supposed to derive our motivation. This is what causes virtue to direct our motivations. Otherwise, we will improperly react to injustice and unfair treatment. In return, such a reaction will cause a loss of wisdom, common sense and discernment.

Love for God the Son is supposed to emphasize correct priorities and love for God the Father emphasizes correct motivation, which is a vital part of the Christian life. True motivation is supposed to come from the Lord and not from our impulses or from people. Again, this is what causes virtue to drive our motivations.

## The sources of motivation

Motivation is the part of our soul that provokes our actions, whether good or bad. Proper motivation comes from God's Word in our soul along with being under the filling of the Spirit. This is what produces personal love for God and gives virtue to our motivations. Improper motivation, on the other hand, comes from the lust pattern of our sin nature and living according to Satan's world system. The first promotes our growth and the second hinders our growth; it is up to us to make the choice.

We are products of our own decisions, and good decisions from a position of strength will accept authority. This is how one will develop true capacity for life, love and happiness—possessing virtue. However, when one makes a bad decision from weakness, one will have a problem with authority. Scripture is clear on the law of taking responsibility for our decisions (Gal. 6:7; Col. 3:25; Prov. 22:8; Hosea 8:7).

Be not deceived; God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (KJV Gal. 6:7)

But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. (KJV Col. 3:25)

He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail. (KJV Prov. 22:8)

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up. (KJV Hosea 8:7)

Galatians 6:7 along with the other verses teach that we always have to take personal responsibility for our decisions and actions because our sins have natural consequences in our lives. Be firm in choosing to walk in virtue love as mandated in the Scriptures, and thus find true happiness.

## **Conclusion**

By no means is the mandate to imitate Jesus Christ by walking in virtue love an easy accomplishment. Yet as we have seen in our study of Ephesians 5:1-2, not doing so carries with it an extensive amount of negative consequences. As believers, it is up to each one of us to decide to either conduct our lives in virtue love or to live under the curse of our impulses. I hope this study has emphasized the importance of deriving our motivation from the Lord and not from our circumstances or from people. The variety of alternatives that Satan offers through his world system cannot compare to the system of virtue that the Lord has provided each one of us who are His children. May the Lord bless your efforts as you strive to consistently imitate Him in virtue love; you will not be disappointed.

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# God's Biblical Timeline of History



