

Love on a Daily Basis
FM 18
May 16, 2008

Godly love never fails or ends, so I'm always on the lookout for it. It's like a quarter to a kid on the sidewalk- so there, to be snatched up.

Godly love picks you up but also weighs on you. What can I spend it on? What will I do with it? Sometimes lightly, it flashes with jolts of joy, other times heavily, drenching, soaking, betraying responsibility. Either way, it's glorious, from above.

It doesn't come around that often, especially the romantic strain (once or twice, maybe five times), so we learn to treat it with great respect. Remember Jacob, the patriarch who wrestled in defiance with God. He was felled and crying with joy when pierced by this Godly love for Rachel. God has his ways of making all of us obey him, and such love is a chief arrow in his quiver.

I was trying to think of the defining quality of Godly love and thus Godly relationships. I mentioned it's gloriousness. But to be honest, the flashy light and jolts don't often last. Such love is too intense to bear. Remember the three apostles before the transfiguration. Such love is so glorious that too much makes us sick. Sometimes I feel that way at a vibrant Pentecostal church service, or when a Jew preaches about redemptive suffering. How much of such glorious love can we take, before it's too much of a good thing.

No I don't think glory is the defining characteristic of Godly love. Nor it's intensity. Surely most folks, after a certain age, realize that intensity does not always mean love or more love, but sometimes there's simply more intense people involved.

How about permanence? I think permanence gets a little closer to the essence of Godly love, in that we know that God is love, and that he loved us even when we were sinners, like Hosea loved his prostitute wife Gomer. This is permanent love, that always forgives, even after the divorce or death, or betrayal. Permanence, un-conditionality, comes pretty close to defining the essence of Godly love.

How about generosity- the bounty of God's love? This is real close to the essence of Godly love. Some people like God never stop giving. But we human beings are often poor recipients of such generosity. Such Godly generosity requires a lot of preparation and maturity to receive, so I don't think it can adequately describe the essence of Godly love, although it describes the relational core of all Godly love, and the fact that it's better to give than receive.

Anyway, I never have been satisfied with the above descriptions of the essence of Godly love. So I asked the Holy Spirit: "what is then the principal quality of Godly love?"

Yes, it's occasionally glorious, unconditionally permanent, bountifully generous, but God showed me that the defining quality of Godly love is less abstract and occasional than the glory of it, more rewarding than the theological fact-hood of it's permanence, and less demanding on it's recipients than generosity. He showed me that Godly love is like a hunger that can get satisfied by the closest piece of bread. He revealed to me that the essential quality of God's love in relation to us human beings anyway, had to be one that was easier for us to grasp and accomplish.

The Lord showed me this through The "Lord's Prayer." This "how to pray" model of prayer starts off highly praising God, but it's first petition comes down to our human plane and our most basic biological need, "Give us this day, our daily bread." But man doesn't live by bread alone. Nor is bread our only daily need.

When a man and a woman who share Godly love get married, when guys meet at a small town

McDonald's every morning for coffee before they work eight hours alone, when we inevitably start to care for folks at work with whom we have little in common, the principal quality of Godly love is revealed, the lowly daily-ness of it. The day after day-ness of it. In between the flashes of glory, within it's permanence, below the radar of generosity, there is the daily-ness of it.

Daily love. Mercy new every morning. Love new every morning. When it doesn't seem like that much is going on, Godly love is going on. The daily love that consoles us, grows us up to responsibility, fills in the gaps between glories, amidst the unawareness of it's permanence, during an indisposition to it's generosity. Isaiah 63,9 captures that Godly love, like Jesus, comes down to our daily level: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

Just like we need to eat every day, even when we don't know what we are eating, we need the carrying of Godly love from other people, and from God himself. You hear a grown adult daughter, responsible and otherwise independent, often say "I talk to my Mom every day, about whatever." About stuff perhaps she can't even remember at the end of the day. This is the stuff of Godly love, because it was part of our bearing up that day nonetheless. In him we live and move and have our being. In him we are lovingly carried each day.

This is where God wants us to live every day, on the receiving end of our daily bread and His daily love. Give us this day all we need and all we hardly know how to ask for, and might not be able to describe, and often can't remember, though we need it just the same. Give us this day our daily love.

He wants us to praise and petition him every day. He knows what we need, but he wants us to talk about with him anyway, and to call him just to keep the relationship going. There's something great and both human and Godly about keeping relationships going on a daily basis.

Perhaps the roughest thing about modern suburban and American market culture, is the lack of daily love and connection we have with each other. We spend a lot of time connected to our cars, our commute, our daily work, our computers, our pets, and our leisure pursuits and less time connected to God and the daily people who could matter to us, who could be the subjects of our Godly love.

Given this daily-ness of Godly love, perhaps we are too choosy about whom we love daily. We have no problem loving dogs and tending to their daily needs. Yet dogs don't nearly exhaust our ability and willingness to love as much people do. But I'm going to hold out for Godly people love rather than get a pet store charge card.

We often wonder why we lose touch with the people we love? Why is that? Because love isn't glorious or permanent or generous? No, it's all these. Because we were wrong and it wasn't love after all? No, it was. We lose touch because there are daily alternatives at hand, even at the convenience store, or at work, or church. Oh there's the intranet and the phone, and the answering machine, and all the rest, but I'm not convinced technology is going to cure our daily need for an immediate exchange of Godly love person to person.

In our faith fellowship and at work we often meet people and experience great moments and periods of new and glorious love. Although some folks now skip this stage for fear of messing up commerce, such love is not to be feared. In time it can even become part of our daily love, received in peace. Love your neighbor as you love yourself, love your God daily because both of them want to love you back.

And when folks move, or move on, or situations change, I know of only one way by which the daily-ness of love can be kept. This was taught to me by a faith mother who calls me when

God prompts, and vice versa. And every time I talk to her, I ask are you praying for me? And she answers "every day." And she really does.

That's Godly love, every day love. "Give us this day our daily love."