

LITTLE CHRISTS



A stranger comes to your fellowship trying to find out whether Jesus Christ actually exists.

"I've heard about Jesus Christ, and I've read about him, but I want to find out whether he is real. So I've come to you folks who claim to know him."

He sits and listens to us sing our praises to Christ.

"That's very nice," he says to himself, "but how do these people know that they're not imagining these things?"

He hears us pray in the name of Jesus. *"What a wonderful thing!--if it's true,"* he sighs.

The teaching describes to him what Jesus Christ will do. And again he is moved. *"But how can I be sure that all these things are really so?"*

There is only one thing that will prove to this stranger or anybody that Jesus Christ really exists.

It is not the way we pray --- it is not the way we sing --- it is not the way we preach.

IT IS THE WAY WE LIVE.

Suppose somebody came up to you and said, *"I've got a big brother who's a giant twelve feet tall. My big brother can pull up trees by the roots. He can hold an automobile in one hand."* Would you believe this person if he himself were only four feet tall? But if this enthusiastic stranger were himself eight feet tall, then you'd say, *"Show me your brother!"*

The only way you can prove to anybody that you are the little brother, the follower, the disciple of Jesus, the Messiah....

.... is to carry his nature, to live the way he does.

The reason Christianity has so little authority in the world these days is because in too many places Christianity is nothing but talk.

- They talk brotherly love ... but to taste some of their brotherly love, you've got to belong to the right social level, have the right income, and the right shade of skin.
- They talk faith... "Faith will do anything" but their lives are saturated with worry. They worry about losing their job, getting sick, about the impression they're making in the eyes of other people.
- They talk forgiveness ... but their churches are torn by strife, envy, jealousy, resentment.

People out in the world are sick and tired of religious talk.



They want to see the real thing.

- They want to see evidence of the nature of Jesus Christ in you.
- They want to see brotherly love in your living.
- They want to see your faith in action.
- They want to see a forgiving heart.

I don't care when you say you were saved.

I don't care how many visions you've had or how many times God has spoken to you ...

.... They won't believe your testimony until you live like Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther says that when a man or woman becomes a follower of Jesus, that person is a "little Christ" ... a miniature of his Master.

They may not be perfect as the Lord, but they bear a family likeness. There is something about them that tells you that they are really related to Jesus Christ.

Now the secret of becoming a "little Christ" is wrapped up in a single word:

LOVE.

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1 John 3:16)

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8)

“Isn't it enough that I'm living a moral life?”

- The person who is looking for Jesus Christ doesn't have to come among us to find people who live moral lives. There are thousands of people outside the Body who are living moral lives.

“Isn't it enough that I give to charity and help in the community?”

- Fine! But this doesn't prove to the stranger that Jesus Christ is alive. Thousands outside the Body give to charity and help in the community.

“How about the fact that I read my Bible and say my prayers?”

- Keep it up! But remember that there are thousands of people who read their Bible and say their prayers but fail to manifest the life of Jesus Christ.

Here's the question, and we must be very honest:

Can someone who is looking for Jesus Christ find that love in our fellowships?



The love of Jesus Christ is different from natural human love in three ways:

- 1. It is a love that goes out of its way and never looks for something in return.**
- 2. It is a love that is sensitive to the broken-hearted.**
- 3. It is a love that thrives on the impossible.**

ANY STRANGER WHO COMES INTO A FELLOWSHIP AND FINDS THESE THREE THINGS PRESENT WILL FIND JESUS CHRIST.

It is a love that goes out of its way and looks for nothing in return.

The Samaritan was on his way to Jericho. He was trying to get there early so he could sell his wares in the market. He had a family to support and obligations to meet. But when he sees this wounded Jew by the side of the road, he changes his plans completely. He forgets about all the things he had planned to do and devotes himself entirely to this half-dead soul. Not only does the Samaritan lose a night's sleep and a day's work, he reaches into his pocket and pays the bill for the afflicted man who belongs to a race that despises Samaritans.

Notice, too, that when the Samaritan goes on his way, he doesn't leave a note saying, "Here's where I live. When you get well, if you want to reward me just send it here.""Here's my phone number. Some day you can do something for me." When the wounded man woke up, he didn't even know who saved his life. And it didn't matter.

- That's the kind of love that Jesus Christ has for us.

We'll go out of our way too if it looks like there may be a reward, or if he may be in a position to pay me back some day, or at least if he'll show some appreciation. Oh but how difficult to go out of your way to help a person who won't even say, "Thank you."

Yet this is the love that will convict hearts and reveal Jesus as Lord..

It is a love that is sensitive to the broken-hearted.



Every day of your life is like a trip on the freeway. There are hundreds of cars ahead of you and behind you moving along at maximum speed. Every so often you see a car by the side of the road, disabled, left behind. Who cares?

On the freeway it may not be legal to stop every time you see a stalled vehicle. But in life, this is exactly what we are commanded to do. We are to turn aside from our own way and minister to the broken-hearted consistently.

"I have come to heal the broken-hearted," said our Lord at the outset of his ministry.

This is what he did. And if we are his disciples, we will do the same.

That lady down the street from where you live whom nobody likes. She walks to the grocery store with her nose in the air and people say she's a snob. But if you have the love of Jesus Christ in you, you will immediately recognize that beneath her aloof exterior she is hiding a broken heart.

- You will not despise her.

There's a man where you work who's forever bragging. Nobody likes him. If you have the love of Jesus in you, you will recognize that his bragging is simply a means of concealing a broken heart...

- And your attitude will be different.

There's a kid at school who's really weird. Everybody laughs. If you have the love of Christ in you, You will weep with him in your heart because you know the anguish that he experiences behind that expressionless face.

- You will not laugh. You will weep with him.

It is a love that thrives on the impossible.



Notice how often the word "compassion" in the Bible is connected with an impossible situation.

"I have compassion on the multitude because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat."

What's the sense of having compassion when the people are hungry?

What can you do for them?

....Then he takes five loaves and two fish.

A woman is bringing the corpse of her only son to burial and she is weeping. Jesus had compassion on her and went to her and said, "Weep not." What good is compassion in a situation like this?

"Young man, I say to you, arise!"

A leper cries to Jesus, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean." And Jesus, moved with compassion, reaches out and touches him... "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And the man is healed.

When we are faced with an impossible situation.....

.... We "conserve" our love, we hold it back.

Why waste it?

That guy's hopeless!

She'll never change!

He's too far gone!

The love of Jesus Christ is at its best when things look impossible.

The more hopeless a person appears, the more you love him.

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.

**Let your love be genuine....
Let your love be like Christ's."**

---Let it!

You don't have to make it ... just let your love be like your Lord's. Your love will be like his, if you want it to be, because Jesus Christ is alive and at work in you.

And he is in our midst, as we serve together in his name.

- To help us to think like he thinks.
- To form us into his very likeness.
- To send us back into the world as "little Christs."

Tell him in your heart right now that you want to be transformed into his likeness.

"Lord, I confess to you that I have been calculating and cold in my love. I've been selfish. I've held my love back from others. I've given it only to certain select people. But I want to be like you. I want to be able to go out of my way and look for nothing in return, to be conscious of the brokenhearted people I brush by every day. And to be able to love those who seem so helpless to me."

If you are willing to let his compassion rule your heart, the Spirit of the living Jesus, who loved you and gave himself for you, will transform you indeed into a "little Christ." Your heart will burn with a love which does not come from you. And people simply by dealing with you in daily life, will know that Jesus Christ is real, and that he is alive in you.



Message and Prayer: Richard E. Bieber 2015
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