

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

July 8, 2007

Christianity, in a word

by David King

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments . . . are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10).

If you could take the entire religion of Christ and boil it down to one word, what word would it be? This passage, and many others, clearly identify that word as **love**.

Love is the foundation of our religion because love is the dominant characteristic of God. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 Jn. 4:7-8). It was love that moved God to sacrifice His Son for us, and provide a means of forgiveness for our failures (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:4-6; Rom. 5:8). He extended this love to those who were His enemies, not His friends. He demonstrated that love in the most dramatic fashion possible, despite our unloveability.

It is that unconditional magnanimity of spirit that followers of Christ are expected to imitate. We are to love one another, despite our imperfections and shortcomings (Col. 3:12-14). We are to love even our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). Paul's great soliloquy on love (1 Cor. 13:1-7) focuses almost entirely on how love behaves in the face of inequality and injustice. Love is a powerful force for good in a world that is dominated by hate. Christianity is based squarely on that principle.

Condensing the religion of Christ into a single word brings clarity to a couple of questions that face modern man.

First, this foundation of love is what makes Christianity so distinctive from the other religions of the world. Islam, for example, can be summarized in the word "submission" (in fact, that's what "Islam" means). The history of Islam, and current events dealing with adherents of this faith, illustrate the practical effect of building a religion on a foundation of submission. "Submission" usually means "submit or die!" The practical result is a life, even whole societies, built upon coercion, rather than freedom. The Christian emphasis on love offers a positive alternative to this religion of forced compliance. Christianity is not merely one alternative among equals; it is a superior faith built upon a better foundation.

Second, a healthy understanding of the role of love in our faith can help us make correct decisions in some of the complicated dilemmas that we confront in life. The Bible does not attempt to provide detailed guidance in every aspect of our lives. It does, however, give us broad guidelines to help us make decisions—most of which are based on the principle of loving others. We may not be able to find the exact answers we're looking for in the Bible, but we can almost always develop a good sense of what helps or hurts others.

Love can be abused and misused, it's true. But if we are careful to define love as God has defined it, and practice it accordingly, it will bring good to a world that badly needs it.