

# UNIQUE & UNIFIED

## THE CALVARY CHAPEL DISTINCTIVES

Part Four of a continuing series on the Calvary Chapel Distinctives. This issue includes *The Supremacy of Love* and *The Centrality of Jesus Christ*. This article was edited by permission and condensed from Calvary Chapel Distinctives by the late Pastor Chuck Smith. All Scripture is from the King James Version (KJV) unless noted.

### The Supremacy of Love

**By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.** JOHN 13:35

Without love, all the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit are meaningless and worthless. **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal** (1 Corinthians 13:1). Paul says that there are those who place a heavy emphasis on speaking in tongues, and who look at that gift as the primary evidence of the infilling or baptism of the Spirit. But if those same people don't have love, then speaking in tongues is meaningless—like a noise made by hitting a cymbal or triangle. It's not proof of anything.

All our doctrinal orthodoxy and understanding of the Scriptures are of no value if we don't have love. Though I understand the great mysteries of the Godhead, the sovereignty of God, or the responsibility of man, if I don't have love, all my understanding is worthless. If I'm just getting in people's faces and working to make them see and believe my side, then my doctrinal purity profits me nothing.

I've come to the conclusion that it's more important that I have the right attitude than the right answers. If my answers are wrong, God can change them in a moment by the revelation of His truth. But oftentimes it takes a whole lifetime to change an attitude. Remember that the next time you get into an argument over some doctrinal position or issue.

God's supreme desire for us is that we experience His love and then share that love with others. Jesus said, **A new**

**commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another** (John 13:34). That's a big order. As we minister to a fellowship or a group—whether it's a home Bible study or a church of 10,000 people—we need to make certain that one of our major themes is love. That love of Christ needs to be demonstrated by our own actions, attitudes, and life. As Paul said to Timothy, **Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity** (1 Timothy 4:12b). Constantly seek to be understanding and compassionate, seeing people in and through the compassion of Jesus Christ. Put yourself in the other man's shoes, in his life situation.

Sometimes there are people who irritate us with their mannerisms or certain characteristics. However, many times the traits we dislike about ourselves are the same ones that we absolutely abhor in others. We've come to tolerate and live with those traits in ourselves, but when we see them in others, we can't stand them. Get to know those people and understand what's irritating them. You can't truly minister to anyone if you don't feel compassion towards them.

How many times do we read in the Scriptures that "Jesus was moved with compassion" when He saw the needs of the people? He understood the need because He had compassion. Therefore, we must seek to understand. Jesus said to His disciples, **Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain** (John 15:16a). One of the fruits of the Spirit is love. He has chosen you to bear this fruit.

### The Centrality of Jesus Christ

**For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.**  
2 CORINTHIANS 4:5a

One of the important characteristics of Calvary Chapel is the centrality of Jesus Christ in our worship services. We dissuade any practice or behavior that would distract

people from focusing on Him. It's important that we keep Jesus Christ as the central focus and keep distractions to a minimum. When distractions do take place, we deal with them and, if necessary, publicly talk about them.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:29, **No flesh should glory in his presence.** I wonder if we realize just how serious a matter it is to try to bring attention to ourselves in the presence of the Lord during a worship service. Do we really want to distract people's attention away from Jesus Christ and draw it to ourselves?

In the Old Testament when Israel had completed the tabernacle, Moses gathered the people to dedicate it and begin offering sacrifices. Aaron was in his priestly robes, as were his sons, and the whole scene was all in order according to the plan of God. Then suddenly, the fire of God was kindled on the altar. All the people saw this sign of God's presence among His people and broke forth with great shouting. Then the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, took unauthorized fire and put it in their incense burners. They started to go in to offer this incense before the Lord inside the Holy Place when Scripture says that fire came down from the altar and consumed both men (Leviticus 10:1-2).

It's my belief that Nadab and Abihu got caught up in the emotion and excitement of the moment. Perhaps they were seeking to demonstrate to the people their positions as priests and how important they were. As a result, they

were consumed. You want to be very careful about such emotions that don't stem from God Himself, and the kind of service that doesn't originate with God. It's an endeavor to draw attention to the instrument rather than to the Master.

We see this in the early church with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Here again is an attempt to draw praise and glory to the individual. They had sold their property and brought a portion of the proceeds to the church, but they pretended they were giving everything. I believe this was an attempt to draw the praise and awe of the people, who would then say, "Look at that. They're giving everything to God!" when in reality they were holding back.

We all like that kind of attention. We like it when people think we're spiritual. Be careful! Our flesh is so rotten. It revels in people thinking that we're more spiritual than we really are. Sometimes we purposely try to give off this impression, and I think this has been a great hinderance to the church.

We really need to be cautious about creating an aura around ourselves and loving the adulation that comes from people. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, they were zapped because they drew attention and glory to themselves—glory that should have been drawn to the Lord. God doesn't want to share His glory. Don't allow distractions. We want to keep Jesus Christ as the central focus in worship. ↩

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