

THE CHOSEN WILL KNOW YOU BY THE FACE YOU WEAR AND THE LOVE YOU SHOW!

If I were to show you two full-faced photos of famous people, let's say of Shakira and Beyonce. How could you tell the two people apart? Would you know them by the face, the smile, and the hair or from the process of elimination? You're thinking, "Don't be silly! Nobody would ever take those two people for look-a-likes". However another person might say, "They aren't the same, they don't even look alike". Well they are different, one is Hispanic and the other is African American, so they aren't the same.

That may be true for some people in the world, but for some others, say about one in every 50 people, distinguishing faces is very difficult to say the least, if not impossible. Because these people suffer from a disease or documented disorder called Prosopognasia, but because that's such a big word and quit a mouthful to pronounce, we will call it "face blindness", which it is often referred.

There is a documented case in Stockholm, Sweden, where a woman is one such sufferer. She can hardly describe her mother's face and struggles even to pick out her own face in photos or in the mirror without facial contractions. She has been known to lose friendships because she cannot recognize them. They have concluded that she is stuck up, she's ignoring them or that she is self-centered and arrogant. While in fact, they look like strangers to her, in the state of her condition. People with this condition can see eyes, noses and mouths as well as anyone else can, but somehow they lack the ability to recognize a set of facial features when they next see them. They just don't realize faces.

The term Prosopognasia comes from two Greek terms prosopon meaning "face" and agnosia "non-knowledge". It is believed that 5 million people in the United States alone suffer from this disorder, which can be inherited and for which there is no cure.

We have two examples of face blindness in the first century and we know it certainly had not been diagnosed at that time. The New Testament gives us a very clear example of it. As we look at Luke 20:14 and 24:16 on the first Easter Sunday, we see Mary Magdalene crying in the area next to where Jesus was buried and had risen again on the road to Emmas, two followers of Jesus were walking when Jesus joined them, and according to the scripture they were not able to recognize him. Their eyes were kept from recognizing him. Only later when he broke bread before them, did they realize that Jesus was with them.

The scripture says," Their eyes were such that they should not know him." Of course, they were seeing the resurrected Jesus for the first time, so maybe that accounts for their problem of face blindness. But before Jesus was resurrected and when he was among the disciples he alluded to a kind of recognition problem that the world could have for which Christians are responsible. In his conversation with the disciples at the Last Supper, Jesus told them that he loved them and that they should love one another. John 13: 34

In fact, he called that a “new commandment”. However, in one way it was not new at all because for centuries it was read in the book of Moses, Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t contradict Jesus.

Yet, there was a newness about what Jesus said, for he intended that his followers’ love for each other should be a beacon of their identity. They were to be that light which would signal to other believers, who they were and not cause a conflict about their intention true consciousness or belief. They were to be seekers of the way, the truth and the light. Then Jesus said, “By this way everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”. (v.35).

Although in other places in the BIBLE, Jesus talked about loving neighbors and loving enemies, here he is saying that acting compassionately toward fellow believers is the way that people outside the church will know that those with this love are his disciples, by the light and love they transmit. 1st John 4:7

That is a positive way to state it, but consider the flip side. Jesus says, “it’s possible for Christians to live in the world without being recognized as Christians”. To bring it right to our own day, Jesus’ new command means that if the world can know we are Christians by our love for one another, then the world can also fail to recognize us as Christians if we don’t love one another. The world can have face blindness when it comes to distinguishing disciples from everyone else. 1st John 4: 11

It has been said, if we don’t love one another, the world has every right to conclude that we’re not Christians, not disciples and that we know nothing about God.

While the conclusion might seem strange, it can and is usually reached by our actions or inactions as Christians. Love and the unity it attests to is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark can the world know that Christians are disciples and that Jesus was sent by the Father to bring this light and truth to the world. Is there some way that we can contribute to this face blindness?

How is that? Well the first is that the practice of loving one another is not limited to Christians. It goes without question that there are those who claim no allegiance to Jesus who also behave lovingly towards colleagues, friends, co-workers, family members, lodge buddies and other groups of which they are a part as well as to strangers in need. And many more people in the world at large hold loving one another as an ideal and even giving it lip service.

“...What the world needs now, is love, sweet love. It’s the only thing that there’s just too little of...” This song is an example of such lip service. There are some differences in distinguishing Christians from others by their love because we live in a society that honors love for one another even if they don’t always practice it.

Another reason for the world’s face blindness is that we can’t always grasp the depth of love that Jesus was and is calling for among his followers. Loving your enemies of course is

desperately difficult and loving neighbors is often hard work so it seems that by comparison, loving our fellow church members should be a snap, but in truth it is very difficult and very hard to do. Sometimes it is devilishly hard to love those who are very close at hand but never lift a hand in love or friendship because of past hurts, they cannot except true love, with no agendas attached, all a person wants is just to have Christ love for them and they still cannot trust. The hurts are so deep, and they refuse to let them go, look at those who hurt people because of mistrust, hidden agendas, and control issues.

The last reason for the worlds difficultly recognizing Christians by their love for one another is that Jesus set the bar very high for relationships within the church. He said, “Just as I have love for you, you also should love one another”. (v. 34)

When we look at ST John, we see two very significant themes.

1. Jesus glorifying God/ God glorifying Jesus at once. That Jesus is GOD.
2. Loving friendships/loving one another Jesus teaches us what love is, how deep love is and when you love there is no fear; because perfect love cast out fear; fear has torment. He that has fear is not made perfect in love. 1st. John 4:18

We see the very heart of John’s gospel is that crucifixion is glorification. Because it is ascension, the lifting up or explanation that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus says that now the son of man has been glorified. Judas’ betrayal is a key turning point in Jesus’ path to glory, his glorification. “If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me.” John 12:32.

He is lifted up. So what kind of face do you wear? He is lifted up. So what kind of spirit do you emit? Good or bad. Trusting or distrusting. Do you show a loving and kind inter-spirit? The love of Christ. Lose your anger, lose your hate, and lose your demons. They are there you know. Jesus Commands that we love regardless. Many church congregations offer social services and outreach to the poor or outsiders, and yet they forget to foster love for one another. They fracture and divide over minor issues. The order of service, the kind of worship, the music, the sermons, the programs, solos , the colors of this group or that group, what to wear and how to decorate for something.

Think about it, on a smaller and more important scale, family members who interact lovingly with the world are sometimes incapable of loving each other at church because of some conflict. The loving friendships among Christians, which Jesus Christ encouraged is not, a bad place to start. Stop seeing what should not be there and begin to see Christ’s love, not the worldly love or love of the world that will get you sent to hell.

GOD would be pleased to hear us singing, Jesus loves us this we know because the Bible tells us so. But what about we love one another because Jesus told us to do so, or we love one another because our HOLY SPIRIT told us to do so.

By this, the world will know that we are his disciples. All too often, Christians think that their identity is bound only to what they believe. I am a Christian because I believe in XY& Z.

Though belief is a key part of every New Testament book, the works of love are also. “You will know them by their fruits.” Matt. 7:16.

Love is a by-product of the fruits that we bear. What kind of fruit are you bearing? We as Christians are not always known by our fruits, but by our lust and unhealthy relationships in a worldly manner. So many things are happening in the world today, until we are sometimes afraid to say the word love, or show love for fear that it may be misunderstood. Jesus understood that problem. Nevertheless, he commanded us to and let me remind you to love and if necessary to pay the price proving that love like he did, no matter what others might say or do. It is our duty to imitate the love of Jesus Christ. When we refuse or fail to show love that we grieve his spirit, which teaches us to follow Jesus Christ in the way of love.

Gandhi once observed the following “I like your Christ, but I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.” This judgment stings us because of its truth. Therefore we as Christians today must struggle to regain the same ethos of love, which cause an ancient observer to say of early Christians “see how they love one another and how they are ready even to die for one another”.

In John 13, there are some other things happening let us look briefly Jesus had just washed the disciples feet and sent Judas off to inform the Jewish leaders of his whereabouts, given them the Last Supper, and gone out to pray, waiting for the haters to arrive and he still treated them with love.

Why are we so surprised that people don't love one another look at what is happening everyday in such places as Baghdad, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, the West Bank, Darfur, the Sudan and Northern Ireland.

Children of God are suffering and dying daily because of a lack of love, why should we be surprised that it happened in the United States too.

We need to remember that the church is the answer to these problems; and while we see in scripture that the disciples went fishing, it wasn't for pleasure. It was to find Jesus. We must remind Christians that they have the power to show what true love is all about and that they have the face of love. We must remind Christians that they must develop a spine and backbone. They must use that voice to spread love. We must develop a true Christian love for all of our fellowman. Be a positive example, not a misunderstanding.

We must remind Christians to not forget to love their children too. If that means saying no to them sometime so be it.

Jesus told his disciples to feed his sheep, to love their neighbors, to love their enemy, to love one another as you love yourself. The problem is that many people don't love themselves. Examine yourselves what do you find? Do you find love in your heart? Enough to go around to others, you have been given an order, get to it, stop stalling, Jesus Christ is expecting results,

you owe him that much. The chosen do not need, the lost and misguided children of God are the ones who need to be told. God is loved and that HE loves them too. John 3:16

Let your light so shine that men will see it and glorify the FATHER who are in HEAVEN. Amen. Thank you LORD. PRAISE THE LORD, Church. Letting your face, your heart and your spirit show your love for the FATHER, SON and the HOLY SPIRIT is my prayer for you. Amen. 1st. John 4:

7-21, tells us about what love is and what love does and the results of love through Jesus Christ. No one can see love unless they see it fleshed out in those who know the invisible GOD through his Son, JESUS CHRIST.

Let us look back at Jesus one final time as we come to a close, HE is:

- Perfect love born for us and to us
- Perfect love growing up among us
- Perfect love taking abuse for us
- Perfect love dying for us
- Perfect love who could redeem us,
- Perfect love ascending for us,

Perfect love for us the HOLY SPIRIT.

AMEN.

Now with the HOLY SPIRIT men will know you by the face that you wear and the love that you show because we know that GOD loves. The truth of this and the joy we show is because it is precisely GOD who has this Great power over the absolute cycle of life and death. Yes GOD has had the last word. THE opened the book that contained the curse of death and put it to sleep forever. No the enemy did not Praise the LORD for all of His Wisdom that is why we know that GOD loved us before we loved HIM and did not intend for us to be lost to HIS glory forever, Thank you Father for teaching us that love is what we need to see you again and love is the key to your KINGDOM. Praise GOD all you saints, AMEN! AMEN! For HE is truly WONDERFUL - THE MIGHTY GOD. HE is truly worthy to be praised. Keep love in your hearts and love on your lips. Never forget to Praise the LORD our GOD. AMEN. Until next month may the GOD of our life continue to bless and keep you in safeness. Rev Nichols