

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" ---- Volume IV Number 2

Valentine's Day and Real Love John 8:2-11

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 38th email sermon in a series we are sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This was the very first MM sent, going out in January of 2002 when our list was much smaller. This message could be appropriate as a Valentine's Day sermon or Sweetheart Banquet devotional. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, or use components of it!

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Valentine's Day and Real Love John 8:2-11

"There was once a shy young man who had never had asked many girls out on dates. So a friend approached him one day and said, "Hey, I've lined you up with a great date for Saturday night. It's all set "

"Who is it?" the shy young man asked. It turned out to be his cousin Mary. He had never met her and immediately responded, "Oh no, I'm not going on any blind date."

"Hey, don't worry about this one," his friend said. "Mary is a terrific girl - and trust me, she's real pretty. But if you don't believe me, I'll tell you how to get out of the date if you don't like the way she looks. This is what I do: I go to the girls house to pick her up, and when she opens the door, I check her out. If I like what I see, then great, we're all set. But if she's ugly, I fake an asthma attack. I grab my throat like I'm choking and scream "aahhhhgggg". When the girl asks what's wrong, I say, with a raspy voice, "I'm having an asthma attack." So we have to call off the date. Just like that no problem.

The shy young man thought about it. He still wasn't sure but didn't want to appear scared so he agreed. Besides the whole scam seemed easy enough if he had use it.

So the big night came. He went to pick up Mary at the house. He knocked on the door and she opened it. He looked at her and to his surprise, his friend was right. She was beautiful! He stood there not knowing what to say.

She looked at him for a moment, then grabbed her throat like she was choking and screamed, "Aaahhhhgggggg!"

Chances are you've been rejected by someone at some time in your life because for whatever reason you didn't measure up. You didn't drive the right car, have the right job, or mix with the right people, and the list is endless. God doesn't look at us that way. When he looks at us, he thinks we are beautiful. He accepts us just the way we are. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." God wants us to have a heart like his - one that reaches out and loves all people, regardless of their appearance. Let's use this Valentine's Day to look at God's love and learn how to reflect His love and acceptance. Here are three paramount truths from this passage... (message continued below this special announcement)

ARM QUICK FACT -- A NEED YOU MIGHT FILL

Do you know of a minister who is retiring or a church library with duplicate volumes or the need to "slim down?" ARM needs books.

ARM routinely sends "care packages" of new and good used books that chaplains can add to their prison library. The inmates love to check out and read various Christian literature. Lately, our supply is GREATLY diminished. Could you donate books with sound Christian teaching to this need? Sorry, but dated material like Bible school quarterlies, "Standards," and "Lookouts" are not helpful for this need. The chaplains need durable books -- hard or soft cover -- that can be repeatedly checked out by the inmates. College Press and Standard Publishing books are very popular -- especially the "What the Bible Says About _____," the "Bible Study Textbook Series," and "13 Lessons on _____" series.

Please 'media mail' or UPS (NO COD's please) books to ARM, 3605 No. Main, Joplin, MO 64801, or call 1-800 CALL ARM for more information. Thanks so much!

1. TRUE LOVE DEMONSTRATES PATIENCE TOWARD SINNERS! 4-7

How many sinners in this passage? We don't know. There were at least three...one woman caught in adultery, and two Pharisees... at least.. it's plural. Here is my point, Jesus was patient with sinners, whether adulterers or the self-righteous... whether immoral or hypocritical.

Don't get me wrong, Jesus had no patience with SIN. BUT HE HAD LOTS OF PATIENCE AND MERCY FOR SINNERS. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. AS LEIGHTON FORD ONCE SAID, 'JESUS LOVES YOU THE WAY YOU ARE, BUT HE LOVES YOU FAR TOO MUCH TO LET YOU STAY THE WAY YOU ARE.'

2. TRUE LOVE DENIES ONESELF THE RIGHT TO IMMEDIATELY PUNISH! 7-11

THE WOMAN HAD BEEN CAUGHT IN THE ACT: JESUS could have leveled punishment right there: *Lev 20:10 "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife-- with the wife of his neighbor-- both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death."*

BUT HE CHOSE NOT TO BRING PUNISHMENT TO BEAR THAT INSTANT. SO ALSO WITH THE HYPOCRITES! Aren't you glad? YOU OUGHT TO BE, YOU COULD HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEAD --AND SO COULD I --- YEARS AGO IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE MERCY OF GOD!

3. TRUE LOVE DECLARES THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN! 11

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." Verse 11 MAKES IT VERY CLEAR THAT JESUS CALLED SIN 'SIN' AND HE WAS NOT TOLERANT OF HER CONTINUING IN IT!

There are those who complain that Christians dwell on sin too much. Have you ever thought that there is a very good reason for this? What is the root cause of all problems in the world? Sin. What is the one thing that keeps us from having joy and an abundant life in Jesus Christ? Sin. What creates misery and guilt and depression and anger and bitterness and all the other problems we've been discussing the past few days? Sin.

SO when it comes to prostitution, perjury, or perversion, we must hate sin. When it comes to sodomy, sadism, or stealing. We hate sin. When it comes to adultery or idolatry we must hate sin. If it's bitterness or bestiality, or if it is homosexuality or hypocrisy, we hate the sin. BUT WE LOVE AND SEEK TO WIN THE SINNER. AND WE CAN'T SALVAGE THE SINNER IF WE FAIL TO PROPERLY OPPOSE THE SIN. Christ's love for the woman was only powerful because he simultaneously

HATED THE SIN THAT WAS KILLING HER SOUL AND SPIRIT!

So we must act. So we must love. So we must oppose sin. True love allows no less.

CLOSE: A few years ago at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. They all turned around and went back. Every one of them. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better."

All nine linked arms and walked across the finish line together. Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves.

What truly matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course. In the end, helping others win makes us TRUE WINNERS! NO COMPROMISE ON SIN, BUT LOTS OF MERCY FOR THE SINNER. THAT'S TRUE LOVE!

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"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

42,370 Bible courses have been sent to prisoners in 2004 -- 116 per day on average! A new prisoner/student is being enrolled every 24 minutes of every day!

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