

I will love you from a distance?

What does one really mean when a Christian says to another, "I will love you from a distance"? I'm not referring to empirical data by which one measures the physical distance between two people but rather the spiritual distance that has come as a result of an attitude towards another. Perhaps one has offended the other and the other refuses to forgive the offender. For whatever reason, they have grown apart and mutually agree to not be in the presence of each other. Is this "distant love" the kind of love that Jesus commanded (**John 13:34 ASV**)? When Jesus said, love one another as I have loved you, he was speaking to the community/family of believers (i.e. Christians). Therefore, in the context of family, at the very least, we should have the kind of love for each other that parents have for their own children (i.e. "PHILEO Love"). We have our children's best interest at heart. We will deny ourselves to make them happy, and protect them from all hurt harm and danger. We do not seek to be apart from them but to be close and affectionate as we would be to our best friend. Likewise, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep (**John 10:11 NKJV**)." He also said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one (**John 10:27-30 NKJV**)." Jesus did not command us to love from a distance. The type of love he requires is the same kind he has for us. Jesus has forgiven us of all our trespasses and He requires us to forgive those who have offended us. Remember when Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (**Matthew 18:21,22 NKJV see also Luke 17:3,4, Matthew 18:15-18**). Jesus is attached to us; so much so that when we offend one another we also offend Christ (**1 Corinthians 8:12,13 NKJV**). Likewise, the kind of love that Jesus requires is that we be attached to one another; not apart from each other.

Secondly, the word "distance" means "apart from" but Jesus taught that we should be "**one**." He said "May they all be **one**! Even as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, so let them be in us, so that all men may come to have faith that you sent me. And the glory which you have given to me I have given to them, so that they may be **one** even as we are **one**; I in them, and you in me, so that they may be made completely **one**, and so that it may become clear to all men that you have sent me and that they are loved by you as I am loved by you (**John 17:21-23 BBE**).

Therefore, when we say to our fellow believers, "I will love you from a distance," we are not in the spirit of **oneness**, but moving toward a spirit of separation which is the spirit of the enemy and the plan of Satan to divide the children of God. Ultimately, our goal is to be Christ-like, to love unconditionally (i.e. AGAPE Love) which not only provides a platform for Christian growth but also attracts the unbeliever to the kingdom of God. **06-02-2016**