

Madison Heights Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)

 149 Main Street  
Madison Heights, VA 24572

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## MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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### Practicing the Love of Christ

I grew up Roanoke where I was a member of a church that emphasized living a life as dictated by Jesus. They put a high value on the Bible and taught me to live my life by the word of God. The preaching that I was exposed to was Bible based with sound doctrine that emphasized peace and humility. There was no creed, no judging, only a commitment to follow Christ.

When I moved to Lynchburg I experienced a much different environment. We all have some degree a preference for some scripture over others. I came from an environment that emphasized love, peace, compassion, and mercy and moved into an environment that preached the condemnation of sin, shame, blaming the sinner, and pointing fingers at others. I have always believed that preaching should be scripture based. It should not be twisted to suit the wants of the speaker or the audience. The Gospel should always be interpreted as truthfully and objectively as possible.

Jesus focused on love while the world rejected him, hated him, and killed him. In his letter to the church in Philippi, the Apostle Paul, teaches about love. In the introduction he states that his prayer is that their love may overflow more and more. By stating that this is his prayer for them, he is demonstrating its importance. He really wants this for them, it is his hope, his dream, and he wants it so very much it is his prayer. His wish for them is that they will have love and this love will be overflowing more and more.

As we study the scriptures we gain more knowledge and insight. It has a compounding effect, the more we learn the more we want to learn more. Paul's desire is that the audience of his letter gains knowledge and insight as they learn the gospel of Jesus. The love of Jesus is demonstrated by his tremendous act of love – the sacrifice on the cross. Our love for one another is one of the most important lessons taught to us by Jesus. Love is demonstrated in our desire and ability to care for the needs of others.

The question of scripture interpretation is a matter of focus. People prefer certain interpretations but focus on what they value. When I was in Martinsville, I was talking with a man that said he didn't mind war because war is in the Bible. I did not have the opportunity to discuss his reasoning. I appreciate the rare opportunities to engage in discussion and initiate reflection. However, I find that people with dogmatic attitudes are not open to intellectual dialogue. Supporting a war of aggression is being more like the Romans that crucified Christ than being a follower of Christ.

The Apostle Paul wrote his letters while he was in prison. He could have chosen to speak on the harshness of his given situation. However, he chose to offer pastoral advice - the audience is to conduct their daily living after the model of Christ. Paul realized that contentment is found in being of one mind and in full accord, in love.

It is a whole lot easier to judge someone than it is to practice the love of Christ. When I moved to Lynchburg I heard that it is a sin to listen to Rock and Roll records, dance, and smoke cigarettes. And I heard a number of things that God hates. The brand of judgmentalism was not about me, it was about the attitude of the speaker. People judge you not according to who you are but according to who they are. We are to live in a manner that is worthy of the gospel. Live your life and conduct yourselves in a manner that is worthy of Christ.

Thank you,  
*George*