

I LOVE YOU, MAN

There has been a common beer commercial, the particular brand I choose not to remember, that must have been successful since it spawned several sequels. It portrayed a distinctly nondescript character who was trying to mooch beer off his father, his brother, his girl friend, anyone who had the beer. It was clear that his conduct was motivated 100 % by self centeredness. He truly cared only for himself and his thirst. His approach to the others was a mournful, somewhat convincing cry of "**I love you man**". I recently saw a man wearing a T-shirt with this slogan printed on it but also something else. I only caught a glimpse but it said something about about Jesus being the light of the world. **I thought that this was wonderful.**

We are approached all of the time by advertisers, merchants, and media who begin with an attempt to convince us that "I love you man". At least they serve up attractive, convincing people who, with an appearance of utmost sincerity, try to persuade us that they care about us and they have a product that will, without doubt, improve our lives. We have all built up walls against such attacks but the advertisers build continually more subtle ways to scale our walls.

Another aspect of all our lives are the politicians who lie out of all three sides of their mouths. They are trying to convince people who are on opposite sides of every question that they, the politician who is speaking, will always do just what they (both of the opposite sides) want. . Using half truths, quarter truths, and little or no truths they speak in, around, and through issues until we are lost in the maze of their rhetoric. Experience has taught us, no matter what political persuasion we hold, that there is a grand gulf between promises and performance. Yet, their basic stock in trade is to convince us that "I love you man", or at least that they spend many sleepless nights planning and working to improve our lives.

This onslaught continues with the "Media". News anchors, writers (this one excepted, of course), and talk show hosts all work diligently to gain our confidence by appearing to be TREMENDOUSLY concerned for our well being. **They are not, of course!! They are concerned with their own well being period.** It is foolish to imagine that they, who profit so mightily and become powerful by influencing the gullible public, are concerned even in the slightest,

about people whom they have never met. Yet, their basic line is "I love you man".

In religion however, things are entirely different. Or are they? In most of our Christian churches there is at least some emphasis on "Agape". Unconditional love. We preach it, we teach it, we discuss it, and some of us even believe we give it. It has been the experience of many, that the love given by churches and the people in the churches, is **anything but** unconditional. Many have been shown warm and sustaining fellowship in congregations and have honestly believed that this love was unconditional --- until there came some significant doctrinal dispute. The dispute does not have to be related to anything important. It could be over such silly things as the rapture. The rapture produces rupture if I am a pre and you are a post and the other guy over there is an a millinealist. Churches have been split and built over just such issues. **This is no basis for loss of fellowship** -- surely God will do whatever He wishes, regardless of how we believe. The same has been true in our lifetime, and continues today, regarding the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" and the use of the gifts of the Spirit. Lives have been wrecked, churches torn apart, and great strife and enmity spewed forth over these things. Was the love which was first shown unconditional? Of course not.

All of these things, and more, have conditioned us to have strong doubts and reservations when Jesus says "I love you man". We have never been shown unconditional love by anyone except, perhaps our parents, and many of us did not even receive that. Many do not really accept that Jesus loves us unconditionally, though we commonly profess that we do. Usually parents, children, husband, wife, pastor, etc all demand certain responses from us in return for the things they do and the affection and relationship that they give. It is almost inevitable that, down deep in our hearts, we should feel the same about Jesus. He will love us if-----. He will love me if I am good. He will love me if I keep His commandments. He will love me if I am active in His church. He will love me if -----. We have become so infected with the lies and deception of the enemy in the areas previously mentioned that we have an almost constitutional inability to believe that Jesus Christ loves us with an unconditional love, Agape.

He does however!! I can not love you in that way, I have tried. Your mate can not love you in that way, they also have most probably tried. Only God can -- and to His praise and Glory ---- He does! He loves ALL MAN. Some will not believe and there is a dire consequence to their unbelief but God loves them ALL . Some believe enough to become born again but not enough to gain peace and allow Jesus to live through them, but He loves them ALL. Some have great faith leading to deep fellowship and warm intimacy with Him and, He loves them ALL. In every case, for every person under heaven God has stated the truth that

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