

Finding *Renewal* in the Love of God

Unit 5: Claiming the Life in Renewal through Sacrifices of Love

Study Questions

In 1978, psychiatrist Scott Peck wrote *The Road Less Traveled*. He had not totally settled on Christianity at the time, though he would have described himself as “spiritual.” Thus his book, a primer on the “true” meaning of love, approached its topic primarily from lessons learned during years of experience while practicing psychiatry. I have often wondered if writing the book drew Peck closer to making a commitment to the Lord. As I read his “discoveries” about the essence of love, I often felt that I could have supplied him with the appropriate scripture to back up his suppositions—many straight from the pages of 1 John. Yet between the lines of the book, one could easily tell that experience, not scripture, represented the ultimate authority. The truths he explained came from insights fully—if not exclusively—his own. By the time he wrote his second book five years later, all that had changed. In fact, Peck **was** baptized two years after the publication of *A Road Less Traveled*. He wrote, “After many years of vague identification with Buddhist and Islamic mysticism, I ultimately made a firm Christian commitment — signified by my non-denominational baptism on the ninth of March, 1980....” Somehow, God had found a way to testify to this seeker concerning the essence of true love, about commitment to God, and obedience to His Word. Peck’s book, written totally from a position outside scripture, defined true love as extending one’s ego boundaries to include another, thus giving oneself to the spiritual nurturing of another. There can be no love without sacrificing oneself.

1. Read 1 John 3.16. How does this passage define “real love?” Make a list of several ways we might be called upon to “give our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

2. According to 3.17, how might a believer express her “real love” to other believers?

When a believer fails to express such love, what does John say about that person’s relationship to God?

3. Elaborate on John’s judgment of the person who fails to express “real love” to her brother or sister (as seen in 3.17) in light of 3.20.

4. What is needed in addition to speaking about our love for one another according to 3.18?

5. How do both the Father and Son model such active love (see 2.1-2 and 4.9-11)?

6. The opposite of loving God and loving one another is to love the world and the things in this world. What are three indications that we love the world?
 - a. Wanting...
 - b. Wanting...
 - c. Being...
7. Examine these texts: 1.9, 2.1, and 2.29, and 3.7. What is the common element found in each of the beings described in these texts?
8. Consider 3.10, 4.7, and 4.19-21 in light of 3.1-2. Why would it be both normal and necessary for the child of God to love her brothers and sisters in Him?

9. What can be learned about sacrificial love in each of the following texts?

a. 2.9-10

b. 2.19 in light of 2.16

c. 3.1-5

d. 3.9 in relation to 3.11-12

e. 5.16