

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-3 God is Love

Dayo and Maduka, walked through the open-air market of their village. The boys were on their way home from school. It had been hours since they had eaten the small lunch that the school provided. Both were hungry. They looked longingly at the various foods for sale, but neither boy had any money. The sun was high in the sky and the vendors began packing up their products. Most shoppers had come earlier in the day, before the heat had set in. One of the vendors had begun packing loaves of bread into bags. She would try to sell the remainder the next day in a village up the road. For now, she was distracted from what was going on around her, as she focused her attention on taking down her stall. Dayo nudged Maduka and whispered, “Distract the bread lady and I will grab us two loaves.”

Maduka stopped and looked at his friend, aghast, “I will not help you steal, Dayo. That is wrong.”

Dayo whispered intensely, “Shhhh. Be quiet. We are hungry and she will not miss two small loaves of bread. Now help me.” Dayo demanded.

“I will not help you steal, Dayo.” Maduka said. “I will not bring shame to my father.”

Dayo shook his head in disbelief. “No one will ever know,” he pleaded.

Maduka looked into his friend’s eyes and then replied, “But I will know. I love my father too much to disappoint him.”

In this story, Maduka showed great love and respect for his father. This love kept him from doing wrong, in spite of his hunger and the pressure from his friend. Maduka and his father had a very close relationship. He knew that if he stole something even as small as a loaf of bread, that it would deeply disappoint his father. This disappointment would hurt their relationship. And to Maduka, maintaining a good relationship with his father was more important than feeding a hungry stomach.

What kind of relationship do you think Dayo had with his father? We can imagine that if asked, Dayo would also say that he loved his father. But Dayo was willing to risk bringing shame to his father and family merely to satisfy a momentary hunger. Do you think that Dayo truly loved his father?

It is the nature of love to desire relationship. In the olBi year 1 course, *God’s Plan*, we learned that God is love. God’s love led him to create the universe, the angels, and then finally, to create mankind to become his children. All human beings were meant to be his children, in loving relationship with him. That was his plan. That was his purpose. All his relationships are based upon love. But true love demands that the relationship is one of choice. Love that is forced or required is less than perfect. And since God is perfect, his love is perfect, and his loving relationships must be perfect. It is impossible for God to have a relationship based upon

selfishness, pride, or anything else. But since the fall of Adam and Eve, mankind has had a difficult time with relationships.

King Saul had two daughters, Merab and Michal. Now it had been promised that whoever killed Goliath, the giant, would be given one of the king's daughters in marriage. And so, some months after David had killed Goliath, King Saul gave his younger daughter, Michal, to David as his wife. Michal loved David. We can imagine why. He was young, handsome, and a national hero! King Saul had placed David over the fighting men. It was obvious to all that the hand of God was upon David. He was successful in everything he did. This actually made King Saul jealous of David. He would send David out to fight the Philistines, hoping that he would die in battle. But David always returned victorious; and the people cheered for him all the more (1Sam 18:27-30).

The years would not be kind to the marriage of David and Michal. They would be separated for many years. King Saul kept trying to kill David, but the king himself eventually died in battle and David ascended to the throne. Michal was returned to her husband. But the time apart from each other had hurt their relationship. Neither had communicated with the other. From her actions that followed, we can see that those difficult years had also broken whatever relationship she had had with God.

The time came for David to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, his capital city. The ark was the most holy item in all of Jewish faith. It was a box a little over a meter long and about a half meter high and wide. It was covered inside and out with Gold. Gold rings were placed at each corner so that long poles could be run through the rings, allowing the ark to be carried. The Ark of the Covenant represented the very presence of God. To David the Ark of the Covenant represented relationship with God and he desperately wanted to bring it back to Jerusalem.

His first attempt ended in failure. Instead of having the ark carried by Levites as the law required, he attempted to bring it into Jerusalem on an oxcart. When the oxen stumbled, the ark shifted suddenly. One of the people walking alongside the ark reached out and touched it, so that it would not fall off the cart. The man was instantly struck dead by God. David and all of Israel suddenly realized the awesome holiness of God. David had tried to do the right thing in the wrong way. This was not acceptable (2Sam 6:3-7).

Three months later, David again decided to bring the ark into Jerusalem. This time he would move the ark as the Law required, using Levites to carry it with poles inserted through the golden rings. David planned a huge celebration for all of the people to be a part of bringing the ark to Jerusalem. Animals were sacrificed, trumpets were blown, and people danced in the street as the ark slowly made its way into the city. On this day, David would give all glory to God. He removed his crown and all of his kingly robes, and wore only a simple sleeveless garment called an 'ephod.' David joined in the celebration, dancing with all of his might, as an act of worship unto God.

Now as King David led the ark into the city, his wife Michal was looking out of the palace window. She saw the king leaping and dancing before the ark and she despised him in her

heart. When David returned to bless his household, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him, saying, “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!” (2Sam 6:12-16).

David replied to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.” It was at this point that the relationship between David and Michal became completely broken. Her love for him had become open disdain. For David, his relationship with God took precedence over his relationship with his wife. She had already broken her relationship with God. Her disdain for him was also a disdain for God. This was unacceptable to David. He would allow her to remain in the royal harem, but he would never have intimate relations with her again. The Bible says that she had no children to the day of her death (2Sam 6:21-23).

Michal’s love for David had grown cold because of the years they had spent apart. During those years they had no relationship with one another. Love requires relationship. And maintaining a relationship requires love, as well as respect, a sharing of values, fellowship, and communication. Without such relationship, the love is unfulfilled, and in the case of mankind, leads to love becoming something else. This happened to Michal. For her, the end result was sorrow and loneliness.

The lesson is **important** because it explains the nature of love and how it requires relationship. Our love for God also requires that we maintain our relationship of love, respect, obedience, and communication with him. Trying to be called a Christian—at a distance and in name only—is not the same as having a relationship with God. It is empty, one-sided, and unfulfilled. Anyone can call themselves a Christian, without knowing God.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God is love, and his love is perfect. His perfect love desires a perfect relationship with mankind. If we live our lives loving God with all our hearts, loving the lost as ourselves, and loving each other, we will be living in God’s image and character as he planned.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1 It is the nature of love to require something. What does love require? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said, “Love requires relationship,” you are correct.

2. Who was King David’s first wife? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said that Michal was David’s first wife, you answered correctly.

3. What caused Michal’s love for David to slowly change? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said, “The years that they were apart and out of relationship,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to examine your own relationship with God. Do you spend time daily, talking to him in prayer and maintaining your relationship? Do you set apart

time to meditate upon what he means to you? Find another Christian and have an open discussion about God, his love, and what true relationship with God means.