

# The LOVE Test

## “Do You Rejoice When Others Fail?”

Part 6

### Scripture Reading

*“And I will show you a still more excellent way.” (1 Corinthians 12:31)*

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”*

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; **it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.**”*

### Prayer of Blessing

#### Introduction

Have you ever secretly rejoiced in the fall or failure of another person, politician, business owner, or sports team?

Can I be honest with you? I have!

When it comes to competitive sports, few things bring me greater satisfaction than a North Carolina loss. Seriously! I loathe the Tarheels from North Carolina. As a diehard Wake Forest fan, my heart has been broken far too many times by the reprobates from Chapel Hill. As a result, regardless of the sport, I love to see North Carolina lose. I pull against them every chance I get. I pulled against them last night in their Final Four game against Villanova. I will pull against them Monday night in the National Championship game against Michigan State.

And...if they lose to Michigan State Monday night, I will celebrate. I will revel and bask in their fall from glory. I will go to bed a happy and peaceful man. I will wake up Tuesday morning with a smile on my face and a skip in my step. Not only will I bask and revel in Carolina's defeat, I will rub salt in the wound of all my mourning Tarheel friends by celebrating on their Facebook pages.

I know that sounds mean, heartless, and utterly unloving, but I'm just trying to keep it real this morning. When I say that few things bring me greater delight than watching the Tarheels lose, I really truly mean it.

## **“Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing...”**

Now of course, when the Apostle Paul writes that agape **“love does not rejoice in wrongdoing,”** he obviously doesn’t have sports teams in mind. To think this way would trivialize the significance of what Paul is actually talking about.

What Paul *is* talking about is people.

Wrongdoing literally means wickedness, evil, and injustice. Thus, Paul is literally saying – “Supernatural God-love does not rejoice and gloat in other people’s sin and failures.”

Have you ever gloated in someone else’s failure or sin?

Paul is talking about the business owner who secretly rejoices in the tax evasion indictment of a competitor down the road. He’s talking about the high school girl who rejoices when her archrival gets cut from cheerleading tryouts. He’s talking about the Republican who revels in the public moral failure of a Democrat – and vice versa. He’s talking about the salesman who secretly delights in the demotion or termination of another salesman who was discovered padding his numbers. He’s talking about the prognosticator who basks in his prediction of a couple’s divorce coming true. He’s talking about the brother who secretly celebrates when his big sister gets caught in a lie by their parents. He’s talking about the pious Christian who gossips about another Christian under the guise of a prayer request.

I’ll stop there, but the list could go on and on and on – couldn’t it. The vast majority of us have fallen prey to this warped and ungodly attitude toward people.

Honestly? We have a natural proclivity for enjoying those things the Bible would define as unrighteousness and sinful – violence and war, crime, sexual immorality, political corruption, salacious news and gossip, and Hollywood scandals.

Why do you think grocery stores across America put magazines like *US Weekly*, *The National Enquirer*, *People*, and *Star* in their checkout lines? Why do you think major news networks like FOX News, CNN, NBC, ABC, and CBS spend the vast majority of their time and energy reporting negative stories – stories of unrighteousness, sin, crime, greed, and corruption?

The answer is simple and sobering. People, including Christians, have a natural disposition to enjoy other people’s failures, problems, faux pas’, and sins.

Just this week, I was reading the news when I came across a story regarding former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich. The headline read – **“Ex-Illinois Governor Blagojevich to be Indicted.”** Do you know what my first reaction was? *“It’s about time!”* I was happy. I rejoiced in Mr. Blagojevich’s failure. I’m not proud to admit that to you, but it’s the transparent truth.

My natural response wasn’t to mourn for Rod Blagojevich. My first response wasn’t to pray for him, his wife, and his children. No...my first response was to rejoice. At that moment I

realized something – I had an agape deficiency in my life. My response to one man’s sin and failure was void of God-love.

### **Why is it that we enjoy other people’s failures, problems, and sins so much?**

First of all, **we have become so anaesthetized by media that we actually find sin entertaining.** I know that stings for those of us who profess to be Christians, but it’s true. Sin no longer offends us like it should. Sin doesn’t disturb us anymore. Before we know it, we’re laughing at and enjoying things that at the very same moment grieve the heart of God.

Second, ashamedly, **other people’s sin makes us feel better about ourselves.** It’s true! If we were honest with each other, we would admit that there’s something secretly satisfying when another person fails. We watch people suffer the consequences of sin; we watch them endure public humiliation; we watch their public and private worlds crumble to the ground, and instead of sympathy and compassion filling and pouring out of our hearts – we succumb to the sin of pride and self-righteousness. We bask in our spiritual and moral superiority (or so we think), all the while forgetting the countless times we’ve sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Third, **we just absolutely love being right.** We will jump at any chance we can get to rebuke and correct another person. We revel in the opportunity to pluck the speck out of our brother’s eye, while at the same time neglecting the beam that is blinding our own eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)

Fourth, and most significantly, **we’ve forgotten the holy and gracious character of God.** When we rejoice and bask in another person’s sin and failure, we are delighting in the very thing that offends and grieves God the Father. God is holy. God is righteous. God is sinless. God is love. When we secretly or publicly rejoice in another person’s failure and sin, we are proving our lack of love for God. We are proving that we have a warped and ungrateful understanding of God’s holiness as well as His grace. Not only that, but we’re revealing our hard-heartedness toward the consequences of sin. Sin produces nothing but harm, brokenness, pain, and interrupted fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Can you imagine if God loved us this way?

- Can you imagine God sitting on His majestic throne enjoying our sin? Can you imagine God reveling in our struggles with sin, habits, addictions, and failures?
- Can you imagine God watching our sin and failures and secretly enjoying our suffering, public humiliation, and crumbling personal and public life? All because it makes Him feel better about Himself?
- Can you imagine God reveling in the words – *“I told you so!”*
- Can you imagine God not being offended and grieved by sin?

God wouldn’t be God if He treated us the way we treat each other. If God acted this way, He’d be nothing more than self-absorbed tyrant. The good news is this, the Bible portrays the love of God in a completely different light. God doesn’t rejoice in our sin. God doesn’t revel in our wrecked personal lives. God doesn’t arrogantly point His finger and say – *“I told you so!”* God’s love is all-together different. God’s love is radical. God’s love is life-changing!

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Report Card

When I was thirteen, I made the huge mistake of lying to my parents about my report card. To say that I was scholastically challenged in biology would be a huge understatement. I hated biology. Biology just never clicked with me – not even in college. Well, on this particular report card, I made a “D” in biology. I was petrified to bring home a report card with a “D.” So...I lied, and lied, and lied to my parents about my report card.

My parents would ask, *“Toby, have you gotten your report card?”* I would respond, *“Nope! I don’t know what’s going on.”*

A week would pass by and my parents would ask me again – *“Toby, did you get your report card this week?”* *“Sure didn’t dad! I can’t figure it out.”* Trust me, this was blatant lying – and my parents knew it. They knew I’d received my report card.

Finally, my dad looked at me and said, *“Toby, I’m going to give you one more chance. Have you received your report card?”* I broke down and admitted that I’d received my report card three weeks earlier. My dad and I were returning from the mall and that’s when he said the most feared words of my early childhood – *“Toby, when we get home I want you to go straight to my room.”*

Now, I’m the oldest of three boys, which means that I used to beat the crud out of my brothers on a regular basis. As a result, my brothers absolutely loved it when I got in trouble. They used to sit on the other side of my parent’s door and listen with delight while I received my dad’s discipline.

But, on this particular occasion, things were different. What happened in my dad’s room that night was so bad, so painful, and so severe that it actually made my brother Will cry. I could hear him on the other side of door crying as my dad dished out my punishment. Will took no delight in my punishment that night. He didn’t celebrate. He didn’t rejoice. He grieved for me. Now...you know you just received the worst beating of your life when your little brother cries for you.

Agape love doesn’t rejoice in people’s sin and failures. Agape love weeps and mourns over the sins and failures of others. Instead of reveling and rejoicing in another person’s sin, we should be broken-hearted. What grieves the heart of God should grieve our hearts. What offends the heart of God should offend our hearts. The sins and failures of people should arouse within us humility, compassion, and grace.

### **Are you rejoicing in the sin and failures of other people?**

Do you gain secret satisfaction from watching other people succumb to temptation and sin?

Do other people’s failures make you feel better about yourself?

Do you approach other people’s failures as a golden opportunity to show your moral and spiritual superiority?

Do you bask in the opportunity to pluck the speck out of your brother's eye, while at the same time, neglected the beam in your own eye?

If so, then you have a significant and glaring agape deficiency in your life. If so, the odds are that you have completely forgotten how sin and failure grieve the heart of the holy God. If so, the odds are that you've completely forgotten the grace and mercy that has been extended to you through God's extraordinary display of agape love, which nailed His Son Jesus to the cross for your sins and unrighteousness.

If you're a person who's prone to rejoice in sins and failures of other, **what's the solution?**

### **"Love rejoices with the truth."**

The Apostle Paul gives us the solution in the very next statement. Paul writes, **"love rejoices with the truth."**

The solution? Rejoice in what God rejoices in!

God doesn't rejoice in the sin and failures of people. No! God rejoices in truth.

What is the truth? The Truth is Jesus Christ. The Truth is the Holy Spirit of Jesus. The truth is the Gospel. The truth is God's Word proclaimed and lived out by disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Agape love rejoices in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** Agape love celebrates the person and life of Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life."

**Agape love rejoices in the Spirit of Truth – the Holy Spirit.** Agape love celebrates the ministry of the Spirit who lavishly distributes spiritual gifts, comforts, counsels, and defends God's children, and brings lost and depraved sinners to conviction and brokenness over sin – convincing lost people of their need for Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

**Agape love rejoices in the truth of the Gospel.** Agape love celebrates the power of the Gospel of Jesus to radically transform lives for the glory of God and the renown of His name and Kingdom.

**Agape love rejoices in God's holy Word proclaimed and lived out.** Agape love celebrates the Word of God by honoring it, meditating on it, and living it without neglect or compromise. Agape love delights when people from all walks of life live righteous lives that are submitted to the commandments, principles, and promises of the Bible. Agape love rejoices in the rewards, fruits, and blessings of others as the result of their commitment to the truth.

**Agape love searches out the truth and rejoices when truth triumphs over sin.** Agape love does not focus on the wrongs of others. It does not parade other people's faults for the world to see. It looks for good, hopes for good, and rejoices in the truth being lived out in other people's lives.

One commentator wrote,

*“The person full of Christian love joins in rejoicing on the side of behavior that reflects the gospel – for every victory gained, every forgiveness offered, every act of kindness.”*

## **The LOVE Test – Part 6**

There you have it, that’s the sixth section of “The LOVE Test.” Here are two specific questions Jesus wants you to answer this week:

1. Does the sin and failures of other people bring you secret pleasure?
2. Are you intentionally choosing to rejoice in the Truth?

According to God, this is the most excellent way.

Be an agape lover this week!