

## ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST'S CHALLENGE

Jesus challenges us to take a long, honest look at our own attitude. Do we love God and others because it makes us “feel good” or because we are genuinely concerned about their well being? Do we, like the crowds who greeted Jesus in Jerusalem, love others as long as we feel good, only to drop them when the good feelings wear off, or do we, like Jesus, love unconditionally, expecting nothing in return, or do we keep demanding more and more miracles from others in a vain attempt to “keep love alive”?

Make a commitment to strike a balance between feelings and attitudes in your relationship with God and with those whom you love. Struggle to love others with no concern for your own pleasure or glory. In doing so, you’ll find that love—*real* love—is much more than a “feeling.”

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Loving God, others, and ourselves involves more than mere feelings. While the Christian lifestyle demands action, it is rooted in our attitudes, not just our emotions.

All of us have had experiences which have changed our lives. Some of these changes are temporary. We may feel excited for a day or two, or even for several weeks, but then the feeling fades. We settle back into our old ways and routines. Other changes, however, are deeper, rooted in that joy and excitement which forever influences the way we live, act, think, and relate to others and to ourselves.

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## MAINTAINING A LOVING ATTITUDE





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Jesus' miracles reveal God's love and concern for us. But they also challenge us to strike a balance between our heart and our heads, our feelings and our attitudes.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead was perhaps Jesus' greatest miracle. The day after He raised Lazarus, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem. News of Lazarus' resurrection had spread far and wide. Many responded with joy and ran to see Jesus as He entered the city, offering Him a "hero's welcome" by waving palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel!"

Those who had witnessed Lazarus' resurrection shared what they had seen with others. More and more people became curious and ran to see Jesus. But the leaders of the people became jealous.

"See! There's nothing we can do," they moaned. "The whole world is running out to meet this Jesus!"

### SHORT LIVED EXCITEMENT

The resurrection of Lazarus was exciting news. But, for most people, the excitement it generated was short-lived. Many who claimed to believe in Jesus because of this miracle soon

lost interest. They were excited about what happened, but it didn't change them.

A few days later, after Jesus had been arrested and put on trial, the same crowd which greeted Jesus so enthusiastically cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! We have no King but Caesar! Crucify Him!" They failed to grasp the essential point: Jesus had not raised Lazarus to make people "feel good," but rather, to challenge people to respond to God's love—the very thing that made what happened happen. It was as if Jesus had said, "If you respond only to your feelings, you'll never change your lives, you'll never change your attitudes, you'll never find true love."

### A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

Our response to God's love involves more than feelings; it requires a change in attitude.

✧ **Love is an attitude, not a feeling.** While love does involve emotions, it is built on concern and care, not on "good feelings." Jesus raised Lazarus because He loved Lazarus and cared deeply for him, not because He wanted to feel good. While knowing that we are loved does make us feel good, we need to know that we are loved because others are sincerely concerned about our well being.

✧ **Love is unconditional.** When Jesus showed His love for others, there were no strings attached. He didn't expect anything in return. He didn't say, "I'll help you if you love me." He didn't think, "Okay, I'll heal you because it'll make me look and feel good." Jesus raised Lazarus because He loved Him. He knew He would be criticized and condemned for what He did. Even Jesus' disciples warned Him not to go to Bethany. Jesus' love overcame every condition, even fear.

✧ **Love helps us overcome obstacles in life.** Jesus encountered people who were jealous of Him, who resented Him, who refused to listen to Him, who criticized Him, who were phony with Him, and who ultimately killed Him. Most people rejected Jesus and refused to respond to Him. Yet, He never gave up. He refused to say, "I don't need this. I can't hack this. Find another Savior." Because of His loving attitude, Jesus overcame every obstacle.

