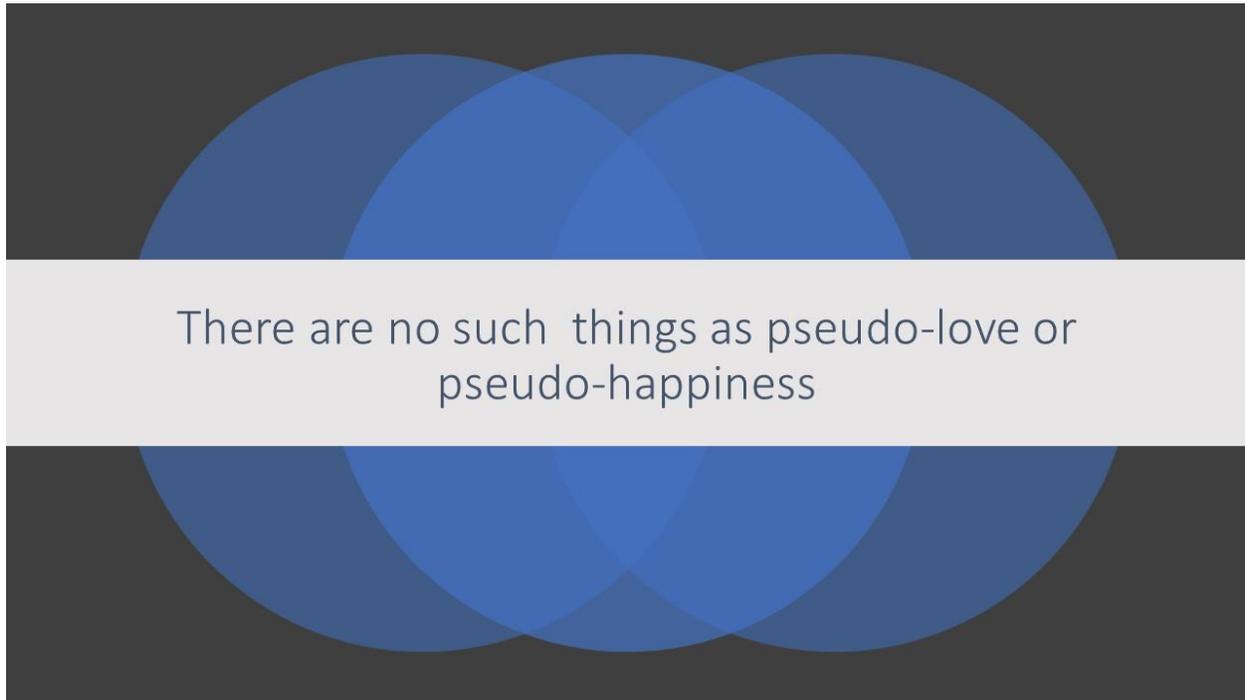


**Daily Life with Christ. Love-36: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of proper love: there are no such things as pseudo-love or pseudo-happiness.**



(Pdf copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/041718.pdf>; for background and complete series, see <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

**Stephen:** Just as it is an undeniable fact that there exists a human naturally acquired love, it is an indisputable fact that there exists in the natural human realm—apart from the graced life in Jesus Christ by the ministry of the Holy Spirit—a naturally acquired human joy. These naturally acquired loves and joys are good and are to be commended—in fact, they can be virtues—natural virtues. However, these proper human love/joy are to be distinguished from God’s supernatural love and joy that are only available to Christians, to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is important to make a distinction between a human love and joy that is inherent and good to human beings and divine love and joy that are inherent to God alone and only available by God’s grace. Failure to make this distinction has led to a lot of misguided and self-evidentially false statements by Christians.

**George:** What kind of comments?

**Stephen:** Like saying that an unbeliever really does not know what true love or joy is. Or speaking negatively of good works of the unbeliever, describing them as ‘filthy human righteous menstrual rags’ (Isa 64:6)—as if “human good” is intrinsically filthy on a human level.

**George:** Are you saying that God accepts the human good of unbelievers?

**Stephen:** No! not for salvation or not for spiritual value. However, there is a place of human good in the natural realm. There is a place for human love and human goodness for the stability

of families and government. Although even the greatest of human sacrifices, if not done in divine love (out of love for God), count as nothing before God as far as spiritual value or merit (1 Cor. 13:3), human natural love and sacrifices do have a noble and virtuous place in the human realm. For example, the natural human love of a husband for a wife, a wife for her husband, their love for their children, country, and community—natural love in these areas even among unbelievers is good and noble. It leads to faithfulness to family and country and community. Such a natural love is good and leads to faithfulness in providing for the needs of others.

**George:** What is it that some Christians say that makes you think they do not see these human works as good.

**Stephen:** Usually it is in the area of liberals helping poor and weak . . . , not so much with things like patriotism. I have heard comments by Christians about unbelievers that are degrading, like describing them in terms of being a bunch of “bleeding heart liberals with all of their human good, filthy rags.” I don’t hear this in reference to unbelievers who are great patriots—those who love their country.

**George:** I think you are being unfair. I think when Christians speak of bleeding heart liberals giving to the poor, they are talking about government taking away money from hardworking citizens to give it to others who are lazy and would rather live off welfare.

**Stephen:** Perhaps that is part of it. However, it seems like the emphasis or ire is on the “bleeding heart” emotions . . . like against liberal news programs that may celebrate or honor an unbeliever who helps the disadvantaged. I think we should honor all good, even human good all the while recognizing that it is just that: human good void of spiritual virtue, but containing natural virtue as such. Understanding the two loves and two joys in terms of natural and supernatural enables us to stay balanced and recognize the merits and limits in each area. In sum, I think it is manifestly false to say that an unbeliever does not have true love or experience true joy.

**George:** So, you think that an unbeliever, a pagan, can possess or experience true love and true joy?

**Stephen:** Yes. True according to human nature . . . a true HUMAN love and a true HUMAN joy. I have not only heard Christians say that unbelievers do not know what true love is, but that unbelievers do not experience true joy. I understand what they are trying to say because it is absolutely true and undeniable that the unbeliever is not able to enjoy divine love or divine joy. But just because they cannot partake of God’s very own supernatural divine love and joy does not mean that they cannot naturally acquire and enjoy a TRUE HUMAN love and joy. The distinction should be in terms of natural and supernatural not true and false. By using true/false, the impression is left that the unbeliever is incapable of love or joy. So, any love or joy that the unbeliever seems to manifest is usually called pseudo-love or pseudo-happiness.

**George:** In your view what is the difference between human love and joy vs. divine love and joy.

**Stephen:** Human love and joy are limited to the natural realm and do not have God as the final end nor are they essentially divine. They are only human—even though they are actualized naturally by God/Esse. Divine love and divine joy are different in that they are inherently God's and thus supernatural—one cannot develop divine love and joy, one can only participate in God's very own inherent love and joy.

**George:** I don't see why you are making such a big deal out of the distinction between natural human love and pseudo-love.

**Stephen:** There are several reasons . . . there are serious implications in how one views these qualities of the human will with respect to the unbeliever and believer. However, the main reason is that denying that there exists a natural human love and joy simply is not real—it is not TRUE. It is intrinsic for every human being to love—it is what he does all the time. He seeks what he perceives as his good. Now, we could talk about improper human love versus proper human love, but to say that there is no such thing as true love in humans is absurd. The same is true of joy. To say that an unbeliever does not know true joy is false. While it is true that the unbeliever's joy is only natural and human and void of spiritual nature of God's own joy, it is false to say that no unbeliever experiences joy. And when Christians say things like this it only makes them look like idiots. While an unbeliever's joy is always tied to his earthly circumstances—whereas the believer shares in God's own joy and circumstances do not affect his joy—the unbeliever's joy is still a true joy, not a pseudo-joy—it is truly human, which means that it will be totally dependent upon circumstances, limited to the temporal realm, and come and go in accordance with his attainment of his love. In sum, the unbeliever's joy is a natural result of him getting what he loves, what he perceives as his good. This is to be distinguished from the believer's supernatural joy, which is always connected to obtaining who he loves, namely God, who never changes. Only the believer is able to live constantly in divine transcendent love and joy because he sees and possesses God as His greatest good and joy. Both human love and joy and divine love and joy are true even if they each have inherently different sources.