

## ***What was it ...?***

... about the early Christians that made it possible for them to reach the whole known world with the Gospel in less than 200 years? What has helped millions of other Christians to quietly change their part of the world?

Dare to Be Different addresses these questions, delivering the challenge to “ordinary” Christians to become extraordinary Christians—and it provides enough inspirational boost to get them well on their way! In this series of 9 articles, David Brandt Berg presents important Christian truths in a lively, thought-provoking style that sparks a desire to be different and make a difference today!



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**DARE TO BE DIFFERENT**

DAVID BRANDT BERG



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# **DARE** **to be** **DIFFERENT**

**by David Brandt Berg**

edited by Phillip Sherwood and Keith Phillips  
second edition

*A Mountain Streams book*

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## Introduction

God is different. His children are *supposed* to be different—and they are supposed to *make* a difference. These are the central themes of ***Dare to Be Different***, a collection of inspirational essays that are sure to challenge and strengthen the reader’s faith.

God’s ways are not man’s ways, the Bible tells us.<sup>1</sup> Citing numerous biblical examples, David Brandt Berg pictures our Creator as an iconoclast, frequently at odds with the status quo His creations have created for themselves.

***Dare to Be Different*** also points us to God’s never-ending, all-encompassing, unconditional and personal love for each of us—the only thing that can truly satisfy our souls, transform our lives, and provide a rock-solid foundation for our faith.

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”<sup>2</sup> The author maintains that the love of God is the greatest force in the world today—greater than all the forces of evil combined—and that it is the Christian’s duty to share God’s love with others.

Holding up Jesus Christ as the ideal role model and His teachings as the how-to, Berg challenges us to let

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<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 55:8

<sup>2</sup>1 John 4:8

our faith make a real difference in our lives and the lives of those around us.

***Dare to Be Different*** will appeal to believers of all ages, backgrounds and cultures, regardless of religious affiliation; to those searching for truth, as well as those who want to more fully understand God's love and ways. It presents important Christian truths in an easy-to-understand and heartfelt manner. And most of all, it leaves us with the conviction that no matter what our circumstances, we can help change the world!

*The Editors*

# A Declaration of Love!

**A**s Christians, we believe in love!—Love for God and others, for “God is love.”<sup>1</sup> That’s our religion—love!

Love is everything, for without love there is nothing: no friends, no caring families, no loving fathers or mothers or children or happiness or Heaven. There could be none of these without love! And none of these could exist without God, for God is love.

Love is the primary solution to all of man’s problems of today, as well as those of the past—true love, the love of God and the love of fellow man. This is still God’s answer, even in such a complex and confused society as that of the world today.

It is people’s rejection of the love of God and His loving laws that causes them to be selfish and cruel to their neighbor—man’s inhumanity to man, which is so apparent in today’s weary world with all of its

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<sup>1</sup> | John 4:8

enslavement by oppression, tyranny and exploitation. Hundreds of millions suffer needlessly from hunger and malnutrition, disease and ill health, poverty, overwork and abuse, not to mention the tortures of war and nightmares of perpetual fearful insecurity. All of these evils are caused by people's lack of love for God and each other, as well as their defiance of God's laws of love, faith, peace, and harmony.

The solution is so simple: If we truly love God, we can love each other. We can then follow His rules of life, liberty and the possession of happiness, and all will be well and happy in Him!

This is why Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is to love—to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” And the second is “like it”—it's almost equal, almost the same: “You shall love your *neighbor* as yourself.”<sup>1</sup>

“Who *is* my neighbor?” a lawyer of religious law asked Jesus, wanting to justify his own lack of love for certain people. What he really meant was, “Tell me exactly who I have to love, so I know who I *don't* have to love.” Jesus then responded with the story of the Good Samaritan, in which He showed that our neighbor is *anyone* who needs our help, regardless of their race, creed, color, nationality, social position or ethnic background:

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37,39

“A certain [Jewish] man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite [temple assistant], when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan,<sup>1</sup> as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

“On the next day, when he [the Samaritan] departed, he took out two denarii [two days' wages], gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves? And he [the lawyer] said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”<sup>2</sup>

**I**f we have real love, we can't face a needy situation without *doing* something about it. We can't just pass by the poor man on the road to Jericho. We

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<sup>1</sup> The Samaritans were inhabitants of Samaria, a territory in central Palestine neighboring Judea (Judah). Because they were of mixed race, orthodox religious Jews despised and shunned them.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 10:30–37

must take action like the Samaritan did. Many people today say of those who need help, “Oh, I’m so sorry, how sad.” But *compassion* must be put into *action*! That’s the difference between *pity* and compassion: Pity just feels sorry; compassion *does* something about it!

We must demonstrate our faith by our works, and love can seldom be proven without some tangible manifestation. To say you love someone and yet not try to help them physically in whatever way they may need—food, clothing, shelter and so on—this is not love! True, the need for real love is a *spiritual* need, but it must be manifested *physically*, in works—“faith working through love.”<sup>1</sup> “For whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”<sup>2</sup>

However, we must always remember that the *greatest* manifestation of our love is not the mere sharing of our material things and personal possessions, but the sharing of *ourselves* with others, along with our love and our faith. Jesus Himself had nothing material to share with His disciples, only His love and His life, which He gave for them and for us, that we too might have life and love forever.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 5:6

<sup>3</sup> John 15:13

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 3:17–18

down one’s life for his friends.”<sup>3</sup> So we consider that the sharing of ourselves, our love and our life with others, is the greatest of all sharing and our ultimate goal.

This is why God created us to begin with: to love and enjoy Him forever, and to try to help others do the same. It was *God* who created love and gave us the need to love and be loved, and He alone can satisfy the deepest yearning of every human soul for total love and complete understanding.

Although the temporal things of this earth can satisfy our bodies, only God and His eternal love can ever fill that aching spiritual void in each of our hearts, which He created for Himself alone. While human love is a wonderful part of God’s plan and partially satisfies the heart, the human spirit, that intangible personality of the *real* you that dwells within your body, can never be completely satisfied with anything less than utter union with the great and loving Spirit that created it.

God is the very Spirit of love itself, true love, everlasting love, love that never ends from a Lover who *never* leaves, the Lover of all lovers, God Himself.

He’s pictured in His Son, Jesus, who *came* for love and *lived* in love and *died* for love that we might live and love forever. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:16

Jesus came to love the people of the world, and He calls us to do likewise in every facet of our lives.

**T** rue happiness is found not in personal pursuit of selfish pleasure and satisfaction, but in finding *God* and giving His love to others and bringing *them* happiness. Do that, and then happiness will pursue, overtake and overwhelm you personally, without your even seeking it for yourself!

“For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”<sup>1</sup>  
If you *sow* love, you’re going to *reap* love. If you sow friendship, you’re going to reap friendship. So obey God’s laws of love—unselfish love, love for Him and others. Give others that love which is their due, and so shall you also receive. “Whatever measure you use to give—large or small—will be used to measure what is given back to you.”<sup>2</sup>

Find out what wonders love can do. You’ll find a whole new world of love you have only dreamed of! There are wonders of love that you can enjoy along with some other lonely soul—if you will only try! If you *give* love, you will *get* love.

Love wasn’t put in your heart to stay.  
Love isn’t till you give it away!

## “What Manner of Man Is This?”

**H** e came to Earth as a tiny, weak and helpless baby, born to a simple, humble young girl who miraculously conceived the child, having never slept with any man. In fact, the news of her pregnancy was so shocking that when the man to whom she was engaged to be married learned about it, he decided to break the engagement and call off the wedding—until a powerful celestial being intervened and instructed him to stay with her and raise this very special child.

Although ordained and predestined to be a *king*, in fact the King *of* kings, He was not born in a palace with illustrious members of the court in attendance. Instead, He was born on the dirty floor of a barn amidst cattle and donkeys, and laid to sleep in the animal’s feed trough.

His birth brought no recognition, honor, or great fanfare from the institutions and governments of His

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 6:7

<sup>2</sup> Luke 6:38 TLB

day. However, that night on a nearby hillside, a motley group of poor shepherds were awestruck as a brilliant, almost blinding light burst upon them from the starry sky and a host of angels filled the night with their heavenly declaration and song: “Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth to men of good will! For unto you this day is born a *Savior*, Christ the Lord!”

Far away in the East, another herald appeared in the heavens. A bright star caught the attention of certain wise men, who interpreted its meaning and followed it. The star led them across hundreds of miles of desert to the little town of Bethlehem, where they honored the young child with their precious gifts.

His earthly father was a carpenter, a humble hewer of wood, with whom He lived and labored. He conformed to our human ways of life, customs and language, that He might understand and love us better and communicate with us on the lowly level of our limited human understanding. He learned to love mankind. He saw our suffering and had great compassion on us. He longed to not only heal our sick and broken bodies, but also to save our immortal spirits.

**W**hen the time came to begin His life’s work, He went about everywhere doing good—helping people, caring for children, healing heart-aches, strengthening tired bodies, and saving all who believed in Him. He not only preached His message,

but He *lived* it amongst the people. He ministered not only to people’s spiritual needs, but He also spent a great deal of time tending to their physical and material needs, miraculously healing them when they were sick and feeding them when they were hungry, all the while sharing His life and His love.

His religion was so simple that He said you must become as a little child to receive it. He didn’t advocate temple worship; He didn’t preach going to synagogue or church. He didn’t advise people to observe any complicated ceremonies or difficult rules. All He did was teach love and show love as He strove to lead God’s children into the true Kingdom of God, where the only laws are to “love the Lord with all your heart” and “love your neighbor as yourself.”

**H**e had very little to do with the hypocritical, pompous, rich-robed, religious leaders of that day except when they insisted on annoying Him with their critical questions. Then He would rebuke them publicly and expose them as the “blind leaders of the blind” that they were. He went so far as to compare them to whitewashed sepulchers which indeed appear beautiful, clean and holy on the *outside*, but *within* are full of rotteness, corruption and stinking dead-men’s bones!

**H**e was not a mere religious reformer, He was a *revolutionary*! He refused to compromise with the false religious system, but rather worked

totally outside of it. He shared His message and love with the poor and common folk, most of whom had long ago abandoned and been abandoned by organized religion.

He never went into any bar with whip in hand, breaking up the bottles and throwing out the bartender. Nor did He ever enter any brothel, beating up the poor girls, overturning their beds, and throwing the men out the window. But He *did* condemn the religious leaders for turning the temple, which was supposed to be a house of prayer, into a den of thieves! Twice He even made a whip, went into the temple, overturned their tables, spilled their money, and drove the money-mad moneychangers out!

He made Himself of no reputation, and was a companion of drunks and prostitutes, publicans and sinners—the outcasts and downtrodden of society. He even told them that they would enter the Kingdom of Heaven before the so-called “good” people, the self-righteous and the religious leaders who rejected Him and His simple message of love. The power of His love and appeal was so great and gave such great faith to the sincere truth-seekers that many didn’t hesitate to leave everything they had to immediately follow Him!

**O**nce, while crossing a large lake with His disciples, a great storm arose which threatened to sink the boat they were in. He commanded the winds and the waves to cease—and immediately

there was a great calm. His disciples, astonished by such a demonstration of miraculous power, exclaimed to one another, “What manner of man *is* this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

Throughout His ministry He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers and raised the dead. In fact, so marvelous were His works that they prompted a leading member of the religious establishment that bitterly opposed and resented Him to exclaim, “*We know* that You are come from God, for no man could do these miracles that You do unless God were with him!”

**A**s His message of love spread and His followers multiplied, the envious leaders of the religious establishment realized what a threat this formerly unknown carpenter had become to them. His simple doctrine of love was destroying their entire religious system by *liberating* the people from their power and control.

These powerful enemies ultimately had Him arrested and brought to trial on false charges of sedition and subversion. And though the Roman governor found Him innocent, he was pressured and persuaded by these religionists to execute Him.

Just prior to His arrest, this Man, Jesus Christ, had said, “They couldn’t even touch Me without My Father’s permission. If I would but raise My little finger, He would send legions of angels to rescue

Me!” But instead, He *chose* to die, to save you and me. Nobody took His life from Him; He laid it down. He *gave* His life of His own free will and accord.

But even His death did not satisfy His jealous enemies. To ensure that His followers couldn’t steal His body and claim He’d come back to life, they placed a huge stone over the door of His tomb and posted a group of Roman soldiers there to guard it. This was a scheme that proved futile, as these same guards became eyewitnesses to the greatest miracle of all. Three days after His lifeless body was laid to rest in that cold tomb, Jesus *rose* from the dead, the victor over death and Hell forever!

Death itself could not stop His work or His words! He rose to lead His tiny band of followers to ultimate victory—to overthrow the Roman Empire with love and the power of the Gospel! The love of God simply rolled right on over His jealous enemies like a giant tidal wave to cover the whole earth, and they were left far behind, as dead and dry as He predicted they would be!

**S**ince that miraculous day nearly 2,000 years ago, this same Man, Jesus Christ, has done more to change history and the course of civilization and the condition of man than any other leader, group, government or empire. He has saved *billions* from the death of a hopeless, frightening tomb, and has given eternal life and the love of God to all who call upon His name.

This Man, Jesus Christ, is not merely a philosopher or teacher or rabbi or guru, or even a prophet. He is the Son of God!

God, the great Creator, is a Spirit and is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere and in everything—far beyond our limited human comprehension. So He sent Jesus, in the form of a man, to understand us and show us what He Himself is like and to bring us to Himself. And though many great teachers have spoken and taught about love and about God, Jesus is love and He is God! Jesus is the only one who died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead. He is in a class all by Himself, because He is the only Savior. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”<sup>1</sup>

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If you haven’t yet experienced God’s love in Jesus, you can right now. See page 94 to find out how.

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:6