

Love: “Love Each Other As I Have Loved You”
John 15:9-17; Mark 12:28-34

Look Back: Last week, we began looking at the fruit of the Spirit. Some of the findings were:

1. There is only one fruit of the Spirit.
2. The fruit of the Spirit is the natural by-product of God’s presence in our lives by way of the Holy Spirit.
3. The fruit of the Spirit is manifested in us as we :
 - a. Walk (live) in the Spirit—obeying and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Abide (remain) in union to Jesus Christ.
 - c. Grow or mature in Christ by learning more about Him through the Word of God and obeying.
 - d. Have a repentant heart toward sin and *crucifying* the sinful nature of the flesh and living in the Spirit. There is a conflict between walking in the flesh and living in the Spirit.

As we begin the lesson, first, let’s explain that the fruit of the Spirit is nine character traits, virtues, or as some call them, “graces” of Christ that are produced in and through you and I as believers, as a result of the Holy Spirit living in us. We can’t obtain these characteristics by “trying” to get them without Christ’s help. If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us, we must join our lives to His (**John 15:4-5**), we must know Him, love Him, remember Him, and imitate Him—Christ.

The nine character traits or virtues of the fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

LOVE.

Love has been defined in a number of ways. Love is ...a warm puppy...never having to say you are sorry...like the measles—everybody catches it sometimes. Love has inspired some to die and others to kill. It may make the world go ’round, but it certainly causes a lot of confusion in the process.

This confusion has found its way into spiritual experience because of the high priority given to love in biblical revelation. In the Old King James Version of the Bible (KJV) the word love is mentioned 310 times, New American Standard Version (NASV) 348 times, and New International Version (NIV) 551 times. “God is love,” (**1 John 4:8, 16**) we are told, and we are commanded to love. It heads the list of the fruit of the Spirit as well as being one of the things that will remain forever. What then is this love of which Christians speak so often and sing so loudly?

Approach Question:

1. Why is there confusion of the meaning of love in the world today?

Now this is a personal question that will have various answers to those listening. But one reason for the confusion about the meaning of love is that there are at least four Greek words that describe different kinds of love:

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1. *Eros*—romantic, passionate love, sexual
2. *Philla*—intimate, love of friends and equals, love of brothers and sisters
3. *Storge*—love of parents for children
4. *Agape*—love of mankind, universal

Another way that the meaning of love gets confused is by what is portrayed through social media, the entertainment industry, and the world system.

Read: John 15:9-17

2. What is involved in remaining in Jesus' love?

According to **John 15:10**, Jesus said, *"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."*

3. What is love as Jesus defined it?

Jesus defined love as selfless giving for others, and the words for love that He used enrich its meaning. In the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, three words were available to speak of love. *Eros*, from which we get the word erotic, has to do with sexual, physical aspects of love, and it desires to possess for personal benefit. *Phileo*, (*Philla*) from which we get such words as Philadelphia and philanthropy, is companionship and friendship love. (*Phileo* is used in **John 15:19**). *Agape* is the word that describes God's love for us and the love that God produces and looks for in us. *Agape* is the fruit of a decision that commits itself to the well-being of the beloved regardless of the condition or reaction of the one loved. (*Agape* is used in **John 15:9-13, 17**).

4. Give some examples of how God has modeled His love for us.

God's love for humanity was first shown in Creation, creating us and providing for us. It was seen over and over again in the long and trying relationship between Jehovah and the children of Israel in the Old Testament, waiting, persisting, forgiving. It is fully seen in the Incarnation and in Jesus' death for a lost and antagonistic world.

5. What is significant about being Jesus' friends rather than his servants?

Being friends has a deeper level of intimacy verses a relationship of master/servants. Jesus says in **John 15:15**, *"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."*

There is progressive intimacy shown in the book of John: Servant, **John 13:13**; Friends, **John 15:15**; Brethren, **John 20:17**.

6. What does it mean to you that Jesus has chosen and appointed you to bear fruit?

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This is another question that is personal. There is a biblical concept of election. The Lord makes choice of individuals (personal) or groups (corporate) for a specific purpose or destiny (**Duet. 7:6-7; Acts 9:15; Rom. 8:33**). Just like with the twelve disciples, Jesus has chosen us and appointed (assigned) us to bear fruit. It is a privilege to be chosen but also an awesome responsibility. (See **John 15:16**)

7. How can we emulate Jesus' love and fulfill his command in verse 17?

To emulate means to match, surpass, or imitate another's behavior or performance. We can emulate Jesus' love by choosing to be concerned about other's welfare. And that concern can lead to action to help. For many Christians and unbelievers, "love is just liking somebody a lot." See **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** for Paul's statement of love in action. Love is a choice.

Read Mark 12:28-34.

8. How is the definition of love expanded here?

This definition of love is expanded to loving God wholeheartedly with all of ones' heart, mind, soul and strength. Also included is loving thy neighbor as thyself.

9. Restate verse 30 in your own words.

10. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself ?

Loving thy neighbor as thyself, means treating others as you want to be treated. The idea of self-love raises a few eyebrows because we know that Christians are taught to deny themselves (see **Mark 8:34-35**). But, we confuse selfhood with selfishness. We can't be consumed with ourselves that nobody else or nothing else matters—an inordinate self-love and self-gratification of our contemporary world. But that does not mean we should fail to appreciate our unique selfhood and the worth we have as God's children. It isn't really possible to love others when we are filled with hatred toward ourselves.

11. What added insight in the teacher's answer made Jesus affirm him as he did in verse 34?

The scribe said that loving God with everything you are and your neighbor as oneself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

12. Consider the relationship between love for God, love for self, and love for one's neighbor. How are these bound together in the Spirit Life?

13. What one step can you take this week to respond to the challenge of meeting a hurting world with God's love?

Homework: Read **Psalm 33:1-11, 20-22; 1 Peter 1:3-9**

Topic: Joy: "In Him Our Hearts Rejoice"

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