

Valley Bible Church Growth Studies

Spiritual Growth and Christian Character

Lesson 8 – Character – Love

Introduction

Discussion question: How does the world define love?

Greek had three words to describe love:

- 1) Eros – Romantic or sexual love speaking of appetite and self-interest. This word does not appear in the New Testament.
- 2) Philia – Having the general meaning of esteem and affection. Refers to mere sentiment, a pleasant feeling about something or someone; a close friendship or brotherly love.
- 3) Agape - One of the rarest words in ancient Greek literature, but one of the most common in the New Testament. This is a self-giving love, love that demands something of us, love that is more concerned with giving than receiving. It is not a feeling but a determined act of will, which always results in determined acts of self-giving. It is based on a lasting, unconditional commitment, not on an unstable emotion. Love is the commitment of my will to someone else's needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself.

Love is an action, an activity. It is not a feeling. M. Scott Peck (1936–)

Some verses that speak of love:

¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that He **gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NASB)

²⁰"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and **gave** Himself up for me. Gal. 2:20 (NASB)

⁸But God **demonstrates** His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ **died** for us. Rom. 5:8

Love **GIVES** and **DEMONSTRATES** and **SACRIFICES!**

Jesus said that the greatest and 2nd greatest commandments in the law were:

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷And He said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" ³⁸"This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹"The second is like it, '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' ⁴⁰"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." Matt. 22:34-40 (NASB) (cf. Deut. 10:12-10:22)

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Loving God

¹⁵"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. John 14:15 (NASB)

²³Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. ²⁴"He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. John 14:23-24 (NASB)

³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5: 3 (NASB)

⁶And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. 2 John 1:6 (NASB)

Loving Others

³⁴"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35 (NASB)

¹²"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. John 15:12-13 (NASB)

¹⁷"This I command you, that you love one another. John 15:17 (NASB)

¹³For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ... ^{6:2}Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. Gal. 5:13-14; 6:2 (NASB)

¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 1 John 3:10-11 (NASB)

¹³Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 1 John 3:13-18 (NASB)

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:7-8 (NASB)

²⁰If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. 1 John 4:20-21 (NASB)

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The Ultimate Description of Love:

⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never fails; 1 Cor. 13:4-8a (NASB)

If we replace love with our own name how much work do we have before we can say that we are loving?

_____ is patient, _____ is kind *and* is not jealous; _____ does not brag *and* is not arrogant, _____ does not act unbecomingly; _____ does not seek his/her own, _____ is not provoked, _____ does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, _____ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; _____ bears all things, _____ believes all things, _____ hopes all things, _____ endures all things. _____ never fails!

Homework

Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 everyday.

Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Are you known as a disciple of Christ? Do you show that you are a disciple of Christ by your deeds?