

Session 5 Loving Others in the Love of God (Jn. 15:12)

I. THE PRIORITY OF LOVE

- A. Review: God is love (1 Jn. 4:16). The very being of God is wholehearted love. Wholehearted love is of first importance in God's personality and in all relationships in His kingdom. The love burning in God's heart has at least five distinct expressions that are deeply interrelated.
1. ***God's love for God***: Each person in the Trinity intensely loves the others with all their heart.
 2. ***God's love for His people***: He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength. He loves the redeemed with the same intensity that He loves within the fellowship of the Trinity.
 3. ***Our love for God***: God's very own love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
 4. ***Our love for ourselves***: We love ourselves in God's love and for God's sake.
 5. ***Our love for others***: We love others in the overflow of experiencing God's love (1 Jn. 4:19).
- B. God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). To abide in love is to continually live in it. The intense love God has for us is expressed in our love to others. Our love for others is the measure of our love for Jesus.
- ⁹***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love...¹²This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (Jn. 15:9-12)***
- C. The Father had a deep desire to have a family that experiences and shares His love with one another. He fashioned the human heart to long for intimacy with Him and others. He created us with a desire to know and be known—to have a sense of belonging. So much of our life goes unnoticed and misunderstood by others. We were not created to be alone (Gen. 2:18). Thoreau said, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”
- ¹⁸***And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone...” (Gen. 2:18)***
- D. We are to live life mutually sharing joy and sorrows with others. Part of God's answer to this longing is to raise up spiritual families committed to the first and second commandments.
- E. Jesus is committed to blessing kingdom communities of believers called the local church.
- ¹⁸***“...I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Mt 16:18–19)***
- F. The NT community resulted from people pursuing a common vision and values together. There is a corporate and individual dimension to functioning in God's family. No amount of time in prayer, Bible study, or ministry substitutes for a believer's committed involvement in a church. Many embrace a “churchless Christianity” which encourages an isolated “anything goes” life.
- ²⁵***...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:25)***
- ¹***A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. (Prov. 18:1)***

II. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. The NT community was a result of the majority of the people embracing the lifestyle of Acts 2.

⁴²They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine [teaching] and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers...⁴⁵divided them among all, as anyone had need. (Acts 2:42-45)

1. **Apostles' doctrine**: Receiving teaching and personally studying the Scripture
2. **Fellowship**: Serving and sharing life in the Spirit and the Word with others requires more than socializing around entertainment and pleasure
³...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son...⁷If we walk in the light... we have fellowship with one another... (1 Jn. 1:3-7)
3. **Breaking bread**: Realigning our hearts to obey God and repair relationships
4. **Prayer**: Embracing regular worship and intercession, and praying for one another
5. **As anyone had need**: Giving to meet the real needs of others

B. Embracing the Acts 2 lifestyle is essential to a New Testament community of believers.

⁴³Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:43-47)

III. TAKING INITIATIVE TO LOVE: BY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

A. We are called to take initiative in building strong relationships and to love people. Our temptation is to passively wait for others to pursue us. Many passively wait for this with a spirit of entitlement. Do not wait for someone to befriend you. Take initiative to show kindness by serving people and hearing their story without demanding that they hear yours or serve you.

³Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on...your heart. ⁴So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. (Prov. 3:3-4; NAS)

B. It is common to pursue people on the condition that they will give us something in return. Jesus called us to a greater love than this (Mt. 5:46).

⁴⁶“If you love those who love you, what reward have you...the tax collectors do the same?” (Mt. 5:46)

IV. HEALTHY KINGDOM RELATIONSHIPS

- A. Healthy kingdom relationships have a *missional dimension* of reaching out to serve others.
- B. Healthy kingdom relationships value the *discipline of regularly meeting and relating*.
- C. Healthy kingdom relationships are committed to *growing spiritually*. The fasted lifestyle enhances relationship building. We are not to fast from people, but from our selfish desires, so that we can give ourselves more to Jesus and to serve people in the will of God.
- D. Healthy kingdom relationships are *open-handed* with a free spirit without demanding exclusivity.
- E. Healthy kingdom relationships *encourage* others, or put courage in the heart of others.

V. REJOICING AND WEEPING TOGETHER (ROM. 12:15)

- A. Healthy relationships share one another's blessings and burdens with a sense of belonging. Cultivating strong relationships with a sense of belonging includes mutually sharing our deeper feelings, thoughts, and experiences with each other. This includes both hearing and sharing our blessings, dreams, sacrifices, pains, setbacks, and struggles. The small portion that is shared in a group setting gives others the insight and permission to go deeper outside of the group.

¹⁵***Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15)***

- B. ***Share their blessings***: Celebrate the victories and prosperity of others—it is part of belonging
- C. ***Share in their nobility***: See and speak a glimpse of their nobility—it strengthens them
- D. ***Understand their heart passions***: Understand their longings, dreams, and godly intentions
- E. ***Know their sacrifices***: Acknowledge their sacrifices in obeying God and serving people
- F. ***Bear their burden***: Help in both the routine and intense burdens of their life
- G. ***Share their pain***: Hear and feel their pain and walk with them through difficulties
- H. ***Share their struggle with failure***: Understand and cover them in their struggle and failure

VI. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (*i.e., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS*)

1. Which point in this session would you like more understanding of?
2. Which point most inspired or challenged you? Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
3. Which point do you want to impart to a younger believer? Why? How will you elaborate on it?
4. What is one point in this session that needs to be emphasized to the larger Body of Christ? Why?