

Thursday, January 11, 2024

Love Is the Way

It's no wonder that the subject of love is the focus of so many songs. It's almost like we wake up thinking "All You Need Is Love" because what we want deep down is "Endless Love". But since we don't love one another perfectly we end up asking the question "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?" We do all we can to find love only to discover, "You Can't Buy Me Love." But love in this life only makes sense when we have the love of God being poured constantly into us and we hear the Lord saying, "I Will Always Love You."

Spiritual gifts are a beautiful gift from the Lord, and they are meant to be a means of expressing the love and the glory of God. These incredible gifts that Paul says God has given to us flow out of our relationship with the Lord. As we walk with the Lord in personal relationship, he equips us to reveal his nature and his message to those around us. The apostle John reminds us:

God is love and love flows from God to us to flow to one another. His desire is that his love is perfected in us—that as he is, we also are in this world (1 John 4:7, 8, 17).

1. Love is a gift from God that must be possessed.

- **1Co 13:1-3 (ESV) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.**
- **We can have all the words to speak in the most eloquent of words, we can know all there is to know and share our understanding and beliefs with everyone around, and we can do every noble act there is to do, but if it's not coming from a heart of love...**
- **If we don't possess love...**

- We are noise (gongs and cymbals).
- We are nothing (I am become nothing).
- Does me no good (profits me nothing).

2. Love is a gift from God that must be practiced.

- 1Co 13:4-8a (ESV) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant [5] or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; [6] it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. [7] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8] Love never ends.
- What appears as an adjective in the English is written as a verb in the Greek text. Each of these is a character trait that Jesus demonstrated that if we truly are walking in the Spirit we will also demonstrate. Again, as he is, we also are in this world.
- Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them (Rom. 12:9 NLT).
- Love is patient and kind. (Love is long-tempered. It's not that we don't have the power to retaliate, but that we choose not to. In fact, rather than retaliating we demonstrate kindness by seeking to serve others to the full.
- Love does not envy or boast. Same as "earnestly desire". We are not desiring the gifts or possessions of others. We are not exalting ourselves.
- Love is not arrogant or rude. Our love isn't full of hot air or for show, saying look at me! Our love is polite and respectful. We don't act in crude or obscene ways. We are governed by purity toward God and others.
- Love does not insist on its own way. Genuine love is not interested in itself. Love wakes up every day seeking the glory of God and asking how can I care for those around me in such a way that they know, see, and feel the love of God and the glory of God.

- **Love is not irritable or resentful.** Love is not quick to get angry and it doesn't provoke anger in others. Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs. Love doesn't keep a ledger, but is forgiving. Rather than being resentful and holding a grudge, love forgives, releasing the debt.
- **Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.** Love loves truth. Love speaks the truth in love. Love longs for truth to be established. Love celebrates truth and mourns over sin.
- Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. The kind of love Paul is describing—this sacrificial, giving kind of love doesn't come from us—it has a source and that source is the Lord. Love traces back to the source. We can bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things because we know the God of love and his love will never end or fall.

3. **Love is a gift from God and it is preeminent.**

- 1Co 13:8b-13 (ESV) As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. [9] For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10] but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. [11] When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. [12] For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. [13] So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
- **The spiritual gifts will one day pass away.**
- **But faith will be held as we continue to trust in the promises of God.**
- **Hope will endure as we live with confidence in the future of God.**
- **Jonathan Edwards described heaven as a place where “love reigns in every heart.” In heaven we will finally be in the**

presence of God, who is love. There will be no sin to impede the perfect flow of God's love into our lives.

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Rom. 12:9 NLT

There is a spring that comes from Mount Hermon north of the Sea of Galilee. It runs down from the hills of Mount Hermon into the Sea of Galilee and then it leaves the Sea and runs through the hills and valleys of Israel. We know this river as the Jordan River. All along the way this river gives life as the spring of Mount Hermon feeds into it. There is a word of warning in this illustration though. The Jordan River comes to an end at what we call the Salt Sea. It gets its name from all the salt deposits that have formed and continue to form in the Sea. The reason the salt builds up is because it has no outlet. The Jordan River flows in, but it doesn't flow out. There is another name for the Salt Sea. It's called the Dead Sea. Life flows into it, but it doesn't flow out.

We may have gifts from the Lord, but if the love of God is not flowing in and through them as we exercise them—the end result is death. The end result is we are nothing but noise, we are nothing, we gain nothing.

The remedy—live our lives in such a way that we are constantly coming to the Father—the fountain of life and love—having him pouring into us, so that in turn, we pour out his life and love on others.

Life Group Discussion Guide

- 1. The life we live for the Lord and the gifts he gives us are only effective when motivated by his love. How can we ensure that everything we do is motivated by love?**
- 2. Think about the description Paul gave of using our gifts apart from the motivation of love (noisy gong, clanging cymbal, becoming nothing, gaining nothing). What is the danger of doing what we do through the wrong motivation?**

3. **Love is...Paul lists several verbs that display the love of God. As you read through the list, are there any that you need to specifically ask for the Lord's help to display in your life?**
4. **Spiritual gifts are temporary. Faith, hope, and love are eternal. How should this motivate us in living out the gospel now?**
5. **Why is love greater than faith and hope?**