

1 John – God is Love: Week Three

What it Means to Love

Day Three: How to Truly Love One Another

Read 1 John 3:19-24

Today let's try to understand how God intends for us to truly agape love Him and one another. We know that God's kind of love is not a feeling, or an emotion. We learned yesterday that love for God is identified by our actions. God so loved that He gave....

But while love might be identified or recognized by our actions, our actions simply reflect the love that is in our heart. And this is the problem. Our hearts and our minds have been corrupted by the sin nature that each of us was born with. We were all born into a cursed, fallen world, because of Adam's sin. *"We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."* 1 John 5:19

Whether we knew it or not, we were all being led by our former "father" the devil. He has the ability to place evil thoughts into your heart and mind. Your unloving thoughts were placed there by the evil one.

As Jesus told the Pharisees, *"You are of your father the devil; and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* John 8:44

The Bible teaches that our natural human hearts are evil.

Read the following verses and fill in the blanks.

1. Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is more _____ than all else and is desperately _____. Who can understand it?
2. Romans 3:10-11 There is none _____ not even one; there is none who _____. There is none who _____.

Jesus told Nicodemus (John Chapter 3) that, *"unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.... You must be born again."* John 3:5-6 Jesus knew that if we were born again through faith in Him and received a new spirit (sometimes referred to as the new spiritual or circumcised heart), our spiritual heart (empowered by the Holy Spirit) would have the power to overcome the sinful desires of the flesh.

Jesus Gave Us the Victory!

Through His death, Jesus paid the penalty for us so that we are no longer in bondage to the devil's world of unrighteousness. We are now free to choose righteousness. But it is **up to us to master the flesh, by choosing God's love** over the devil's temporary pleasures and worldly gain. With our spirit communicating with God, and our mind focusing on Jesus through His Word, we can be overcomers. We can master anything that the devil tempts us with. Therefore, John says, *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."* 1 John 4:18 If we will choose to love the way Jesus loves, we will never be afraid. The devil will lose his grip when we understand how to walk in God's love.

*"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins; in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest; **But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved, and raised up with Him....for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.**"* Ephesians 2:1-6, 8

The reason Jesus came:

"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."
1 John 3:8b

*"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so **that He might rescue us from this present evil age....***
Galatians 1:3-4

*"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, **in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.**"*
Colossians 1:13, 21-22

*"His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises so that by them **you may become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**"* 2 Peter 1:3-4

Learning to Walk in Love

It's time for a challenge! Are you ready for some “**solid food**”?

*“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, **are you not walking like mere men?**” 1 Corinthians 3:1-3*

The people that Paul was writing to at the church in Corinth, were still walking like “mere men” instead of the holy people of God that Christ died for. If they continued to fight with each other and be jealous of each other, they could not receive solid food. I don't want to be a “mere woman”, do you?

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 2:15, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

We each need to make a choice. Who will we serve?

Read Matthew 16:21-25

Jesus told his disciples that he was going to have to suffer and die. Peter began to rebuke him. I can relate to Peter. I also want to rebuke the idea of having to suffer – whether it's Jesus or me. Suffering is not something any of us want to do. But look at how Jesus answered Peter. *“Get behind Me, Satan!” You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's. Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself....”*

Here are some facts about learning to walk in God's love.

1. You will have to be willing to deny yourself. Matthew 16:24
2. You will have to care more about God's interests than man's or your own.
Matthew 16:23
3. We also need to be willing to risk our lives for our brothers and sisters 1 John 3:16

Let's return now to 1 John 3:18-24 Answer the questions.

1. We are told not to love with word or with tongue but in deed and (v.18)

_____.

John tells us that we are to love in truth. Then he proceeds to help us understand how we are to love in truth. It's a matter of the heart.

- If our (reborn and sanctified) **heart** assures us, then we will know it is truth.
- If our (reborn and sanctified) **heart** condemns us we will know it is not truth.
- If our (reborn and sanctified) **heart** does not condemn us, we will have confidence before God.

2. Whatever we ask we receive from Him because we (v.22) _____ His _____ and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

3. What are His commandments? (v.23)

- _____
- _____

Read 1 John 4:12, 17-18

1. If we love one another, what are the two consequences? (v.12)

- _____
- _____

2. Why is it necessary that love be perfected in us? (v. 17)

3. What will be the result of our perfect love (transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit)? (v. 18) _____

4. When someone is fearful, what does that tell you about that person? (v.18)

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

List the descriptive words or phrases that describe God's agape love.

- 1. (v.4) Love is _____
- 2. (v.4) Love is _____
- 3. (v.4) Love is not _____
- 4. (v.4) Love does not _____
- 5. (v.4) Love is not _____
- 6. (v.5) Love does not act _____
- 7. (v.5) Love does not _____
- 8. (v.5) Love is not _____
- 9. (v.5) Love does not take into account _____
- 10. (v.6) Love does not _____
- 11. (v.6) Love does _____
- 12. (v.7) Love _____ all things
- 13. (v.7) Love _____ all things
- 14. (v.7) Love _____ all things
- 15. (v.7) Love _____ all things

According to v. 13, out of the three great virtues (faith, hope, and love), which one is the greatest? _____

As we learn to walk in love, look at the list of descriptive words or phrases above. How are we doing as a church family? Are we walking in God's love as described above or are we more like the "mere men" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:3? Look back through the list and write the words that you think are the most difficult to do.

Some people would read this list and decide that it was too difficult for us. They would be like Peter who rebuked Jesus for saying that He would have to suffer. Remember Jesus's answer to Peter? He said, "*Get behind me, Satan!*" (*Matthew 16:24*) We need to learn from this example by Jesus. Walking in love will require us to "*bear all things*", and to "*endure all things*". That sounds a lot like suffering to me. We need to abide in the Vine, because there we will find everything we need to overcome.

Are you in?

I have decided that I am willing to bear all things and endure all things for Jesus and for you, my sister. I am determined to walk in agape love, and if that requires me to risk my life for your sake, I will do that. I believe God has commanded us to love one another, and that is not a request. It is a command by our Lord. Remember, we are not "mere men or mere women". We are not the children of the devil – or Cain. We are children of the Most High God, and the blood bought redeemed Body of Christ, the King of Kings.

I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.

"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." 1 John 3:14

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3:16