



LESSON 1 DEVOTION 1

LOVE MUST BE SINCERE. HATE WHAT IS EVIL; CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD. BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE. HONOR ONE ANOTHER ABOVE YOURSELVES. ROMANS 12:9-10

Have you ever watched one of those reality shows on TV where people try to sell items to a pawn shop? Before an item is purchased, the store owner may bring in an expert to try and determine if an autograph is authentic, or if a piece of artwork is the real deal or not. Sometimes the owner will pay top dollar for an item, but only if it is genuine.

Paul wanted the Christian believers in Rome to not only recognize genuine Godly love but to live love as well. He pointed out that genuine love:

- ***Does Not Pretend***
- ***Hates What Is Wrong***
- ***Always Lines Up With Goodness***
- ***Honors Others***

Think about those four characteristics of Godly love and ask yourself the following questions today:

- ***Is my love for others real or do I have to sometimes fake it?***
- ***What is my reaction when I see people being mistreated or picked on at school?***
- ***What categories best describe my attitudes and actions?***
- ***How do I feel about honoring others and treating them with respect and dignity?***

LESSON 1 DEVOTION 2

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:18-19

Have you ever used the word “because” to answer a question someone asks you? Then there is the dreaded follow up when asked again, and you say, “just because!” We use that answer for one of two reasons: either we don’t want to give an answer, or we don’t know the answer. No matter how you use it, the word “because” should join two statements and give an explanation or reason for the first. **For example:**

- Don’t text and drive BECAUSE it increases the possibility of a wreck.
- Guys/girls don’t understand girls/guys BECAUSE (feel free to put your own answer here).

The Bible gives us lots of great “because” statements and one is in today’s passage. This week you learned that Jesus commanded us to love others, and that we are able to do that “because He first loved us.” As you meditate on that verse remember the Bible says that God is love and He sent Jesus because He is love. When the Spirit of God entered your life at salvation, you also received the awesome love of God. With that love dwelling in you, you can love others and it is because God is perfect and complete love.

So, on your own you really don’t have the ability to live out the great commandment. But with God in you, His perfect love will extend to others.

Today, write or say a prayer thanking God that He loved you first, and because of that love, you can now love others.

LESSON 1 DEVOTION 3

Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. 1 Peter 2:16-17

Freedom ...

It's hard not to take it for granted, isn't it? In fact, most of the day-to-day freedoms can best be appreciated by those who've had them taken away at some point. The person who has known religious persecution probably appreciates publicly worshipping God more than those of us who have not know persecution.

In Peter's day, many Jewish Christians still wanted to hold on to the rituals in the Old Testament in order to have a relationship with God. But, Jesus freed us from those rituals to bring us to God based on what He did on the cross, not what we do in our lives. Loving others is not what saves you. Loving others is what you do with the new freedom that salvation brings!

Think About This . . .

- Do you show love to others out of obligation or because of God's love living in you? What is the difference between the two?
- Peter said we are free but under the authority of God? What do you think that means?
- If we are free to love and God lives in us, why do you think it is so hard to really love others?