

2ND WEEK OF CONSECRATION: LOVING JESUS BY LOVING OTHERS

Houses of Light Church • January 4-5, 2020

1 Jn. 4:7-8

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

I. 5 STAGES TO GROW IN LOVE FOR GOD AND FOR OTHERS:

1. **STAGE 1: To grow in love we need to receive a greater understanding of love in the relationships within the Trinity.** Each person in the Godhead loves each other intensely with all Their heart (**Jn. 17: 23-24**). The way God loves within the Trinity is the *only* way He loves us: *God always loves fully*.
2. **STAGE 2: To grow in love we need to receive a greater understanding of the love God has for us. (Eph. 3:18-19).** God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God with all His heart, mind and strength. Have you asked yourself: how would you love others if you knew you were perfectly loved? Well, you are already perfectly loved by the God of love (**Jn. 17:23**) so you can love Him and others more.
3. **STAGE 3: To grow in love we need to receive a greater impartation of love for Jesus which is imparted to His people by the Holy Spirit (Ro. 5:5).**
4. **STAGE 4: To grow in love we need to love ourselves in the love that God has for us.** We see each other and love each other through the lens of Jesus' love for us, His work on the cross, His great investment in us and our value for Him. The Bible calls us to both: love ourselves (**Mt. 22:39**) and at the same time to hate our sinful nature.

Mt. 22:39 “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

- *We love who we are in Christ: our new identity in Christ and what we do in God's will.*
 - *We hate who we are outside of Christ and what we do outside of God's will (Gal. 2:20).*
5. **STAGE 5: We love others in love others in the overflow of God's very own love.** Our love for others is an expression of our love for Jesus and a measure of the maturity of our love for Him.

Jn. 15:9-12 “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love... 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with My joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!. 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.”

- A. **We will never be able to love people more than we love ourselves in the love of God.** We will always delight each other in the way God delights in His people. He wants us to enter into what He feels about others. He wants us to enjoy how much He enjoys them.

Isa. 62:4 "Never again will you be called "The Forsaken...", But you will be called Hephzibah for the Lord will take delight in you ..."

B. We are to love all those whom God loves, –including ourselves and those who differ from us socially, emotionally, intellectually, etc. **We cannot love Jesus or others well if we are overwhelmed with the "emotional traffic" of feelings of self-hatred, rejection, comparisons, bitterness, etc.**

C. **The two enemies to overcome in order to progress in our relationships are:**

1. **Bitterness:** It is the inability to readjust after a painful event that makes us negative people. Bitterness that is not conquered with genuine forgiveness tends to grow and destroy the physical, emotional and spiritual life of those who tolerate it.

Heb. 12:15 "Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."

2. **Haughtiness:** It is the inability to recognize our condition and to accept help, ask for forgiveness and make changes. The humble recognizes, apologizes and progresses.

Pr. 29:1 "Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy."

II. TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO LOVE EVEN DIFFICULT PEOPLE

A. Our love for others extends beyond loving only people who enjoy the same things that we enjoy and who treat us well. We should not only love "cool" people, who are popular and influential enough to improve our position and condition, etc. We are empowered to love them in the overflow of gratitude and the joy of being loved by God.

B. Jesus' command to love others is much more than a sentiment, but also practical actions. This command is praised by many, mocked by some, but ignored by the majority, even in the body of Christ.

Mt. 5:43-48 "You have heard it said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you...45 that you may be sons of your Father...He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good...46 If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?... 48 be perfect, just as your Father...is perfect"

1. Jesus corrected the Pharisees' distortion of the command to love. They limited it by taking out "as yourself" and adding the command to "hate your enemy." They limited the command to loving only people who were nice to them (not those who troubled them) and those like them.

2. **Love your enemies:** Our enemies are adversaries who seek to hurt or hinder us or who hope to see us fail. **We are to act in the opposite spirit of those who mistreat us.** (Here Jesus is not addressing the issue of self-defense against a criminal who physically attacks your family).
3. **Do not even tax collectors do the same?:** Greedy, dishonest, and manipulative people love the people who love them. Unbelievers show love to the those who agree with their tastes in food, music, politics, sports, entertainment, and recreation and who treat them with honor. The natural human mindset is: "If you do something bad to me, then I will do something bad to you. If you do something good to me, I will do something good for you. Alfred Plummer said: *"To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human and to return good for evil is divine."*
4. **Bless those who curse you:** We are to speak words of blessing to them and about them. We are to go beyond refusing to answer their insult with an insult. It is surely a victory to say nothing negative and to refuse to retaliate against an enemy, but Jesus calls us to do more than keeping quiet and staying a distance from them. Some say, "I can't even look at them in the meeting," or "I refuse to be in the same room with them." **But acting in the opposite spirit of our enemies by loving, instead of avoiding them, causes us to face our bitterness and fear.**
5. **Do good to those who hate you:** As we seek to obey this, our feelings will change. This is how we experience the supernatural realm and make advances in the kingdom.

Rom. 12:14-21 *"**Bless** those who persecute you; **bless and do not curse...** ²⁰**If your enemy is hungry, feed him...**" ²¹**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good..."***

6. **Pray for those who spitefully use you:** Our love increases as we pray for our enemies. It is impossible to pray for someone without growing in love for them.
7. **Sons of your Father:** God blesses evil people because it is His nature to love. Our Father loves people while they are unthankful and evil; He doesn't wait until they are grateful.

Lk. 6:35 *"**Love your enemies...[as] sons of the Most High. He is kind to the unthankful and evil."***

III. TO SEE WHAT THE SPIRIT SEES IN PEOPLE

- A. Paul's prayer included the Lord helping us to see how He sees and values others.

Eph. 1:17-18 *"**Father of glory may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,** ¹⁸ **the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."***

- B. I encourage us to pray, *“Lord, let me see and feel what You see in and feel about my brother.”* As we see even a small measure of God’s glory in a person’s life, we are to speak it to them. **Our unity is directly proportionate to how much we see of God’s glory in the lives of the redeemed.**
- C. **We are to see one another according to who they are in the Spirit (or in God’s eyes), not the flesh.** We must not regard or evaluate and define others according to the flesh or according to how they look or how much money, influence, or gifting they have, but see their success and value in Christ.

2 Cor. 5:14-16 “For the love of Christ compels us...¹⁶Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh...”

- D. To live **“according to the flesh”** includes agreeing with the enemy’s false narrative about others’ lives. To live **“according to the Spirit”** includes agreeing with how He sees them in Christ.

Rom. 8:5 “Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

1. To **“set our mind on the things of the flesh”** includes more than choosing vices like lust, anger, greed, etc. It also includes agreeing with a dark narrative about the failures in the lives of others.
 2. To **“set our mind on the things of the Spirit”** includes more than pursuing virtues as love and purity, etc. It also includes agreeing with His narrative about others and how He feels about them.
- E. God created each of us in a unique way as His workmanship (Eph. 2:10). Each person is a special object of His creative work, His work of art.

Eph. 2:10 “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things...” ()

- F. Because all people are created in God’s image, they deserve to receive love from us (the love that we receive from God), even if they respond to it in a wrong way or even mistreat us.
- G. **Seeking o love people like Jesus loves us results in exposing our sin, need, and spiritual immaturity. The call to love one another requires a comprehensive re-ordering of how we think and process life.**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. **What will you do to better love those who are difficult to love?**
2. **How can you overcome bitterness and arrogance in your life?**
3. **Ask God to tell you how He sees that person you don't like so much.**