

Fruit Of The Spirit

“Love”

Galatians 5:22, 23, 25

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

There was an Evangelist who was preaching at a certain church noticed an old couple on the front row holding each other's hands. The Evangelist was impressed by the fact they were holding hands through the whole service. After service was over, he took the older couple aside and said, “You two are an inspiration. Acting like teenagers in love! You even held hands the whole service.” The wife, with an exasperated look on her face said, “That's not love preacher. It's the only way I can keep him from cracking his knuckles.”

The question for today is, what is LOVE? Illustration: The story of Helen Keller.

You would think that as much as people sense the need of being loved and talk about being in love, that there would be an easy definition of what love is. Why is love so hard to understand?

I believe the Bible lays out love very clearly for us. Let's look at some scripture together.

1 John 3:11 John says, “This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.”

Romans 13:8 Paul wrote “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

1 Peter 1:22 Peter wrote “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brother, love one another deeply, from the heart.”

And of course Jesus said, “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. I have told you this that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” John 15:9-12

To God love is not something that just happens to us or experienced only. To God love is something we DO! Let me show you.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son....”

When God loved us He got involved with us. He DID something. He didn't just talk about love. He did love. And that is what He asks of us.

John wrote: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence."

When God commands love, He is not commanding an emotion. He is not commanding us to have a fuzzy feeling towards one another. He commands an action.

When we read that famous passage about love in 1 Corinthians 13 we're not being told about the emotion of love. We're being told what love DOES and DOESN'T do. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

One author wrote: "Contrary to sentiments expressed so often when we say "I love you," love is not simply passion, affection, close ties, and friendship. Love is more accurately described by words like unconditional and sacrificial. They take us beyond a view of love as easy and natural.

True love causes pain sometimes, and we by nature back away from pain. Love requires sacrifice, and by nature we avoid such sacrifices. Love demands unconditional commitment, and we by nature fear committing ourselves so completely. Love exposes our fragile nature doesn't it?

Look again at Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness." In other words, love is the fruit of God's Spirit within you.

1 John 4:7 says, "Dear friends let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."

Now what that tells me is that God's kind of love doesn't generally come naturally to you or me. Love in its purest form comes from God. And without God's kind of love operating in our lives, our own concept of love will be a pale echo of His.

So if true love doesn't come naturally to us, what does? Colossians 3:1-10 tells us what is really "natural" for men and women. It goes through a whole litany of sinful behaviors like anger, rage, malice, and slander, and filthy language, and then it says "you used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived."

The Bible teaches that even the nicest person has a selfish streak just below the surface. It's like a story I read about a zoo that kept a lion and a monkey in the same cage. A visitor marveled at this and asked, "who do they get along?" The zookeeper said, "Well, usually well but occasionally they have a disagreement and then we have to get a new monkey.

In other words, things were going to be generally OK until the lion started acting like a lion. The Bible tells us, that unless the Spirit of God guides us in our lives, unless He continually teaches

us to love one another we will revert to our old selfish, self-centered nature. The lions going to come out and someone is going to get hurt. Is Spirit to empower us to learn how and to carry it out. The Holy Spirit doesn't sit dormant in our hearts. When the Spirit comes into our lives He becomes actively involved in our walk with Christ.

Paul tells us that in order for the Spirit to do His job we need to "walk in step with the Spirit." What does that mean? It means we have to make a conscious decision to be in God's presence. It means spending time in bible study, prayer and worship regularly.

If you want to love like God loves then you have to spend time in His presence. Illustration: I had a college professor who told us, "If you can pass my class without attending my class then more power to you." So..... I tried that out and it didn't go so well. I realized I needed to be under my professors teaching, in his class to adequately learn. There are no short cuts to learning to love as He loves. It's only in His presence that we are truly demonstrated how to love."

God's kind of love is focused on giving than receiving. In closing let me explain by telling you a story. It's about a shy kid named Chad. Valentine's Day. He wanted to make everyone in his class a Valentines card. He said "I didn't forget one person, not a single one."

God's kind of love is when we learn to focus less on getting love and more on giving it away.