



Love Me Tender

John 13:34-35

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."



Here is the BIG IDEA in this lesson:

Our love not only displays our faith, it defends it.

Introduction:

In India, the story is told of how the Indian Government built an institute for leprosy several years ago, staffed it with the brightest minds, and equipped it with the best materials. Down the road, 10 miles or so, was a mission. Old—yes! Not well staffed—indeed! It had a leprosy clinic, but the most astonishing thing took place. The lepers—whose very flesh was rotting away—would not leave the old clinic at the mission to go to the government clinic. When the missionaries asked, "Why will you not go?" They were told this: "Here you care for us. Here you love us. We do not know if they will care for or love us there." With the stench of death covering their rotting, half-eaten bodies, they said, "We would rather be here, in tough and meager surroundings, and be loved, than to be there, with the best of all things, but in a cold and sterile environment."

This is true of the community in which we live. When the people who *feel their spiritual leprosy* come to church, they really do not care about the music or the padded pews. What they really want to know deep down and secretly is, "*If I go there, will they really love me? Would they love me if they really knew me?*" This is a secret question that unbelievers have and, truth be told, it is a question that many believers have as well.

D.L. Moody, the famous 18th century evangelist, once said, "A man may be a good doctor without loving his patients; a good lawyer without loving clients; a good geologist without loving science; but he cannot be a good Christian without love."⁴ "Love," said Dr. Francis Schaeffer, "is the ultimate apologetic."⁵

⁴ As quoted by John Blanchard, *Gathered Gold*, p.389

⁵ As quoted by David Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters*, p.123

Our love not only *displays* the faith, it *defends* the faith! But what does it mean for believers in the church? Love is the hallmark, the badge, and the chief family characteristic of the church of Jesus Christ. Stephen Olford was right when he said, "Love is the binding power which holds the body of the Christian church together."⁶

In this lesson, we will consider **three aspects of loving one another**: the *meaning* of the love, the *message* of love, and the *manifestation* of love.



Lesson: Thinking Truth Through

The MEANING of love

- A. Read the following verses and write down the one common message contained in all of them: John 15:12, 17; 1 John 2:7-11, 3:11, 23; 2 John 5-6
- B. According to John 13:34, what pattern or example of love are we commanded to follow?
- C. How did Christ love His disciples and how does He love the church? Read Ephesians 5:25-32.
- The love of Christ for the church was not only *sovereign*, but it was and is *special*! Christ did something *particular*, *decisive*, and *unique* when He died for the church. The love of Christ for His people is a love that does five things: 1) it *pursues*, 2) it *overtakes*, 3) it *subdues*, 4) it *transforms*, and 5) it *overcomes* every resistance in the beloved.
- It is a self-sacrificing, God-honoring love. This is the pattern of love that we are commanded to follow.
- D. What do these verses teach us about the meaning of true love?
- Romans 5:1-8
 - 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
 - 1 Corinthians 13:13 (*Cf. Gal.5:22*)
 - 1 John 2:15-17
 - 1 John 4:7-11
 - 1 John 4:20-21
 - 1 John 5:1-3

⁶ Blanchard, p.389

The MESSAGE of love

According to the following verses, what message does a love for the brethren send?

- John 13:35—Loving one another is the distinguishing quality of being a true follower of Christ.
- 1 John 3:14—Loving other believers is the evidence of spiritual life.
- Galatians 5:22—Love provides conclusive evidence of the Spirit's indwelling presence.

The MANIFESTATION of love

- A. Read 1 John 4:18. What hinders the manifestation of love in our lives?
- B. Anyone can say he loves Christ and other believers, but how can you tell? How does a true love for the Lord and believers look and how should it express itself?
- Read Romans 12:9. It is to be an _____ love.
 - Read 1 Peter 4:8. It is to be a _____ love.
 - Read Galatians 5:13. It is to be a _____ love. (Cf. Heb.6:10)
 - Read 1 John 3:16-18. It is to be a _____ love.
- C. The apostles emphasized two important truths about love among Christians. What are they, according to these verses?
- 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13
 - Hebrews 13:1
- The reason love must *continue* to *abound* and *abide* is because it is always in danger of being *neglected* or *severed*. One of the causes of neglected love is persecution (*Matt.24:12*). Troubles have a way of causing you to focus on your own situations and become self-absorbed. Therefore, we are to make sure that this kind of love not only continues, but also that it is preserved.
- D. Read 2 Peter 1:5-10. What are three things that result from a steadfast love among the brethren?
- Verses 5-7: An active and fruitful Christian life
 - Verses 8-9: An affirmation that you have not lost sight of what the Christian life is all about
 - Verses 10-11: An assurance that enables you to face life and never suffer a reverse
- E. According to John 15:7-11, how do we grow in our love for one another?



Application: Making Truth Stick

How can you lead to Christ your boy
Unless Christ's methods you employ?
There's just one thing that you can do—
It's let that boy see Christ in you.

Have you a husband fond and true?
A wife who's blind to all but you?
If each would win the other one,
That life must speak of God's dear Son.

There is but one successful plan
By which to win a fellow man;
Have you a neighbor old or new?
Just let that man see Christ in you.

The Church that hopes to win the lost
Must pay the one unchanging cost;
She must compel the world to see
In her the Christ of Calvary.

—Author Unknown

Being a doer of the Word (2 Tim.3:16)

1. What did I learn ("teaching")?
2. Where do I fall short ("reproof")?
3. What do I need to do about it ("correction")?
4. How can I make this a consistent part of my life ("training")?

Answer Key

Lesson: Thinking Truth Through

The MEANING of love

- A. love one another
- B. the love that Christ has for us
- D. What do these verses teach us about the meaning of true love?
 - love is the result of justification by faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - gifts, knowledge, and service are all valueless without love
 - love is the chief Christian virtue
 - God's love demands allegiance and loyalty
 - love is a mark of true knowledge of God
 - if you are hating your brother, you cannot be loving God at the same time
 - faith in Christ and love for believers are inseparable

The MANIFESTATION of love

- A. fear
- B.
 - unhypocritical
 - fervent
 - serving
 - practical
- C.
 - it must abound
 - it must abide
- E. keep the Father's commandments and abide in His love

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.