

Cultivating Love

Lesson for Sunday, October 12, 2025

Begin with your Scripture memory. Have you thought of a way to recognize and even reward those who have memorized these three verses? For some people, these may be the only verses they have memorized in years!

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ It's hard to imagine a topic that is more misunderstood than "love."
- ⇒ Discuss the following questions...
 - How would you define love? Is there an easy definition that fits the majority of applications?
 - It's a word we use for a variety of applications. Someone says, "I love my parents" or "I love my spouse/kids." That is different than "I love Clemson/Carolina."
 - How does the world define love? How do Christians define love? What are the differences?
- ⇒ We are talking about the essential virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-7, and Peter ends with the virtue of charity (or love). Biblical love is the culmination of all that Peter has taught us to this point.
- ⇒ What does it mean to love according to the Bible?

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Love **Defined**

- a. You have most likely heard a previous lesson or message about the different kinds of "love" used in the Greek language: agape, philia, eros, storge.
- b. Most of the time, the biblical use of love is referred to as agape and simply defined as a self-sacrificing, unconditional love. But the word is used in some places in the Bible that we don't normally think of love in these terms.
 - i. 2 Timothy 4:10 – Paul uses the word agape to describe the affection Demas has for the world, but we wouldn't say it was a self-denying sacrificial love.
 - ii. 1 John 2:15-17 – John commands believers to not agape the world.
- c. What do these illustrations teach us? Agape is not describing a love that comes naturally from our feeling toward others.
 - i. Agape refers to a **will-directed** wholeheartedness.
 - ii. Agape is not **feelings-based**, it is deliberate and focused.
- d. Here is a good definition: Agape love is a comprehensive **attitude** of mind toward all people that is willing to act on the behalf of their best spiritual **interests** even at personal **sacrifice**.

2. Love **Demonstrated**

- a. Agape is best seen in the big story of the Bible.
- b. Read through these illustrations. (Don't get caught up on this, simply read it.)
 - i. What was going on when God killed an animal and covered the fallen Adam & Eve with skins and promised that one day her seed would crush the serpent's head?
 - ii. What was going on when daily animal sacrifices were offered upon an altar before the tabernacle and later the temple?
 - iii. What was going on when a baby boy was born to a virgin named Mary in a stable in Bethlehem?
 - iv. What was going on when a Jewish teacher, Jesus, broke the barriers of Jew & Samaritan in order to witness to a fallen woman at a well?
 - v. What was going on when Jesus assembled around Him twelve followers who travelled and learned from Him?

- vi. What was going on when Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross outside of Jerusalem?
 - c. The answer to all these scenes is that we are seeing the agape love of God on a mission to **redeem** and **restore** fallen man.
 - i. Jesus did not heal and feed people because there were too many beggars and hungry people on the earth. There was something more going on.
 - ii. His mission of love was to meet the **spiritual** needs of fallen man.
 - d. The story of the Bible is the story of agape: The comprehensive attitude of God toward all people throughout history that was willing to act on the behalf of our best spiritual interests even at great, personal sacrifice – the death of His Son.
 - i. See John 3:16; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:1-7
3. Love **Developed**
- a. This kind of love is not our natural tendency. We do not instinctively live for others, nor do we instinctively do good deeds out of concern for their spiritual needs.
 - b. If we are going to love others in this way, it must be deliberately **expressed** and deliberately **cultivated**.
 - c. Discuss: How do you think we can go about cultivating this kind of love in our lives?
 - i. First, we must recognize that if we are saved, God placed His agape love in us at salvation. See Romans 5:5.
 - ii. Second, we have a responsibility to see that agape love matures as we grow in the Lord.
 - d. Return to our text. Love is the culminating virtue that is the result of the other virtues being active in our lives.
 - i. We must be committed to **virtue** (living out our purpose of Christlikeness).
 - ii. We must be continually growing in our **knowledge** of Jesus.
 - iii. We must be learning **self-control** and how to **endure** life's difficulties.
 - iv. As we are growing in **Godliness**, we are learning how to especially **love** our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - v. Now we are equipped to show the agape love of God to everyone we meet.
 - e. Remember, the greatest love we can show anyone is sharing the Gospel. Their greatest need is Jesus.

CONCLUSION: (taken from page 133)

- ⇒ Suppose you were invited to attend a high school junior/senior banquet. As you enter the auditorium, you see the tables beautifully set.
- ⇒ Prominently placed in the center of the backdrop onstage is a silhouette of the Eiffel Tower. When you look at the menus, they are printed in French with English translations provided.
- ⇒ The table decorations include a small replica of the Tower.
- ⇒ It would not take much for you to conclude that the setting for the evening is Paris.
- ⇒ When we study the love of God and what He is doing from Genesis to Revelation, it is all about the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for our redemption and restoration.
- ⇒ The silhouette cast on the backdrop for the drama of the world is a cross. It explains what God is doing for the good of men. This is the heart of agape love.
- ⇒ The love that we are to show to others is to be done against the backdrop of the cross (Matthew 5:16).

OTHER QUESTIONS:

- ⇒ Do you see the importance to focusing on the spiritual needs of people? What are the various spiritual needs of people in the age of your class? Discuss and help your group members see the spiritual needs of people like them.
- ⇒ There's a Friend Day application in this lesson! Our lost and unchurched friends need the Gospel! They can find it at FBT on November 2! Encourage your people to pray & invite!