

Living a Fruitful Life

The fruit of love

Intro: We've been talking for several weeks about the characteristics of a fruitful life. Peter adds one final virtue to his list of seven.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

The Importance of Love—Its necessity

Paul said it was the greatest of the three abiding virtues.

But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

It circumscribes our walk as a disciple of Jesus.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

By clothing ourselves in love the qualities of Christian character are bound together to produce a complete person.

And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Colossians 3:14)

It is the safeguard that prevents our Christian liberty from turning into destructive selfishness.

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)

It is sieve through which all our preaching and teaching of the truth must pass.

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, (Ephesians 4:15)

It is the "universal motive" for all that we do.

Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16:14)

The Meaning of "Love"—Its Characteristics

The Greeks had four words which we translate "love".

Eros - carnal, sexual attraction

Philia – friendship, affection

Storge - family closeness, belonging

Agape – love defined by the character of God

God is the perfect illustration of "agape".

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

The qualities of God’s love

It is intellectual--It is not an uncontrolled reaction of the heart, but a concentrated exercise of the will.

"Agape has to do with the mind: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live. Agape has supremely to do with the will." (Barclay).

It is selfless--It is a caring love, one which becomes involved with the need of others.

It is giving—It provides the need that another has.

It is unearned--It does not depend upon the one being loved having to earn such love.

It is non-exclusive--Expressed only to select few, but an all-embracing benevolence, shown toward all.

The Demonstration of love—Its deeds

Demonstrating our love toward God—Mt. 22:37

Keeping His commandments

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (Jn. 14:15).

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.” (Jn. 14:21)

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me. (Jn. 14:23-24)

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love. (Jn. 15:10).

The proof of our spirituality toward God ultimate rests in how serious we are about doing what He says, about obeying what He commands!

Demonstrating our love toward our fellow-man.

Here we could spend the rest of the week looking at commands of God that show love. However, the spirit of agape is captured beautifully in the sermon on the plain.

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. “Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. “Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. “And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way. “And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. “And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. “And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount. “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. “Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” (Lk. 6:27-38)

As we read this text we can see the actions of love. Do good, bless, pray, don't return evil for evil, treat as we would like to be treated, lend expecting nothing in return, be merciful, do not judge or condemn, pardon, give.

CONCLUSION: As we bring this series to a close let us remember the motivations Peter gave to practice these things:

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:8-11)