

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 31, 2021 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

IMITATING CHRISTLIKE LOVE

John 12:32-33, John 3:14-17, 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

As believers we know that God's plan and purpose for our lives is to make us like Jesus. Romans 8:29-29 says it like this, *"²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."* In other words like little brothers and sisters we are to grow up to be just like our big brother, Jesus. We are to "conform (or take one) to the image" of God's own Son, Jesus. And in Ephesians 5:1-2 the Apostle Paul tell us to, *"...be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* When Paul say we are to "walk in love," he is telling us that we are to live love, but not just any kind of love. We are to live out Christ-like love, to love like Jesus loved, "agape" love.

"What the World Needs Now Is Love" is a 1965 popular song with lyrics by Hal David and music composed by Burt Bacharach. First recorded and made popular by Jackie DeShannon

What the world needs now is love, sweet love.
It's the only thing that there's just too little of.
What the world needs now is love, sweet love.
No not just for some, but for everyone.

It's really true! The world is looking for love, real love, genuine love, love that's unconditionally, that doesn't look first to determine if it worth loving, but loves without looking, love that is color blind, and economically blind, and socially blind. Real... genuine... love, like that exhibited by Christ. That is what makes Jesus Christ and His love so compelling... so drawing... so magnetic. This stand alone study will take a look the "drawing" appeal of love, but not just any love. Christ's love! The one we are to live out in our Christian lives.

I. THE APPEAL OF CHRISTLIKE LOVE (John 12:32-33, John 3:14-17)

"People are hungry for acceptance, love and friends, and unless they find them in the church they may not stay there long enough to become personally related to Jesus Christ. People are not persuaded, they're attracted. We must be able to communicate far more by what we are than by what we say." -Marion Jacobsen, "Saints and Snobs,"

Based on this quote:

1. What are people really looking for today? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Why is it so important for us to live love in the church (as church members)?
3. What does our ability to “imitate Christ-like love” (to really love as Christ does) have to do with others coming to know Jesus Christ?
4. Why are people attracted rather than persuaded? Do you agree or disagree with this statement (“People are not persuaded, they’re attracted.”)? Why or why not?
5. What do you think is meant by the statement, “We must be able to communicate far more by what we are than by what we say.”?

Jesus said, “³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.’ ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.” –John 12:32-33 (NKJV) The word “draw” literally means to attract, and speaks of a magnetic appeal... drawing power. There is a magnetism in the cross. But what is it about the cross that make it such a draw. In one sense we would think the cross as repulsive, something that would turn others away, and cause them to be repelled. As an instrument of brutal and cruel torture, the cross was bloody, degrading, and extremely inhumane. It has been suggested that after the brutal beatings and mistreatment Jesus endured prior His crucifixion He would have been hardly recognizable, covered in lacerations, bruises and much blood. Not very appealing, to say the least. So, what was the draw? What makes the cross so magnetic, and what did Jesus mean when we said, “... if I am lifted up from the earth, (I) will draw all people to Myself...”?

Notice what Jesus said a little earlier in John’s Gospel in John 3:14-17, “¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” Once again, the idea of the Son of Man being lifted up on the cross is mentioned (just as Moses lifted up the redemptive snake in the wilderness to save his people). But this passage make it more clear what God was up to in lifting up His only Son, Jesus, on a cross. Again was makes the cross so drawing. That familiar verse, John 3:16, make it clear. It’s love... the love exhibited in the cross. Never has the world seen such a picture of love. Never has the world been loved, with this kind of love, and to this extent as what is exhibited on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5 Reasons the cross is so “drawing” in it’s appeal:

1. The cross is a divine demonstration of real love (Romans 5:8) - “⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” – Romans 5:8 How is the cross a divine demonstration of real love? How would you explain this to someone who has never heard the good news?
2. The cross is the greatest example of sacrificial love the world can know (John 15:13) - “¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” – John 15:13 Jesus, Himself, is telling us that the sacrificial love of one man giving his or her life for another is the “greatest love” that can be shown. We see this exhibited from time to time in our world. We think of the sacrifice of love given by our men and women in uniform who have died that we might enjoy the freedoms we enjoy in this country. From time to time we see this type of “sacrificial” love exhibited when one steps in front of a bullet or a car for

another and gives their life, or someone who gives us a kidney to another in a medical emergency. These are good pictures of the “greater love” that Jesus speaks of, but Jesus is the greatest picture of this kind of sacrificial love that gives his life for another, because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. He literally became the perfect sacrifice for the entire human race. Not all accept His sacrifice on their behalf, none the less Scripture tell us He made it. *“For God so loved the world that He gave..”*

3. **The cross is an unparalleled portrayal of love for the unlovely (1 Peter 3:18) -** *“¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God...” – 1 Peter 3:18* To be “righteous” means to be “rightly related to God.” To be “unrighteous” means to be “wrongly related to God,” enemies of God, fighting against God. Peter tells us that Jesus, the Righteous, died for you and I when we were wrongly related to God, enemies of God, fighting against God. Even from His cross Jesus demonstrated this when He cried out on behalf of his crucifiers, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34)*. Jesus even told His followers (you and I) that we were to love the least of these... the unlovely and the unloveable in Matthew 25.
4. **The cross is the only way we really know what love is (1 John 3:16) –** This is interesting... we talk so much about “love,” but do we really understand love. No wonder the world has such a mixed up notion of love. I believe that Scripture suggest (no tells us) that real love can’t be known outside of the cross. Listen to *1 John 3:16, “¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” -1 John 3:16* Real love is not us loving, but God loving. That is where we really start to understand love. When we look at Him, and how He loves. *“¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” – 1 John 4:10*
5. **The cross is passage way to an all access love and availability with the Father (Ephesians 2:18) -** *“¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” – Ephesians 2:18* Through Jesus’ death on the cross the love of the father, the love He has for us became available and accessible to us always... all the time... anytime. *“¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.” – Ephesians 3:12*

See, it is on the magnet nature... the “drawing” of the cross that Jesus pinned His hopes. And Jesus was right because love will live long after might and power and force is dead. William

➡ Barclay writes, *“The only secure foundation for any kingdom is the foundation of sacrificial love.”* There is a “drawomg” appeal created by love that the world desperately needs. The world is in desperate need of the magnetic appeal created by authentic love – genuine “agape” love,

II. THE PRIORITY OF CHRISTLIKE LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Perhaps the greatest treatise on love in all of Scripture is the “Love Chapter” found in **1 Corinthians 13**. We hear this passage of Scripture read all the time at weddings and anniversary gatherings. The love chapter is Paul’s explanation of “Christ-like” love, what it is, how it works, what it ought to look like. The love chapter was played out on the cross. All of the marvelous attributes of genuine love pictured in the love chapter can be seen in Jesus. Let’s read it that way **read the love chapter substituting the word love for the word “Christ.”*

➡ **(READ: 1 Corinthians 13 *insert Christ for charity/love)**

1. **Conditional Statements...** “ If I..” – This conditional appears five times and give actually give six surprising weak substitutes for genuine love in verses 1-3

6 Weak Substitutes for Love:

- (1) **Spirituality** - “*If is speak with the tongues of men and angels...*” Have you ever known those who always make you feel like they were spiritually superior to you, more pious? Ask yourself what might have been missing?
- (2) **Religion** - “*If I have the gift of prophecy...*” Have you ever known those who were very religious and devout... so religious and devout that they cut themselves off from other people? Ask yourself what might have been missing?
- (3) **Knowledge** - “*If I can fathom all mysteries and have all knowledge...*” Have you ever known those who knew all about the Bible, very smart and learned about Scripture, many be knew how to answer all the questions, but when it came to relating to others they couldn’t? Ask yourself what might be missing?
- (4) **Faith** - “*If I have great faith to move mountains...*” Have you ever known those who may have had a lot of faith, they would perhaps want to step out on faith, but when they encountered those who had some reservations or who felt like we might need to wait, they would get angry? Ask yourself what might be missing?
- (5) **Benevolence** - “*If I give all my possessions to the poor...*” Have you ever known those who like to give and give a lot, they didn’t mind others knowing that they were giving, or maybe they made sure that somehow others new what they gave, or maybe they gave, but complained about giving? Ask yourself what might be missing?
- (6) **Sacrifice** - “*If I give my life in martyrdom...*” Have you ever know those who were constantly serving and giving, and doing things for others or for the church, busy all the time... so busy doing in fact that they were tired, burned out, and in subtle ways let others know? Ask yourself what might be missing?

NOTE: Surprisingly great churches are not built on great spirituality, great religious acumen and insight, great knowledge, great faith alone, great benevolence, nor great sacrifice. While these are important without the missing ingredient they will always ring hollow and fall short. Do you think this ever happens in churches? What are the results?

2. **Repetitious Statements...** “... But do not have love...” – Three times in the first three verses this statement appears “... but do not have love...” This three time repetition sounds similar to the three time repetition that Jesus gave to John in the last chapter of John’s gospel **(READ: John 21:15-17)** Remember that Peter had been one of Jesus closest followers and disciples. He was one of the inner circle disciples with James and John, but when Jesus was facing his darkest hour Peter had denied Jesus not once but three times. Peter’s three fold denial is here covered in Jesus’ reinstatement of Peter’s affirmation of his love for Christ repeated three times. From this we may learn something about the priority of love.

3 Truths Learned from 3 Repetitious Statements:

- (1) **Real love is not shown by our religious following and seeming devotion (*this can be fleeting*)** – Don't think it can't! I've seen the most religious of men and women fall and lose their way. If it can happen to Peter it can happen to you! And Paul mentions all of these highly public, visible religious expression and tells us they are not enough and implies they can be absent of love.
- (2) **Real love is not negated by our faults and failures, because we always have one who will keep on loving us no matter what (*that is not a license, but a humbling truth*)** – This is important to know, because it inspires us to love deeper, like God and Jesus love... to be motivated to a higher love that love no matter. Jesus loved Peter unconditionally, even when he was denying Him. That is why He reinstated Him. John 21 is a love act by Jesus on Peter behalf. That is how we are to operate within the fellowship. Also remember that the first 3 verses are ways that we try to love God, but they ring hollow compared to His love and are meaningless apart from His divine love.
- (3) **Real love is not so much in what we say, but what we do and not so much in what we do, but how we do it (*what is behind it... love*)** – In otherwords, "Peter don't say you love me. You did that once and denied knowing me. Peter show you love. Show you love me by loving and caring for others." Listen, don't just be spiritual, religious, knowledgeable, show faith, be benevolent, be sacrificing... be loving. Show why you are those things because of love and through those things express love. That is truly fellowship building.

III. THE MEANING OF CHRISTLIKE LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

1. **Working Definition of Love** – "Seeking the highest good of the other person; doing what is best for them." – Charles Swindol

The world says, "*Love is never having to say your sorry!*"-*Love Story* But love must always be saying "I'm sorry!" "Please forgive me!" "I was wrong!" Sometimes love even has to say "I'm sorry" when it wasn't your fault because that is just what love does.

The world say, "*Love is a many splendored thing!*"-*Movie* But sometimes love is not splendored, glorious or brilliant. Sometimes it's messy and difficult and painful and many times it hurts. That is what love does. The world has a very mixed up notion of love.

The world's mixed up definition of love? – Below list some of the things that might describe how the world today defines love:

1. **Love is conditional** – "I will love you if..."
2. **Love is me oriented** – "What is in for me..."
3. **Love is fickle** – "I love lots of things and lot's of people and if it doesn't work out I will find someone or something else to love."
4. **Love is misunderstood** – "I love things, hotdogs, baseball and apple pie..."

5. **Love is sex** – “Love is sex and sex is love... we even call it ‘making-love’ Sex is an expression of love between two married and committed people, but sex is not necessarily love.

In the ancient Greek speaking world, love could be a pretty confusing thing, like it is today, so the Greeks had 4 different words to describe “love.” Each of these 4 words was a different kind of love.

4 Kinds of Love in the Greek:

- (1) **Storge = Family love** – “Storge” love referred to love within a family, parental love between a parent and child, or the love bond that existed among kin.
- (2) **Phileo = Friend love** – “Phileo” is literally “brotherly love,” the love that exist between close friends... even best friends. The city of Philadelphia is known as “The City of Brotherly Love” and that pin name from the root meaning of the city’s name coming from this Greek word, “Phileo”... Philadelphia.
- (3) **Eros = Romantic Love** – “Eros” is the love between a husband and wife, the romantic attraction that two people feel when they are drawn together and love is ultimately consummated in “eros” love. Unfortunatley this beautiful Greek word has been corrupted today and used by the Pornography Industry as a designation for their business “Erotica.” So when we see the word “Erotic” we immediately think of something dirty. Originally this was the word use to describe what a couple in love felt for each other... something beautiful... intimate, and created by God.
- (4) **Agape = Divine Love** – This was the highest form of love in the Greek language. It was not used (maybe rarely) by the ancient Greek and not a words used in Classical Greek, but almost exclusively used in New Testament in Koine Greek... the common Greek of Jesus day (the New Testament was not written in Classical Greek but Koine Greek, “Koine” means common) This words denoted a type of love unknown to man... divine love. It was a love that was “unconditional.” It is a truly committed kind of love, an always kind of love, and unchanging love. It is a love that says, “No matter what you do I am going to keep loving you!” This is the kind of love that Scripture tells us that God has for us, that He demonstrates for us through Jesus, and it is the kind of love that we are called to exhibit and practice toward others. It is this kind of love that is characteristic of genuine “fellowship.” And you can see why it is so dangerous... it is unconditional!

NOTE: *“Agape” is the kind of love spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13, therefore as 1 Corinthians 13 describes this kind of love we are to pay close attention because this is what we are to exhibit in building true, genuine, koinonia fellowship.*

2. 15 Beautiful and “Drawing” Characteristics of Love –

- (1) **Patience (v.4)** –This term refers to being long-tempered, and is always directed toward people. On the other hand, “endurance,” though similar, is always directed toward things and circumstances.
- (2) **Kindness (v.4)** – Kindness can be described as “helpful, friendly, free from petty criticism.”
- (3) **Not jealous (v.4)** – To be jealous is to “burn with envy.” Put another way, jealousy is “the inordinate passion to possess what I already have.” “I am jealous. That

belongs to me! Envy, on the other hand is different. Envy is “the inordinate passion to have what another person possesses.” “They have more than me and I want I want it.” Jealousy want to keep, while envy wants to have.

- (4) **Not bragging (v.4)** – Agape does not act or play the part of a braggart. The term can easily be used in reference to intellectual or spiritual pride.
- (5) **Not arrogant (v.4)** – Arrogance blows, is inflated, puffed up, and is proud and haughty. Bragging is something we do, while arrogance is something we are.
- (6) **Not unbecoming (v.5)** – At the heart of this word is the idea of scheming. It refers to shape, form and outward appearance. The outward appearance of love must not be tactless or rude.
- (7) **Not self-seeking (v.5)** – Literally, agape “does not seek the things of itself,” which includes its own rights, ways and interest. It puts the rights, interest of others ahead of it’s own.

NOTE: *Genuine fellowship must have love if it is to live. Without love, fellowship is destroyed... and total death results*

- (8) **Not provoked (v.5)** – Two original word shape the thought... (1) “to sharpen” (2) “beside.” Here’s the idea... “not sharpened beside others, not irritated.” Love does not permit the one who is sharp and abrasive to affect it. Effort is implied in the characteristic.
- (9) **Forgiving (v.5)** – “Love does not take into account a wrong suffered.” An accounting suggests the thought of making entries in a ledger. Love does not keep score, but forgives and erases from the ledger.
- (10) **Righteous loving (v.6)** – “Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.” Agape finds no pleasure in, nor sympathy with wrongdoing, but loves “right-relatedness” both with God and others.
- (11) **Truth loving (v.6)** – Love and truth are inseparable twins. When love is present, there is no room for hypocrisy. Love bears the responsibility of searching out the truth, and not responding to, nor spreading hearsay.
- (12) **All bearing (v.7)** – To “bear” has the idea of covering over, so as to protect or shield. Real love is durable, and withstands the blows and attacks of others.
- (13) **All believing (v. 7)** – This is not being gullible, but putting aside suspicion... giving the benefit of the doubt without skepticism.
- (14) **All hoping (v.7)** – This agape quality has to do with anticipating the very best in the other person.
- (15) **All enduring (v.7)** – Being determined and refusing to quit also characterizes agape

IV. THREE POSSIBLE RESPONSES

3 Possible Responses:

1. **“I’m never going to be unlovely again”** – *Evaluation:* Totally unrealistic. Every effort of the flesh is bound to fail.

2. **“I have tried and tried, but failed. It’s not worth the risk”** – *Evaluation:* Refusal to try is disobedience. *“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.” (Romans 12:10)*
3. **“I admire these qualities, want them, but cannot produce them in my strength”** – *Evaluation:* This is the only proper response. The key to such loving is a commitment of the mind and heart to the Holy Spirit’s control. *“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.” (Galatians 5:22-23)*

NOW ITS YOUR TURN...

Pray about it... Spend some time in prayer specifically for an attitude of love and acceptance. Ask God to show you the weak spots in these areas, and ask for His strength for improvement.

Read about it... How do you measure up to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7? Try this brief exercise and see. Read aloud verses 4 through 7 of 1 Corinthians 13, substituting your name for the word “love” (i.e. Bill is patient, Bill is kind etc.) How does it sound? Which phrases are true and which phrases could stand some improvement?

Act upon it... Are you allowing God to produce in you this “magnetic appeal” created by authentic agape? Are there people who haven’t seen this love in you? If so, write down a name of or two. Determine to show them agape through your life i