

Disciple of Christ Study: Lesson 15 Love

Purpose of study: *Live life as a disciple of Christ and intentionally make disciples for the glory of the triune God. A disciple is a “student” or “follower” who learns, studies, and acts in accordance to the teachings of Christ, the Master.*

Lesson 15: Love (Day One) *Love is More Than a Feeling*

In this, our final lesson, we will emphasize love, the most influential of human emotions. Although love plays a powerful part in human emotions or feelings, it is more easily experienced than defined.

Sometimes our feelings do not match reality. For example, we may not feel saved, forgiven, loved or worthy of God's attention. But through *faith in Jesus Christ*, we are saved, forgiven, loved and worthy of God's attention. We might say faith trumps feelings.

Definitions: Emotion is a natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others. Feeling is an emotional state or reaction. It can also be defined as a belief, especially a vague or irrational one.

In *Lesson 14: Faith and Confession*, we learned that faith is complete trust and confidence in God. We trust He loves us and do not rely on emotions. This does not mean our experiences of God's love are not meaningful, but that we live by faith rather than by feelings.

Read 1 John 5:3-5 and answer questions 1-3:

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 5:3-5

1. How do we love God (v. 3)?

****See end of lesson for repeat of questions and blank spaces for you to write your answers.**

2. Why do we obey God (v. 3)?

3. How do we obey God and overcome the world in victory (v. 4-5)?

Both the Old and New Covenants deliver expectations of obedience. With the New Covenant, disciples defeat evil by faith in Christ. We trust Jesus to help us obey God's commands. Our obedience to His commands reveals our love of God. We do not rely on emotions or feelings to love and obey, but on faith in Jesus Christ.

Obedience is not burdensome because of our personal devotion and communion with God. Spending time with God and His word develops and matures us in His ways; we yearn for His will. We are transformed into disciples after God's own heart; we do everything He wants us to do (Acts 13:22).

In *Lesson 14: Faith and Confession*, we also looked at “coming clean” before God. You had an opportunity to consider any kind of sinful habits or addictions that might be keeping you from advancing in God’s Kingdom for His purposes and for His glory. You and I must be vigilant (watchful) in throwing off bad habits and behaviors in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Not only do we want to throw off sinful habits and inappropriate behaviors, *but we also want to replace them with good habits and loving behaviors.* This is only possible with the Holy Spirit. Being filled with God and His purposes for our life is absolutely the only way we will ever be fulfilled. We are created by God to find fulfillment only in Him. All else brings emptiness, dissatisfaction and destruction.

Read Matthew 12:43-45 and answer questions 4-6:

"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation." Matthew 12:43-45

4. According to Jesus, what happens when an evil spirit leaves a person but returns sometime later to find the person (house) unoccupied (v. 45)?

5. What do you think Jesus means when He says the house (person) is not occupied (v. 44)?

If a house is occupied, someone lives there. That person uses the house for his or her purposes. In the same way, when an army takes control over an area or a country, they are said to occupy it. The occupying army controls the area for its purposes.

The point of the Matthew 12 passage is to determine whether or not God's Spirit is in one's life. If not, there is no protection against harmful invaders. The enemy (evil spirit) can return, and with no divine resistance, set up camp again. The enemy can and will take control of an empty and unprotected soul for his wicked plans.

6. How does Jesus’ warning affect (influence) you and the individuals you are discipling?

The Holy Spirit not only provides us with protection and victory over the enemy, He gives us the ability to fill our "camp" or souls with love. Not a sentimental and emotional love, but a strong and dependable love.

Satan may use your past abuse to whisper, “There is no such thing as love. Your parents didn't love you. You have no friends. No one cares about you. God doesn't even love you.”

Or one of his demons may try to convince you that you are an angry, unloving and uncaring person. He might say, “You're selfish and don't care about anyone but yourself. You'll never make a good disciple because you don't love. You can't love. Why bother with all this stuff?” The evil ones probably use stronger language, but I am sure you get the idea.

Satan wants to block your faith by telling you lies. When you believe lies instead of the truth, there is a disturbance in your walk with God. You are unable to function or perform properly. This is called dysfunction. In this case, your ability to receive and give love may be blocked. Faith has failed because of “Faith Blocker” #4: Personal Reality (*Lesson 14, Faith and Confession*, pages 5, 9). It means you are depending on what others have said or say about you rather than God.

Read Romans 5:5 and answer questions 7-12:

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:5

7. Who has poured out love into believers' hearts?
8. How does God pour out love into believers' hearts?
9. Do you believe God has poured out His love into your heart by the Holy Spirit? Yes No Sometimes (Circle One) Explain your answer:
10. Why are you assured of loving God and loving your neighbor?
11. How do faith and love work together?
12. Memorize Romans 5:5.

Scripture tells us that in Jesus Christ, God has poured out His love into our hearts. God the Father and God the Son sent God the Holy Spirit to indwell Christians and love through us. Romans 5:5 is a faith statement because we must place our confidence in what God has told us in His word. God is love, and His love is in our hearts.

Romans 5:5 is one of my favorite verses because it answers my prayer to be loving. By faith we receive God's love and by faith we are able to love God and others. Humans cannot create or manufacture love; it comes from God alone. No matter our background or current situation, we all have the same opportunity to receive and give love in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Lesson 15: Love (Day Two) *Love other Races*

Building loving relationships with those of different races or cultures can be difficult. Humans seem to have an affinity (attraction) for those who are similar to them and an aversion (dislike) for those who are dissimilar. This is not the way God designed us or the world; He wants us to trust and care for one another.

Christians especially need to build relationships on two facts: **1.** God created every person in His image and **2.** God loves every person. You and I are special to God, but no more special than anyone else.

Race is defined as a group of people who share similar and distinct physical characteristics. Social conceptions and groupings of races have varied over time. For example, in the 19th century, a number of anthropologists (science of humans) and biologists classified the human race into three major divisions: Asian, Black and White.¹

Currently, the trend is to drop the classification of race and instead speak of ethnic groups. These are people who share a common cultural background or descent. In terms of ethnicity, there are more than 5,000 such groups in the world.

While some researchers use the concept of race to make distinctions among sets of traits, others in the scientific community suggest that the idea of race has no basis by pointing out that all living humans belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens*.² Thus as one species, any two humans are about 99.99% identical in terms of DNA sequences or genetic materials. This means that division of race is largely subjective (personal feelings or opinions) and that the original race classifications were also probably just subjective descriptions as well.

The ugly side of race classification is racism. Racism is the belief that one race is superior to another. It is also defined as racial prejudice and discrimination. All races and ethnic groups are guilty. We are intolerant and unfair to those who *seem* unlike ourselves, while showing favoritism to those who *seem* similar to ourselves.

We can look at America and acknowledge that racial hatred is a cancerous sore on our souls. But who is at fault? The easy and truthful answer is the evil one, Satan. Nevertheless, we need to look deeply into our own hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to show us where we have personally sinned in this area.

13. Review your life with the Holy Spirit's help regarding racism. How have you been guilty of avoiding or hurting others because they are of a different race or ethnicity?

14. Confess your sin of racism and ask Jesus to help you love those of different races or ethnicities.

If you belong to a minority race in a population, most likely you have experienced racism. This could be in the workplace, a club, prison, sports team, neighborhood or society at large. Older Americans remember the Jim Crow Laws and racial segregation in effect from 1874-1975. Former white slave owners did not want to work or live equally with their former slaves and enacted the "separate but equal" policy in the South. As a result black and white people were required to use separate facilities, including public schools and water fountains.³

¹ Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_\(human_categorization\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_(human_categorization))

² *ibid.*

³ The Social Welfare History Project: <http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/eras/civil-war-reconstruction/jim-crow-laws-andracial-segregation/>

In 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr., said "it is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." Much has changed since 1963 and yet much remains the same. "Sadly, more than 50 years later, the church remains overwhelmingly racially divided. Only between 5 to 7.5 percent of churches in the U.S. are considered to be racially diverse, a designation meaning that at least 20 percent of a church's members don't belong to the predominant racial group there."⁴

15. Why do you think the church remains racially divided?

There may be a variety of answers for question 15. The point of the question is to note that racial divisions continue to be an issue in America. If the body of Christ is divided, how can we expect society at large to be any different? Racial fellowship and harmony begins with us, His disciples. We must begin to work, play and worship together in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Love spurs us on toward racial reconciliation and other heavenly causes.

Read Romans 12:16-17 and answer questions 16-18:

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. Romans 12:16-17 (Harmony: peace and like-mindedness.)

16. How are we to live with one another (v. 16)?

17. What should our state of mind be and who should we be willing to associate with (v. 16)?

18. Do we repay evil for evil (v. 17)? Yes No (Circle One)

If we are unwilling to associate and make friends with others from another race, we are racists. We think these people are of a low position and not worthy of our time and attention. Or we may be too concerned about what others think and how it may affect our reputation.

Races may even deem (consider) another race as the enemy. There may be several reasons for such an assessment. When a crime is committed and the perpetrator and victim are of different races, Satan will plant the "all" lie. "All" the people of the perpetrator's race are bad and none can be trusted.

Do not let yourself be misled by the devil and his demons' lies. There are good and bad "apples" in every race and ethnicity under the sun. Plus, as an ambassador of Christ, a "bad" person is just the person we are looking for, not the righteous. We are called to be *fishers of men and women*; racists may well be in our fishing ponds. We need to be praying and looking for ways to share the gospel as well as living a life of love. As a disciple of Christ, we do not have the luxury of giving into sinful imaginations and feelings.

Read Luke 6:27 and answer questions 19-20:

⁴ 5 Ways to Make your Racially Divided Church More Diverse:
<http://racelrelations.about.com/od/diversitymatters/a/RacialSegregationinChurch.htm>

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:27

19. Suppose someone truly despises you because of your race and is your enemy. How are you to treat that person?

20. How did our model, Jesus Christ, treat His enemies (Romans 5:7-10)?

Definition: Genocide is the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation.

"Race violence in the twentieth century became so widespread that a new term was created to describe it. The word 'genocide' was coined in 1944. It comes from 'genos,' which is the Greek word for race, and '-cide,' which in Latin means killing. Down through the centuries, fairly simple and standard racist attitudes have resulted in countless wars, race violence, small- and large-scale atrocities, and massive deaths -- a pattern which continues today."⁵

Racism is not specifically based on one's skin color. It may be used to identify others from a different group but usually there are other factors determining prejudice. Hatred and brutal treatment can be directed at others because of different beliefs, traits or ethnicities. There can also be economic or political reasons.

Definition: Ethnicity is the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.

Racism in its most macabre (gruesome) form can lead to genocide.⁶ Here are three examples:

"Beginning in 1915, ethnic Armenians living in the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire were rounded up, deported and executed on orders of the government. The combination of massacres, forced deportation marches and deaths due to disease in concentration camps is estimated to have killed more than 1 million ethnic Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks between 1915 and 1923.

After coming to power in 1933, Germany's Nazi Party implemented a highly organized strategy of persecution, murder and genocide aimed at ethnically "purifying" Germany, a plan Hitler called the "Final Solution". Six million Jews and five million Slavs, Roma, disabled, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and political and religious dissidents were killed during the Holocaust.

Civil war broke out in Rwanda in 1990, exacerbating tensions between the Tutsi minority and Hutu majority. In 1994, returning from a round of talks, Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed when his plane was shot down outside of the country's capital, Kigali. Habyarimana's death provided the spark for an organized campaign of violence against Tutsi and moderate Hutu civilians across the country. Approximately 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates

⁵ Racism and Genocide by Rayni Joan: <http://www.keypubs.com/keypubs/keypubs-racism-and-genocide.htm>

⁶ Past Genocides and Atrocities: <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/?id=gadex&gclid=Cj0KEQjwh428BRCnvcyI-5nqjY4BEiQAIjebwmN2MfATU5McJmgWRfiakQplFh1xu3WqHLKgwSE2kPkaAnrM8P8HAQ>

were slaughtered in a carefully organized program of genocide over 100 days, making history as the quickest killing spree the world has ever seen."⁷

21. Do you think God is willing to forgive the perpetrators of genocide? Yes No (Circle One)
Explain your answer:

In the eighth century B.C., Assyria was *the* evil empire. The Assyrians were bent on war and violence. Their cruelty is legendary. They would massacre whole villages and towns of the people they conquered and afterwards, pile up their victim's heads outside the city wall.

God called the prophet Jonah to go to Assyria's capital city, Nineveh, and preach against its wickedness. Jonah did not want this evil enemy to be forgiven, so he ran away. You know the story, he was swallowed by a big fish, repented and God commanded the fish to vomit him onto dry land. This time Jonah obeyed God, went to Nineveh and warned them of God's coming wrath. These warmongers listened to the word of the LORD and repented.

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. Jonah 3:10

22. Read Jonah 3:10. Did God forgive the Ninevites when they repented? Yes No (Circle One)

But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.² He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Jonah 4:1-2 (See Exodus 34:6-7)

23. Read Jonah 4:1-2. How does Jonah describe God?

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. John 3:16

24. Read John 3:16. Is God still gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity? Yes No (Circle One)

Jesus died to save sinners, victims as well as perpetrators. Even in His death, Jesus gave us an example of godly behavior. We must forgive those who hurt us.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. Luke 23:34

25. Read Luke 23:34. What did Jesus say as He was nailed to wooden beams?

Read Colossians 3:12-14 and answer questions 26-28:

⁷ Ibid.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:12-14

26. As a disciple of Christ, God's chosen, holy and dearly loved, how should you act toward anyone of another race, ethnicity, political group etc. (v.12)?

27. How should you respond to perpetrators of racial discrimination (v.13)?

28. What binds all virtues together in perfect unity?

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (Reconciliation: positive change in relationship)

29. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. What can *you* do to be part of the solution for racial reconciliation and harmony?

Lesson 15: Love (Day Three) *Defining Love*

A simple definition of love is an intense feeling of deep affection. Other definitions may differentiate various kinds of love such as divine, romantic, familial (family) and brotherly (or sisterly) love. All four kinds of love are found in the Bible and all are dependent on God.

God made us in His image and therefore we resemble Him and have the ability to love to some extent. God is love (1 John 4:8). Love is His nature and essence. We have the capacity to love, but true, unadulterated and pure love can only come through Jesus Christ and His Spirit.

Pure love is not dependent on feelings but on God. This is the kind of love we are going to define and strive to live by in Christ Jesus, our Lord. The greater your trust in Jesus, the greater your capacity to give and receive love.

Read 1 John 4:9-10 and answer questions 30-32:

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.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 4:9-10

30. How does God show His love among us (v. 9)?

31. How do *you* allow Jesus to live and love through you?

32. What is love (v. 10)?

The New Testament defines God's love through Jesus Christ and His atoning⁸ sacrifice on the cross. Which brings us back to the New Covenant of love we studied in Lesson 6. The New Covenant was made on the Cross in Jesus' blood sacrifice for our sins. Think of all the loving benefits believers have from the New Covenant (Lesson 6, p. 16). If you no longer have this page, ask your CLI Discippler to send it to you.

Jesus loves you with a pure and holy love. He did not *feel* like being spit upon, nailed to a cross and receiving God's wrath for mankind (Mark 14:38). But, because Jesus loves God the Father and you, He went willingly, even joyfully, to His death (Hebrews 12:2). So love does not rest in you or what kind of emotions you are experiencing, it depends on faith.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

33. Read Romans 5:8. How does God show His love for you?

Jesus also demonstrated His love through acts of compassion and healing recorded in the Bible. The triune God does not change (Malachi 3:6) and continues to have compassion and mercy on you and His people. Sometimes we may not see God working in and around us, but by faith we know He is with us. His love is constant; it never fails.

Read Psalm 52:8-9 and answer questions 34-36:

But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. ⁹ I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of your saints. Psalm 52:8-9

34. What does the psalmist trust in (v. 8)?

35. What does the psalmist hope in (v. 9)?

36. Will you place your trust in God's unfailing love and hope in His name? Yes No (Circle One)
Explain your answer:

David wrote Psalm 52 at a time when he was not living in safety. King Saul's servant, Doeg, had reported back to him of David's location. Recall, King Saul was jealous of David and was trying to kill him.

Nevertheless, David writes that He is like an olive tree thriving in the house of God. He is using a figure of speech, a simile, which compares one thing with another thing of a different kind; it is used to make a description more emphatic or vivid. The simile gives us a picture of trust.

⁸ "Atonement, meaning reconciliation, was associated with sacrificial offerings to remove the effects of sin and in the New Testament, refers specifically to the reconciliation between God and humanity effected by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ." Holman Dictionary

David is saying that like a tree, he is rooted in God and is never without resources. His roots go deep into the ground to the source of water, God's instruction. David is open to God's word and will always prosper and be fruitful. His enemies cannot uproot him because he trusts God. Even though David is going through life-threatening circumstances, he believes God loves him and that He is good. David reveals his faith by sincerely praising God in the presence of others.

37. Pray: Triune God, May I always trust in Your unfailing love and place my hope in You. No matter what is happening in my life, may I praise You and declare You are good. Amen.

Lesson 15: Love (Day Four) *Loving Others*

Read 1 John 4:11-13 and answer questions 38-40:

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.¹³ We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 1 John 4:11-13

38. Why should we love one another (v. 11)?

39. How is God's love made complete in us (v. 12)?

40. How do we know God lives in us (v. 13)?

Under Roman emperors, Nero (54-68 A.D.) and Domitian (81-96 A.D.), Christians were mistreated and martyred at an alarming rate. 1 John was written around 85 A.D. Considering all the hate and persecution directed toward the author of 1 John and his readers, it is amazing he is writing about love. Like David, he is not letting enemies or dire circumstances direct or guide his emotions. The apostle John is trusting God. He is rooted in Christ and His teaching.

Since 1 John was written about 85 A.D., there have been countless stories of extraordinary love rooted in Christ Jesus. Those with this divine love know its source. Here is a brief testimony of one who loves:

"Mamie Mobley, the mother of Emmett Till, was asked if she harbored bitterness toward two white men, or toward whites generally, for the brutal murder of her son in 1955. This is what she said:

It certainly would be unnatural not to [hate them], yet I'd have to say I'm unnatural....The Lord gave me shield; I don't know how to describe it myself....I did not wish them dead. I did not wish them in jail. If I had to, I could take their four little children--they each had two--and I could raise those children as if they were my own and I could have loved them....I believe the Lord meant what He said, and try to live according to the way I've been taught."⁹

⁹ New Interpreter's Bible, Volume Twelve, 434. Quoted in Studs Terkel, *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession* (New York: New Press, 1992) 21-22.

41. Have you ever been able to love another with Jesus' kind of sacrificial love? Yes No (Circle One) If yes, please share the story:

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. 1 John 3:16

42. How do we know what love is according to 1 John 3:16?

We may not be called to physically die for another person. However, we should be ready and willing to lay down our lives in whatever way the Spirit leads us. God has a unique purpose for each of us and we must be open to His call. Let us prepare our hearts to listen and hear what the Spirit wants to say to us. The following are not unique instructions but are ways we should all place others above ourselves.

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?¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:17-18

43. Read 1 John 3:17-18. What are some ways, other than physical death, you can lay down your life?

A believer in Africa was raising 6 children with only a \$10 a month income. He was concerned because the children in his village were going blind due to a disease that could be prevented with medicine. The medicine cost 50 cents.

He began to pray and ask God to send a rich person to their village to help give the money for the medicine, but no one ever came. As he kept praying, the Lord told him he should give the money to buy the medicine. But with 6 children and only a \$10 a month salary, he could not see how this was to be done. Nevertheless, he and his family prayed and decided that every month they would buy the medicine to help at least one child.

They saw others in need and sought God's help in putting their love into action. For seven years they have been buying medicine for these children. Their love in action has prevented 84 children from going blind.¹⁰

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a and answer questions 44-46:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.⁸ Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

¹⁰ http://givewithjoy.org/true_stories.htm; This is a true story in a series of radio spots by Brian Kluth of www.GiveWithJoy.org and www.kluth.org

44. Why is love patient (v. 4)?

45. Why is love not rude (v. 5)?

46. Why do *you* not delight in evil but rejoice with the truth (v. 6)?

Paul gives us a practical description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. He makes it easy to grasp how love is to be played out in every day circumstances. Yes, it is easy to understand, but not so easy to do. We must rely on the Holy Spirit so our love never fails.

One way to keep our love from failing is to pray through 1 Corinthians 13 on a regular basis.

Pray: Lord, Make me patient, make me kind. May I never envy, boast or be proud. I pray I am not rude, not self-seeking and not easily angered. May I never keep any record of wrongs or delight in evil but instead rejoice with the truth. Amen.

Lesson 15: Love (Day Five) *Love is Elementary*

Read Matthew 22:37-40 and answer questions 47-51:

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40 (Neighbor could be anyone: See Luke 10:29-37)

47. According to the first and greatest commandment, how are you to love God?

48. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind?

49. How can *you* increase your love for God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

50. According to the second great commandment, how do you love others?

51. How can *you* increase your love for other people?

Love is the most basic foundation of Christianity; it is elementary. Jesus tells us that all the Law and Prophets are based on loving God and loving our neighbor. In this time period, the Law and Prophets was another way of saying all of Scripture (Old Testament).

Jesus' words about loving God and neighbor have been recorded in the New Testament to emphasize: *all of the Bible's instruction depends on loving God and loving our neighbor.* If you have never memorized Matthew 22:37-40, now would be a good time. However, we are leaving it up to you and will not ask you to write it down.

Love is not only basic to Christianity, it is the primary test of discipleship. Remember, a disciple is a student or follower of Christ. Following Jesus means a daily life of sacrificial love *in honor*

of God and in support of one another. Dishonoring or disrespecting God is **not** loving God with all our hearts, souls and minds.

Read Ephesians 3:16-21 and answer questions 52-56:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he (God) may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:16-21

52. How should you be rooted and established (v. 17)?

53. The apostle Paul is praying for his readers to have power, together with all the saints to grasp (seize) and understand what (v. 18)?

54. When believers know and take hold of the magnitude of Christ' love, what happens (v. 19)?

55. Why do Christ's disciples have hope of being filled with the fullness of God (v. 20)?

56. Are you praying this prayer for your students or learners? Yes No (Circle One) If not, will you begin praying for them now? Yes No (Circle One)

Only God can change or move hearts, therefore it makes perfect sense to ask God to strengthen us and others in His love. When we walk in the fullness of God, we recognize "He is enough." We do not need anything else. If and when God chooses to heal or provide, we accept in gratitude, but our lives are not based on what God gives, but on who He is. He is the fulfillment of our lives.

When the apostle Paul prays for believers to be filled with all the fullness of God, he is declaring the truth of the New Covenant. In Christ, we are able to partake of His divine nature. We are filled with God's Spirit to communicate with God, and with others about God. We have grace to obey and display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). According to our capacity, which is through faith and obedience, we can know God, conform our lives to Him and rejoice in His love forever.

Love is the identifying mark or characteristic of a disciple of Christ. Love distinguishes Christ's followers from the world. May God mark us all with Jesus' sacrificial and perfect love.

One such man marked with love was abolitionist¹¹, politician and writer William Wilberforce (1759-1833). He displayed the love of Christ to thousands of people he would never meet. He

¹¹ Abolition is the act of officially ending or stopping something: the act of abolishing something; specifically: the act of abolishing slavery

worked tirelessly as a wealthy member of Parliament for 23 years to end slavery in his country. Parliament is the group of people who are responsible for making the laws in the United Kingdom.

"In the late 1700s, when William Wilberforce was a teenager, English traders raided the African coast on the Gulf of Guinea, captured between 35,000 and 50,000 Africans a year, shipped them across the Atlantic, and sold them into slavery. It was a profitable business that many powerful people had become dependent upon. One publicist for the West Indies trade wrote, "The impossibility of doing without slaves in the West Indies will always prevent this traffic being dropped."¹²

When God called William and a few others to take on the slave trade, opposition was fierce. His friends were afraid for his life. Still, he would not let the issue die and presented 8 bills that were soundly defeated. It was not until the 9th bill was passed in 1807 that Parliament abolished the slave trade in the British Empire. He died a few days later.

Earlier William wrote, "This principle of love regulates the true Christian's choice of companions and friends, where she is at liberty to make such a choice. It fills her with the desire to promote the physical well-being of all around her. Still more, it makes her feel compassion and an anxious concern for their spiritual welfare. If we feel indifference instead, this is one of the surest signs that our faith is weak or declining. Love brings our faith to life."¹³

Wilberforce was a disciple of Christ. He led a disciplined life with the fruit of the Spirit. He was longsuffering as he persistently and tirelessly served in Parliament to free slaves. He loved those he knew and those he had never met. He loved by faithful action and self-control. Simply, he trusted and followed Jesus and never gave up.

57. How does William Wilberforce's life encourage you to keep going and not give up?

58. Do you think people can tell you are a Christian by your love? Yes No (Circle One)
Explain your answer:

It is not always easy to love others. People can be impatient, hurtful, mean-spirited, and even dangerous. We would like to think these kind of folks are not believers, but the truth is, believers can display all of these ugly characteristics. We *can* all exhibit these bad behaviors when we are disobedient or ignore the Holy Spirit. Perhaps recognizing our own shortcomings will give us patience and understanding for others who fall short.

Read Matthew John 13:34 and answer questions 59-62:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
John 13:34

¹² Christian History: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/activists/william-wilberforce.html>

¹³ Fendall, Lon, *William Wilberforce, Abolitionist, Politician, Writer*, Barbour Publishing, Ohio, p. 178.

59. What is the new command that Jesus gave to His disciples?

60. Why is it "new"?

61. How must disciples love one another?

62. How will men and women know that you are Christ's disciple?

The commandment to love your neighbor is not new (Leviticus 19:18), but the extent to which Jesus calls us to love is new. We are to love sacrificially and without restraint, using Jesus' standard of love for us. Christ also makes it clear that our love is not for a select few. He describes our neighbor as everyone, no matter the race, class or ethnicity (Luke 10:33-37).

Loving others is not for cowards. It is not a frivolous and wimpy emotion. It takes courage and conviction to love as defined by Jesus' life and death.

Read Ephesians 3:16-21 and answer questions 63-65:

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:8-10

63. What does it mean to have a continuing debt to love one another (v. 8)?

64. How do we sum up the commandments (v. 9)?

65. What is the fulfillment of the law (v. 10)?

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? Matthew 5:44-46

66. Read Matthew 5:44-46? Why are we considered sons of our heavenly Father when we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us?

Replace sin and old habits with the love of God and others. Love is elementary and the fulfillment of the law. Love is the basic building block of discipleship. Love well and you will be an exceptional disciple of Christ.

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

---End Lesson 15 and the Disciple of Christ Study---

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS Lesson 15

CLI Disciple of Christ Study: Love

Return your answers to your Discipler for discussion and review. Include a personal letter with your answers. This study is designed to forge a close, yet professional, friendship between you and your Discipler. Even short notes help bridge the distance and connect hearts in Christ.

Name: _____ Number: _____ Date: _____

Name of Institution: _____ Street address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Lesson 15: Love (Day One) *Love is More Than a Feeling*

1. How do we love God (v. 3)? _____

2. Why do we obey God (v. 3)? _____

3. How do we obey God and overcome the world in victory (v. 4-5)? _____

4. According to Jesus, what happens when an evil spirit leaves a person but returns sometime later to find the person (house) unoccupied (v. 45)? _____

5. What do you think Jesus means when He says the house (person) is not occupied (v. 44)?

6. How does Jesus' warning affect (influence) you and the individuals you are discipling?

7. Who has poured out love into believers' hearts? _____

8. How does God pour out love into believers' hearts? _____

9. Do you believe God has poured out His love into your heart by the Holy Spirit? Yes No

Sometimes (Circle One) Explain your answer:_____

10. Why are you assured of loving God and loving your neighbor?_____

11. How do faith and love work together?_____

12. After you memorize Romans 5:5, write it here:_____

Lesson 15: Love (Day Two) *Love other Races*

13. Review your life with the Holy Spirit's help regarding racism. How have you been guilty of avoiding or hurting others because they are of a different race or ethnicity?

14. I have confessed my sin of racism and asked Jesus to help me love those of different races or ethnicities. Yes No (circle One) Explain your answer:_____

15. Why do you think the church remains racially divided?_____

16. How are we to live with one another (v. 16)?_____

17. What should our state of mind be and who should we be willing to associate with (v. 16)?

18. Do we repay evil for evil (v. 17)? Yes No (Circle One)

19. Suppose someone truly despises you because of your race and is your enemy. How are you to treat that person?_____

20. How did our model, Jesus Christ, treat His enemies (Romans 5:7-10)?_____

21. Do you think God is willing to forgive the perpetrators of genocide? Yes No (Circle One)

Explain your answer:_____

22. Read Jonah 3:10. Did God forgive the Ninevites when they repented? Yes No (Circle One)

23. Read Jonah 4:1-2. How does Jonah describe God?_____

24. Read John 3:16. Is God still gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity? Yes No (Circle One)

25. Read Luke 23:34. What did Jesus say as He was nailed to wooden beams?

26. As a disciple of Christ, God's chosen, holy and dearly loved, how should you act toward anyone of another race, ethnicity, political group etc. (v.12)?_____

27. How should you respond to perpetrators of racial discrimination (v.13)?

28. What binds all virtues together in perfect unity?_____

29. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. What can *you* do to be part of the solution for racial reconciliation and harmony? _____

Lesson 15: Love (Day Three) *Defining Love*

30. How does God show His love among us (v. 9)? _____

31. How do *you* allow Jesus to live and love through you? _____

32. What is love (v. 10)? _____

33. Read Romans 5:8. How does God show His love for you? _____

34. What does the psalmist trust in (v. 8)? _____

35. What does the psalmist hope in (v. 9)? _____

36. Will you place your trust in God's unfailing love and hope in His name? Yes No (Circle One)

Explain you answer: _____

37. Pray: Triune God, May I always trust in Your unfailing love and place my hope in You. No matter what is happening in my life, may I praise You and declare You are good. Amen.

I have prayed: Yes No (Circle One)

Lesson 15: Love (Day Four) *Loving Others*

38. Why should we love one another (v. 11)? _____

39. How is God's love made complete in us (v. 12)? _____

40. How do we know God lives in us (v. 13)? _____

41. Have you ever been able to love another with Jesus' kind of sacrificial love? Yes No (Circle One) If yes, please share the story: _____

42. How do we know what love is according to 1 John 3:16? _____

43. Read 1 John 3:17-18. What are some ways, other than physical death, you can lay down your life? _____

44. Why is love patient (v. 4)? _____

45. Why is love not rude (v. 5)? _____

46. Why do *you* not delight in evil but rejoice with the truth (v. 6)? _____

Lesson 15: Love (Day Five) *Love is Elementary*

47. According to the first and greatest commandment, how are you to love God?

48. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind?

49. How can *you* increase your love for God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

50. According to the second great commandment, how do you love others?

51. How can *you* increase your love for other people?_____

52. How should you be rooted and established (v. 17)?_____

53. The apostle Paul is praying for his readers to have power, together with all the saints to grasp (seize) and understand what (v. 18)?_____

54. When believers know and take hold of the magnitude of Christ' love, what happens (v. 19)?

55. Why do Christ's disciples have hope of being filled with the fullness of God (v. 20)?

56. Are you praying this prayer for your students or learners? Yes No (Circle One)? If not, will you begin praying for them now? Yes No (Circle One)

57. How does William Wilberforce's life encourage you to keep going and not give up?

58. Do you think people can tell you are a Christian by your love? Yes No (Circle One)

Explain your answer:_____

59. What is the new command that Jesus gave to His disciples?_____

60. Why is it "new"? _____

61. How must disciples love one another? _____

62. How will men and women know that you are Christ's disciple? _____

63. What does it mean to have a continuing debt to love one another (v. 8)? _____

64. How do we sum up the commandments (v. 9)? _____

65. What is the fulfillment of the law (v. 10)? _____

66. Read Matthew 5:44-46? Why are we considered sons of our heavenly Father when we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us? _____

Congratulations! You have completed the Disciple of Christ Study!

Dear Disciple of Christ,

You have shown strength, courage and persistence in completing the CLI Disciple of Christ Study. These are characteristics that will serve you well as you continue working in God's kingdom. Although the war against the evil one has been won in Christ Jesus, there are individual battles and skirmishes that you will face. Continue to be strong, courageous and persistent in serving God and seeking His will.

In Jesus,



Kathleen Skaar
Founder/Executive Director

Rev 8/3/2016

