

October 1, 2023, Pastor Jason Smotherman

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some practical ways to show unconditional love not just to those around you but people you don't know?
2. What is the biggest hurdle to unconditional love?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13. Paraphrase it in your own words to closely match how your life looks today.

SERMON NOTES:

1 John 3:14 (ESV)

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹²We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. ¹⁴**We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.** Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Mark 12:30-31

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. ³¹The second is this: '**Love** your neighbor as yourself. 'There is no commandment greater than these.'

When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus could have responded with any of the four most common words known at that time describing the love we are supposed to possess. Our language knows only one word for love. whereas there are 4 types of love in the Bible (Philia, Eros, Storge, and Agape). Jesus when responding and translating the Hebrew word from the OT to the common language of the time, chose the word Agape.

Death to Life

A Quick Summary

Eros – emotional and sexual love

Storge – Family, e.g. the love that parents feel for their children.

Philia – brotherly love, e.g., David and Jonathon

Agape – unconditional love

1 Corinthians 13 describes it in painful detail for our flesh.

Known as the love chapter, it's sequencing is incredibly impeccable. Sandwiched in between chapter 12 and 14, the densest chapters on how to use the giftings given by



the Spirit, without an agape love the church will not just fail, it will cease to be the church.

The most important things we obtain from the Spirit of God is not the gifts of the Spirit but the fruit of the Spirit. To be clear, we don't have to choose one set over the other. It is not an either/or but a both/and. Fullness requires character founded upon the fruits and abilities founded in the Spirit. The greatest fruit of the Spirit is Love.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Fruit is the natural byproduct of a healthy rooted tree or plant growing what it is intended to grow. There is no trying but becoming what God intended.

If you're in Him, you will see them. 9 fruits that will revolutionize your world. The greatest is LOVE.

WHAT IS THIS AGAPE LOVE?

Agape love is the love that God has for us and the love that He asks us to show Him and other people. This means we love a person despite his or her flaws or shortcomings. **Agape love is about giving to others, sacrificing our time, energy and resources for someone else without expecting anything in return.**

It's not a conditions-based love.

Conditions based = You meet my need and then I will meet you need.

It's a I'll go first kind of love and expect nothing in return kind of love.

It's an unconditional based love = I will go first and expect nothing in return.

An invitation for a relationship.

CS Lewis (observations on Agape love)

- Love is something more stern and splendid than mere kindness
- You have not chosen one another, but God has chosen you for one another.

Look around the room. For this season, space, and time, **God has chosen us to be together.** To love unconditionally the Kingdom of God into us and those around us.

Truth is - You will never look into the eyes of someone that God doesn't love.

To explain this incredible kind of love a little deeper.



There is nothing you can do that stops God from loving you, because there wasn't anything you did to make Him begin loving you. You are loved period. You are to love period.

This extravagant kind of love that has been extended **to us**, is now being asked to be extended **through us. Loving people first without expectation is a God kind of love.**

1 John 4:19

We love because he first loved us.

Jesus used the word, Agape. Agape, in the Greek dictionary means love, but not just any kind of love. It is the very essence of God and the heart of Christianity. God used the word Agape to write the whole New Testament. Agape is the love God has for you.

Human Love:

You hear people say, "I have fallen in love."
Fallen is something that has happened.
You had no control of that. Human love is an emotion.

Human love is ready to die for its object and a week later it's ready to kill its object.

In human love there is always a "because" . . .

- Because I see you as beautiful, I am drawn to you.
- Because our hearts beat as one...
- Because we think alike...

There is always a "because" in human love.

Everything I have said about human love is not true of God's love.

God does not fall in love; He chooses to love.

God is love. He doesn't have it. He is it!

Having water and being water are two different things.

God does not have a lot of love.

God doesn't even have all the love there is to have...

He is Love!

The origin of this kind of love for us to extend to others is only possible because He stepped first.



The origin of this kind of love being released amongst us requires an individual taking His lead and stepping first.

Tommy Barnett says it this way:
Find a need and meet it. Find a hurt and heal it.

1 John 3:16-18

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. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, **let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.**

The world's love is based upon tolerance and acceptance, His love is based upon action and in truth.

Love without action and truth is not love.

The world's love leads people into despair with a false hope and joy.

Beer commercials that show six pack abs and joy filled party scenes but never show the alcoholic stealing love, joy, and peace from their family.

Careers that acquire houses but never able to build homes.

Lifestyles that lead to more and more experimenting but never any peace and surety.

There is a better way.

It's not easier, quicker, or allows for a life centered on self.

It's better.

It doesn't cost you your peace. When you lay your head on your pillow, there is a surety, a foundation that is strong.

The aged apostle John declared you will know when you have passed from **death to life, when you love one another.** His warning and example given was found in a reference to the relationship that Cain had with Able.

Genesis 4:1-12

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was **very angry, and his face fell.** ⁶ The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?^[b] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to^[c] you, but you must rule over it."



⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother.^[d] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

Cain's life and decisions give us some practical tools on how to love.

1) God first.

Cain's first mistake was to make position more important than priority.

The older has always struggled with newer. (vs. 1-2)

Nothing new here, Cain the older brother struggled with Abel the newer brother. Cain was first but that didn't mean his priorities were correct. Arriving first is not the goal, putting God first is.

The farther you walk on the narrow road the more you are susceptible to changing position with priority.

The aged apostle says you will KNOW you have your priorities correct with God by your love for those around you.

The conflict arose out of Abel's genuine offering exposing the pretending of the first from Cain. Kingdom Principle: Our best is like filthy rags. We cannot earn, work, be good enough to have God's approval. Our best is different than our first. Anything that I put before God is an idol. He needs to be first.

So many are chasing healthy human relationships only to grasp them like sand on a beach. You will never have the marriage, family, career, church, you were intended to have outside of a right relationship with God.

2) Be an ABEL foundation.

Comparison is a thief of relationship and joy.

Aeschylus

No man is a complete failure until he begins disliking men who succeed.

We are to be the foundation by which others launch into God success upon.

Don't be Cain.

Avoid envy at all costs.

James 3:16-17 (KJV)

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Don't just run from envy, jealousy, and the like.

Run to the wisdom of God.

Run to purity, be peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits, for EVERYONE, and do so undivided.

PL Tan

The man who keeps busy helping the man below him won't have time to envy the man above him—and there may not be anybody above him anyway.

Romans 13:13-14

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

James 3:13-18

Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

There is nothing like seeing people WIN for Jesus.

Life is hard enough without Church People rooting for your fall.

3) Take Ground just don't till Ground.

Cain because of posture against creating a foundation for others to win introduced him to a life where his life's fruit doesn't match your effort.

Genesis 4:12

When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

If you find yourself "spinning your wheels" in life. Stuck in a rut.

Find someone to serve.

Give what you need.



The fastest way to the top in the kingdom is serving those who can never repay you for what you do for them.

If I have the language perfectly and speak like a native, and have not His love for them, I am nothing. If I have diplomas and degrees and know all the up-to-date methods, and have not His touch of understanding love, I am nothing. If I am able to argue successfully against the religions of the people and make fools of them, and have not His wooing note, I am nothing. If I have all faith and great ideals and magnificent plans, and not His love that sweats and bleeds and weeps and prays and pleads, I am nothing. If I give my clothes and money to them, and have not His love for them, I am nothing.

If I surrender all prospects, leave home and friends, make the sacrifices of a missionary career, and turn sour and selfish amid the daily annoyances and slights of a missionary life, and have not the love that yields its rights, its pleasures, its pet plans, I am nothing. Virtue has ceased to go out of me. If I can heal all manner of sickness and disease, but wound hearts and hurt feelings for want of His love that is kind, I am nothing. If I can write articles or publish books that win applause, but fail to transcribe the Word of the Cross into the language of His love, I am nothing.
—*South African Missionary*

Rabbi Julius Gordon

Love is not blind—it sees more, not less. But because it sees more, it is willing to see less.