

Women's Bible Study Fellowship
St. Matthew AME Church
Orange, New Jersey

Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher
March 9, 2024

Winter Series: "I Want to Know What Love Is "

"Love suffers long and is kind, love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
I Corinthians 13:4-7 NKJV

Session III: "Help Me Lord, This is Not Easy"

"If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy, but don't love. I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and I have faith that says to a mountain, "jump," and it jumps, but I don't have love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love."
I Corinthians 13:1-3 MSG

I. Review of Session I: "True Love Starts with God "

"Dear friends let us love one another, for love comes from God. "
I John 4:7a NIV

" And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. "
I John 4:16 NIV

- No definition of love means anything unless it is rooted in God. No matter how you define love, if you can't root your definition in God. It will either be incomplete, flawed or imbalanced.
- The love of God is His joyful self-determination to reflect the goodness of His will by meeting the needs of mankind.
- Love is a choice and an action.
- What God did for us in Christ is the starting and ending point of any definition of love. The cross of Christ is the ultimate definition of God's love.

"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."
Ephesians 3:17-18

- God's love is total, says Paul. It reaches every corner of our experiences. It is wide-it covers the breadth of our own experiences, and it reaches out to the whole world. God's love is long-it continues the length of our lives. It is high-it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is deep-it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death.
- When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God's love. God's love is so great that we will feel totally secure in Him.
- True love is always visibly expressed. If people have to read your mind to know you love them, they will never really know they've been loved.
- True love is sacrificial. It costs something to love. True love is never free.

- True love is beneficial. True love does not cancel out our own interests, but your benefit is not the focus.
- True love is unconditional. True love doesn't have to be earned.
- True love is judicial. True love makes judgment calls.
- True love is emotional. Emotion by itself doesn't equal love, but you can't have true love without feeling.

II. Review of Session II: "Do You Want to Be Called a Liar?"

"If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. " I John 4:20

- The real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us—our family members, co-workers, neighbors and fellow believers.
- We cannot truly love God while neglecting to love those who are created in His image.

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

- Paul offers a strategy to help us live for God day by day.
 1. imitate Christ's compassionate forgiving attitude
 2. let love guide your life

- All the virtues that Paul encourages us to develop are perfectly bound together by love. As we clothe ourselves with these virtues, the last garment we are to put on is love, which holds all of the others in place.

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

- Jesus says that our Christlike love will show we are His disciples.
- Backbiting, jealousy, petty bickering, gossip and division are not of God. Do people know you are Jesus's followers?

"The one who does not love, does not know God, for God is love." I John 4:8

- If you have learned love, you learned it from God, because He is the Only One who can give you true love. You can't have God and not have love.
- If you are often hateful, cantankerous, angry, irritable, ill-tempered, disagreeable, grouchy, grumpy, cranky, argumentative, your problem isn't that people keep messing with you. Your problem is you really don't know God. You may know about God, but you really don't know God.
- When you get to really know God, His love rubs off on you.

III. "Make It Plain"

- Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts exercised in the church body. Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice and miracle working power produce very little without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. Although people have different gifts, love is available to all.

IV. "Help Me Lord, This is Not Easy"

In I Corinthians 13:4-7, Paul lists fifteen characteristics of Christian love.

1. Love is patient. In the New Testament patience deals mainly with people and not so much about patience with circumstances. This patience describes the person who has it easily in his power to avenge himself and yet will not do it. It describes the person who is slow to anger, and it is used of God Himself in His relationship with us. In our dealings with people, however unkind and hurting they are, we must exercise the same patience God exercises with us. Such patience is not the sign of weakness, but the sign of strength; it is not defeatism, but rather the only way is victory.

• LOVE NEVER GIVES UP. LOVE SUFFERS LONG.

2. Love is kind. There was no more religious a man than Philip the Second of Spain, and yet he founded the Spanish Inquisition and thought he was serving God by killing those who thought differently from him. It's possible for Christians to do good work and still be unkind. So many good church people would have sided with the rulers and not with Jesus if they had had to deal with the woman taken in adultery.

• LOVE CARES MORE FOR OTHERS, THAN FOR SELF.

3. Love knows no envy. It has been said that there are really only two classes of people in the world- "those who are millionaires and those who would like to be." There are two kinds of envy. The one who covets the possessions of other people; and such envy is very difficult to avoid because it is a very human thing. The other is worse- it grudges the very fact that others should have what he/she has not; it does not so much want things for himself/herself as wish that others had not got them. Meanness of the soul can sink no further than that.

• STOP BEING A HATER.

4. Love is no braggart. A person who loves as God loves does not boast about what he has and does-obsessed with one's status or importance. Love does not inflate a sense of one's own greatness.

• LOVE DOES NOT PARADE ITSELF. LOVE DOESN'T STRUT.

5. Love is not inflated with its own importance. Napoleon always advocated the sanctity of the home and the obligation of public worship for others. Of himself he said, "I am not a man like other men. The laws of morality do not apply to me." The really great person never thinks of his/her own importance. No one likes the "important" person.

• LOVE IS NOT PUFFED UP AND LOVE DOESN'T HAVE A SWELLED HEAD.

6. Love does not behave gracelessly. There is a kind of Christian which takes delight in being blunt and almost brutal. There is a graciousness in Christian love which never forgets that courtesy, tact and politeness are lovely.

• LOVE DOES NOT FLY OFF THE HANDLE.

7. Love does not insist upon its rights. There are those who always insist upon their privileges and those who always remember their responsibilities; those who are always thinking of what life owe them and those who never forget what they owe to life.

- LOVE ISN'T ALWAYS "ME FIRST." LOVE DOESN'T FORCE ITSELF ON OTHERS.

8. Love doesn't fly into a temper. The real meaning of this is that Christian love never becomes exasperated, annoyed or furious with people. Kipling said that it was the test of a man if he could keep his head when everyone else was losing his and blaming it on him, and when he was hated, he did not give way to hating. The person who is master of his/her temper can be master of anything.

- LOVE CHILLS.

9. Love does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received. The word translated, store up is an accountant's word. It is the word used for entering up an item in a ledger so that it will not be forgotten. That is precisely what so many people do. One of the great arts in life is to learn what to forget. Some Christians nurse their wrath to keep it warm; they brood over their wrongs, until it is impossible to forget them. Christian love has learned the lesson of forgetting.

- LOVE DOESN'T KEEP SCORE OF THE SINS OF OTHERS.

10. Love finds no pleasure in evil-doing. It is not so much delight in doing the wrong thing, as the malicious pleasure which comes to most of us when we hear something about someone else. It is one of the queer traits of human nature, that very often we prefer to hear of the misfortune of others than of their good fortune.

- DON'T REJOICE WHEN YOUR ENEMY SUFFERS

11. Love rejoices with the truth. There are times when we definitely do not want the truth to prevail; and still more times when it is the last thing we wish to hear. Christian love has no wish to veil the truth; it has nothing to conceal and so it is when the truth prevails.

- TAKES PLEASURE IN THE FLOWERING OF TRUTH

12. Love can endure anything. It is just possible that this may mean "love can cover anything," in the same sense that it will never drag into the light of day the faults and mistakes of others. Love would rather set about quietly mending things than publicly displaying and rebuking them. It also means that love can bear any insult, any injury, or any disappointment. It describes the kind of love that was in the heart of Jesus Himself.

- LOVE PUTS UP WITH A LOT.

13. Love is completely trusting. This characteristic has a twofold aspect. In relation to God it means that love takes God at His word and take every promise to heart. In relation to our fellow brothers and sisters, it means that love always believes the best about them. It is often true that we make people who we believe them to be. If we show that we do not trust people, we make them untrustworthy. If we show people we trust them absolutely, we may make them trustworthy.

- TRUST GOD ALWAYS. LOVE CAN EVEN DIGNIFY THE CONDEMNED.

14. Love never ceases to hope. Jesus believed that no man/woman is hopeless. As believers, we must speak words of encouragement and hope to each other. Disappointment and despair will have to flee in the presence of hope.

- ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE BEST.

15. Love bears anything with triumphant fortitude. Whatever you find yourself in the middle of determine to see it all the way through to finish. Go through this challenge with a positive attitude, knowing that this is going to work out for your good, also know that God's love is covering you.

- KEEP GOING TO THE END.

"I WANT TO KNOW WHAT LOVE IS"