



NEW TESTAMENT • LESSON 55

LOVE

Love is the most important gift of all.



MONDAY

THE STORY: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3

Love is required. The Corinthians were using the spiritual gifts to pridefully show off their spiritual abilities. All the while they were sinning through immorality and taking one another to court (see 1 Corinthians 5 and 6). Although Paul encouraged the Corinthians to pursue the gifts, he took time to interrupt his discussion of the gifts to teach them about love, which is what must motivate the exercise of every spiritual gift. In 1 John 4 we are told that we can love because God first loved us. Love is also a gift from God.

Unlike the other spiritual gifts, which a person may or may not have, love is required and ensures the proper operation of all the other gifts. To use a spiritual gift in an unloving way to further oneself or one's own cause is to accomplish nothing.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why is love the greatest gift of all? (Love is the required foundation for all the gifts. It glorifies God and serves others. If we exercise the gifts for our own benefit, we exalt ourselves but not Christ.)

Why can we consider love a spiritual gift? (Every good thing we do is only by the free gift and grace of God. Likewise, love, the most excellent way, is also a gift from God.)

PRAY:

Ask God to help you demonstrate love to each member of your family.



TUESDAY

THE STORY: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

Love is action. Love is a word cheapened by overuse today. We say we love pizza, candy, the beach, and a million other things. Love is defined as something we feel, not something we do. Here in Paul's description, not a single item refers to feeling. Paul doesn't say love is wonderful, delightful, or intense. Each description of love demonstrates a godly action toward another. Each of these godly actions requires sacrifice. Each of these sacrifices points to the ultimate sacrifice and demonstration of love: "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).

TALK ABOUT IT:

How do you use the word Love in everyday conversation? (Draw your children out regarding both the meaningful and trite ways they use the word love.)

How is the word love connected to the cross? (The cross is the greatest demonstration of love. If we review the list in Paul's description of love, we can find the gospel in each one of them. For instance, God was patient not to judge sin, but in kindness He sent His son, Jesus. Jesus honored the Father by submitting to the cross and giving up His glory in a demonstration of humility, the opposite of envy and boasting.)

Review the list of the characteristics of love. Take time to encourage one another by sharing the evidences of God's grace you see in each other's lives, where one or more of these characteristics of love are observable and at work.

PRAY:

Thank God for His demonstration of love on the cross.



WEDNESDAY WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

THE STORY: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:10

Many quote 1 Corinthians 13 on love and try to separate it from the gospel. Portions of this passage might sound wonderful at a wedding ceremony, but without an understanding of the gospel and its connection to it, this description of love cannot be fully appreciated. The gospel defines and gives meaning to love. We know that the Bible says, “God is love.” And the apostle John in 1 John 4:8-11 describes God’s ultimate demonstration of love as the death of His Son on the cross. John goes on to explain that the cross is the motivation for loving one another. Paul also points to this in 1 Corinthians 13:10 when he says, “when the perfect comes...” “The perfect” is Jesus.

Since God is love, and Jesus is God, and He lives forever, love never ends! All other worldly gifts and knowledge will be superseded by a more complete truth that will come to us in eternity, but the love of Christ will remain forever. The love Paul speaks of is not a humanistic, works-based love, but rather a love which thirst comes from a heart changed by grace.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Can we separate genuine love from the gospel? (No, genuine love grows out of the gospel. We love because God first loved us.)

Why is it difficult for us to love perfectly? (Although believers have been set free from the bondage of sin, we still have sin remaining within us, which wars against love. That is why Paul tells us to pursue love [see 1 Corinthians 14:1]. We must put off selfishness and put on love, as well as put off impatience, pride, anger, lies, and every other sin, and put on love.)

PRAY:

Ask God to help you put on love in honor of the way God loved us by sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins.



THURSDAY

THE STORY: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-14

Love never ends. When Jesus, the perfect, comes, we will no longer have a need for tongues or prophecy, healing or wisdom. All the gifts of the spirit will pass away because we will be in the presence of perfect wisdom, perfect knowledge, and perfect truth. Love, however, will not pass away. The cross - the greatest demonstration of love and the basis of our salvation - will be celebrated forever. Sin will be destroyed, and we will all live in perfect love toward one another and toward God. The theme of heaven is love. When we recognize this and live in the good of it today, we bring a little bit of heaven to earth. Perhaps there is no greater earthly expression of the love of Christ than when someone sacrifices for another. When we do, whether we realize it or not, we are honoring the sacrifice of Jesus, the author of love.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why will prophecy and knowledge pass away when Jesus returns? (We know only a small part, but when Jesus comes, we will see Him as He is. Our former understanding, all we knew about Jesus, will be nothing compared to seeing Him face to face.)

Why won't love pass away? (Love is the basis of our relationship with God. The cross is the way to heaven and our guarantee of remaining in heaven.)

Why is it important to pursue the spiritual gifts now? (God uses the spiritual gifts through us to encourage and build up others even while we wait for Christ to return.)

PRAY:

Pray that God would pour out both love and the spiritual gifts upon each member of your family.



FRIDAY ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

THE STORY: PSALM 31:5

Just before Jesus died, He spoke the words of this verse, “into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). The centurion who saw what happened praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47). Jesus had finished the work He set out to do. The wrath of the Father was satisfied. Our sins were paid for on the cross, which was the single greatest demonstration of the love of God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How did Jesus’ words affect the centurion? (The centurion saw that even in Jesus’ very last breath, He spoke not a single ill word to anyone. He could tell that Jesus was no ordinary man and that He was righteous.)

Why is it important that Jesus finished well, without sin? (Not only do we depend on Jesus taking our punishment on the cross, but we also depend upon Christ’s perfection for our righteousness. Jesus takes away our sin and gives us His perfect life in exchange. His perfect life, given to us, fulfills the requirements of God’s law.)

PRAY:

Thank Jesus for His death on the cross and for His perfect life. He truly is “the perfect”!