

- **Cultivate** definition: try to acquire or develop (a quality, sentiment, or skill).¹
- It is imperative that we understand that the fruit produced in the life of the Christian is a result of obedience and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gal 5:22-23 (ESV) ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The world’s definition of love:

“True love is a strong and lasting affection between spouses or lovers who are in a happy, passionate and fulfilling relationship. An example of true love is the emotion shared between a couple who has been married for 40 years and who are still passionate about each other and care deeply for each other.”²

God defines love differently:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (ESV) ¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

- Love is not optional. We must define it according to God’s definition.

1. GODLY LOVE IS NOT JUST A “FEELING.”

- Feelings are attached to love, but love is not defined by how I feel.
- **Agape** definition: “To have love for someone or something based on sincere appreciation and high regard”³

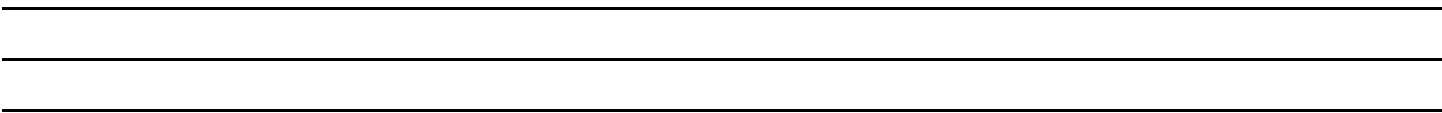
John 3:16 (ESV) For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- God loves us because we are valuable to Him. We are valuable because we are made in His image.

As Christians, we love because the Holy Spirit works in us to help us understand the value of one another.

1 John 4:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹We love **because he first loved us**. ²⁰If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

- But Love doesn’t stop at just *valuing each other...* We are called to ACT on the love that we have for one another.



2. GODLY LOVE IS MORE ABOUT WHAT I CAN GIVE THAN WHAT I CAN GET.

John 15:12 (ESV) This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

How has Jesus loved us? Jesus left Heaven to be a servant.

Matthew 20:28 (ESV) ...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

One of the first things we see happen in the early Church is people beginning to serve others as a result of the Holy Spirit showing up:

Acts 2:42-45 (ESV) ⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

- Their focus changed from what can I GET to what can I GIVE. Imagine if we applied this in our relationships? (Marriages, Parenting, Friendship)

3. GODLY LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL.

God doesn't love you any MORE or LESS based on what you do or don't do.

Romans 5:8 (ESV) but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

There are still consequences to our actions, but God's love is constant towards us!

Proverbs 3:11-12 (NIV) ¹¹My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹²because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THIS?

1. Are you dependent on the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in your life?
2. Have you been basing love on a feeling?
3. Has your love for God been conditional? Has your love for others been conditional?
4. Have you not made a decision to follow Jesus because you have had a broken understanding of love? Have you been believing the lie that God could never truly love you?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV) ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails...

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Corinthians 13; Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 2:3-11

Icebreaker: What are family rules or house rules you have for how you function as a household, or how to play a certain game?

1. What was important for you to hear from this week's sermon?
2. Read Galatians 5:16-26 and Matthew 22:36-40. Try re-telling what one passage says to a partner. What do these passages tell you about who God is and His way of life?
3. Who is a model for you in expressing love for God and for others? What have you seen in them?
4. What helps you walk by the Spirit? A) When are you more likely to walk in the old nature/flesh?
5. How would you recognize the fruit of love being formed in your life?
6. What is your response to what God is showing you?

Resources: Consider going through *Experiencing God* this summer!

Passages to prepare for next week, Cultivate! Week 3: Joy

This week, read Galatians 5:16-26; John 16:19-24; Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-5

As you read, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the passage saying about God, mankind, and how the world works?
- What do I learn about myself from this passage?
- What response does this require of me in my thinking, believing, and doing?

¹Definition of *cultivate* taken from Google Dictionary.

²Definition and example of *true-love* taken from YourDictionary.com by LoveToKnow Corp, copyright 2018

³Definition of *agape* taken from Jannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 292. You can also find translations of Greek and Hebrew words used in the Bible using the Concordances at BibleHub.com!

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