

Life on the Vine
Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community

Lesson One: **Love**

Introduction

1. List from memory the nine fruits of the Spirit. (No peeking at Galatians 5.22,23)
2. Although the exact order of the listing of all the fruits may not be important, which fruit is listed first? What might be the significance of “love” being the first fruit of the Spirit?
3. What are some other scriptures that emphasize the centrality of love?
4. Paul’s list of the nine fruit might best be understood as one fruit (love) with eight definitions or descriptions of what that love is. What are your thoughts on this?

Lesson Plan

1. The Many Faces of Love.
 - a. How many different emotions, attitudes and actions do we use to describe the English word “love?”
 - i. --
 - ii. --
 - iii. --
 - iv. --
 - v. --
 - b. The meaning of our word “love” is very _____.
2. Love in the Bible
 - a. Most people are aware that the language of the New Testament (Greek) provides at least four different words to describe what we refer to as “love.”
 - i. Erao – Sexual attraction
 - ii. Phileo – Friendship love
 - iii. Stergo – Family love
 - iv. Agapao – Godly love
3. Godly Love. If we are called on to love as God loves, we need to understand the characteristics of His love.
 - a. --God’s love is completely undeserved and unearned.
 - b. --God’s love is steadfast and constant.
 - c. --God’s love is a suffering love.
 - d. --God’s love knows no boundaries.

- e. --God's love is "other-directed".
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- 4. We are Called to Imitate God's Love
 - a. The love that God calls us to does not arise from within us but is a reflection of the kind of love He has for us. Read the following passages.
 - i. Leviticus 19.18; 33-34
 - ii. Ephesians 5.1-2
 - iii. 1 John 3.16-18
 - b. We must recognize that we can love in this manner only through the power of God in our lives (Romans 5.5) and we must work to prevent our self-centeredness from hindering the flow of God's love through us.

Class Discussion Questions

1. We are to imitate God's love—undeserved, steadfast, suffering, boundless and focused on others. In what areas of our lives do we most nearly demonstrate this kind of love? In what areas of our lives do we struggle in demonstrating this kind of love?
2. What would be the affect of God's kind of love on marriages? Church?
3. Do we tend to equate "love" with "like"? How are these different?
2. If you haven't done so earlier in the class, discuss how each of the other eight fruit of the Spirit are motivated by love and demonstrate love.
3. Contrast the positive descriptions of love as found in the fruit of the Spirit with Paul's listing in 1 Corinthians 13.4-7 of what love is *not*.