

THE HOLY SPIRIT

LESSON 13: FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LOVE

Main Idea: Love is one of the most often used, misapplied, and misunderstood words in the English language. People say they love everything from a close relative to a pair of shoes. When a word is used to mean almost anything, it means almost nothing. So how can we understand what love means as a fruit of the Spirit? Love is foundational to understanding the Bible. This lesson will help you grasp what Paul meant when he identified love as a fruit of the Spirit.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 John 4:16-21



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

The Greek word Paul used for love in Galatians 5:22 is *agape*. The idea of this type of love is one of action. This love is a divine attribute. Read what John wrote about love in 1 John 4:8: “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Love is best understood as the motivation behind the redemptive process (John 3:16). John explains love in action through the person and work of Jesus Christ. To help you understand how this type of love is best expressed in the body of Christ, read what John wrote in 1 John 3:16 and John 13:35. In addition, love defines your relationship to yourself (1 John 3:2), to God (Matthew 22:37), to your neighbor (Matthew 22:39), and to believers (John 13:35).

In fact, love for other believers is a defining aspect of the Christian experience. Read what John wrote in 1 John 4:7–8. This dimension of love is covenant love. It is a love born in the heart of God for lost humanity, revealed in His redemptive acts throughout history, and culminating in the sending of Jesus into the world as an offering for sin. It is a love incarnated in His Son Jesus, the Christ (John 14:8), which continues to be incarnated in the lives of His disciples.

INTIMACY

The concept of intimacy becomes distorted when the term *love* is abused. All too often, when the word *intimacy* is used, thoughts immediately go to sex. Today, what is missing from this word is its relational dimension.

Intimacy involves close personal interaction resulting in commitment, emotional bonding, and mutual care and concern. Such interaction requires a significant investment of time to really know a person. This is why Jesus spent nearly three years with His disciples. They ate, drank, slept, worked, and ministered together. Their lives were interwoven and inextricably linked. Intimacy involves personal feelings. While you may discuss surface topics at a social gathering, it is only when you share your feelings that intimacy grows. Through an authentic, intimate relationship, values are communicated and you begin to know a person at a deeper level.

Intimacy also involves personal care. This includes concern for a person’s physical and emotional needs. However, intimate love finds its highest expression in caring for another’s spiritual health.

In fact, nowhere is intimate love more practically expressed than in the confrontation of sin. Such confrontation is not an intrusion into the life of a



brother or sister; rather it is a responsibility that comes with being a believer in Christ.

STAYING POWER

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for God's covenant love is *chesed*. *Chesed* is God's steadfast and enduring love for His covenant people. This love pursued Israel throughout her endless cycles of rebellion. And it was this enduring love that sent Jesus to the cross. If you desire the fruit of the Spirit, especially love, to be evident in your life, you must ask yourself: What is the staying power of my love? How far am I willing to go in loving, forbearing, and restoring another? To what extent will I go to reach the lost for Christ?

As with all goals that appear far beyond reach, it is easy to become disheartened and not even try. But remember, this type of love is a fruit. Fruit is cultivated and grown. You cannot manufacture fruit. It is the natural result of a healthy fruit-bearing vine, tree, or plant. Second, this love comes from the Holy Spirit. This means He is the only one who can produce it.

So then, what is your role? Your part is to cultivate the work of the Spirit in your life by abiding in Christ (John 15:1-10).





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

What does this study say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in this study below, you will better understand what God is saying to you today.

As a believer, you are called to imitate the love of Christ. But what is Christ's love like? In the life and ministry of Jesus we possess the clearest revelation of God's love (John 1:18). An examination of the life of Christ can help you see the love of God as it is expressed through Jesus. This foundation provides a framework for the fruit of the Spirit that you are to express in your daily life.

- God's love is a self-giving love. (John 3:16; 15:13; 1 John 3:16).
- God's love is an intimate love. (Galatians 6:1)
- God's love as a fruit of the Spirit is an unconditional love. (Luke 23:34)
- God took the initiative to love you first. (1 John 4:19; Romans 5:8; 15:7)
- God's love involves a total or unlimited forgiveness such as we have experienced from Christ. (Colossians 3:13)
- True forgiveness sets no numerical limits. (Matthew 18:22)





BULLSEYE: Zero in on Your Target

How can this study apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:

- Who appears in the passages you read?
- Where are these passages taking place?
- When are these passages occurring?
- Why are these passages important?
- What is happening in these passages?
- What verse stood out to you? Why?



- Describe in your own words how Paul uses the word *love*.
- What are two things have you learned about love that you had not known previously?
- From the Crosshair section, with which point did you most resonate? Why?
- On a scale of one to four, with one being very well and four being not very well, how well do you show the fruit of love? Write out a plan to improve.



USING MY *FIREBIBLE*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the *FireBible* and answer the accompanying questions:

- 1 John 3:16. What does “lay down your life” mean in today’s context?

- Galatians 6:1. What does the word “restore” mean? How would love as a fruit of the Spirit help you restore?

- Luke 23:34. How can you apply the words of Jesus into your life as a fruit of the Spirit?





TRIGGER PULL: Hit Your Target

How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers below or in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the thought you experienced to your family and to others around you?

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