

## ***Session 8 Stage #5: Loving Jesus By Loving One Another***

### **I. REVIEW: THERE ARE 5 STAGES TO GROWING IN LOVE**

- A. The foundational premise in this teaching series is that God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). This quality of love is foundational to life in God's kingdom.  
<sup>9</sup>***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)***
- B. The love in God's heart has at least 5 expressions that are deeply interrelated.
1. ***God's love for God:*** Each person in the Trinity intensely loves the others with all their heart.
  2. ***God's love for His people:*** He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength.
  3. ***Our love for God:*** God's very own love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (Jn. 17:26).
  4. ***Our love for ourselves:*** We love ourselves in God's love and for God's sake.
  5. ***Our love for others:*** We love others in the overflow of experiencing God's love (1 Jn. 4:19).
- C. ***Stage 1*** is to receive increased understanding of the love in the relationships within the Trinity. The way God loves within the Trinity is the *only* way that He loves us—*He always loves in fullness*.
- D. ***Stage 2*** is to receive increased understanding of the love that God has for us (Eph. 1:17; 3:18-19).
- E. ***Stage 3*** is to receive an increased impartation of love for Jesus (Jn. 17:26).
- F. ***Stage 4*** is to love ourselves in the love that God has for us. We see and love ourselves through the lens of Jesus' love for us, His work on the cross, His great investment in us, and our value to Him. The Bible calls us both *to love ourselves* (Mt. 22:39) and *to hate our lives* (Lk. 14:26).  
<sup>39</sup>***“And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Mt. 22:39)***
1. *We love who we are in Christ*—our new identity in Christ and what we do in God's will.
  2. *We hate our lives*—who we are outside of Christ and what we do outside of God's will.
- G. ***Stage 5*** is to love others in the overflow of God's own love (Jn. 15:12). Our love for others is an expression of our love for Jesus (Heb. 6:10) and an indicator of how mature our love for Him is.  
<sup>9</sup>***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love...<sup>11</sup>*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy [gratitude] may be full. <sup>12</sup>*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn. 15:9-12)*****
- H. We will never be able to love people more than we love ourselves in the love of God. We will forever delight in one another in the way in which God delights in His people. He wants us to enter into what He feels about others. He wants us to enjoy how much He enjoys them.  
<sup>4</sup>***But you shall be called Hephzibah...for the LORD delights in you... (Isa. 62:4)***
- I. We are to love *all* those whom God loves—including ourselves and those who differ from us socially, emotionally, intellectually, etc. We cannot love Jesus or others well if we are overwhelmed with the “emotional traffic” of feelings of self-hatred, rejection, comparisons, bitterness, etc.

## II. ACTIVELY LOVING EVEN OUR ENEMIES

- A. Our love for others is to extend beyond loving only the people who enjoy the same things that we enjoy and who treat us well. We must not only love the “cool” people—who are popular and influential enough to enhance our position and status, etc. Only by loving Jesus and ourselves are we able to overflow in love even for people *who are not like us* and *who do not treat us rightly*. We are empowered to love them in the overflow of the gratitude and joy of being loved by God.
- B. Jesus’ command to love others—even those who do not treat us well—is the highest summit of love and spiritual maturity. It is much more than sentiment, but also has practical actions. This command is praised by many, mocked by some, yet ignored by most, even in the body of Christ.

<sup>43</sup>“**You have heard it said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’** <sup>44</sup>**But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you...** <sup>45</sup>**that you may be sons of your Father...** **He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good...** <sup>46</sup>**If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?...** <sup>48</sup>**be perfect, just as your Father...is perfect.”** (Mt. 5:44-48)

1. Jesus corrected the Pharisees’ distortion of the command to love. They limited it by taking out “*as yourself*” and adding the command to “*hate your enemy.*” They limited the command to loving only the people who were kind to them and not those who troubled them.
2. **Love your enemies:** Our enemies are adversaries who seek to hurt or hinder us or who hope to see us fail. We are to *act in the opposite spirit* of those who mistreat us. (Here Jesus is not addressing the issue of self-defense against a criminal who physically attacks your family).
3. **Do not even tax collectors do the same?:** Greedy, dishonest, and manipulative people love the people who love them. Unbelievers show love to the those who agree with their tastes in food, music, politics, sports, entertainment, and recreation and who treat them with honor.
4. The natural human mindset is: “If you do something bad to me, then I will do something bad to you. If you do something good to me, I will do something good for you.” *To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human and to return good for evil is divine.*” (Alfred Plummer, 1852-1916)
5. **Bless those who curse you:** We are to speak words of blessing to them and about them. We are to go beyond refusing to answer their insult with an insult. It is surely a victory to say nothing negative and to refuse to retaliate against an enemy, but Jesus calls us to do more than keeping quiet and staying a distance from them. Some say, “I can’t even look at them in the meeting,” or “I refuse to be in the same room with them.” But acting in the opposite spirit of our enemies by loving, instead of avoiding them, causes us to face our bitterness and fear.
6. **Do good to those who hate you:** As we seek to obey this, our feelings change (2 Cor. 3:17). This is how we experience the supernatural realm and overcome dark emotions in our heart.  
<sup>14</sup>**Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse...** <sup>20</sup>**“If your enemy is hungry, feed him...”** <sup>21</sup>**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** (Rom. 12:14-21)

<sup>17</sup>**...where the Spirit of the Lord is [embraced], there is liberty [in our heart].** (2 Cor. 3:17)

7. **Pray for those who spitefully use you:** Our love increases as we pray for our enemies. It is impossible to pray for someone without eventually growing in love for them. Jesus understands the design of the human heart and thus *knows that our love follows our prayers*.
8. **Sons of your Father:** God blesses evil people because it is His nature to love. Our Father loves people while they are unthankful and evil; He doesn't wait until they are grateful.  
<sup>35</sup>***“Love your enemies...[as] sons of the Most High. He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” (Lk. 6:35)***
9. **Be perfect:** Jesus called us to live *perfectly* by seeking to walk in all the light the Spirit gives. This is where we experience deep liberty in our heart from dark emotions (2 Cor. 3:17).  
<sup>17</sup>***...where the Spirit of the Lord is [embraced], there is liberty [in our heart]. (2 Cor. 3:17)***

### III. TO SEE WHAT THE SPIRIT SEES IN PEOPLE

- A. Paul's prayer included the Lord helping us to see how He sees and values others (Eph. 1:18).  
<sup>17</sup>***...Father of glory may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,***  
<sup>18</sup>***the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Eph. 1:17-18)***
- B. I encourage us to pray, “Lord, let me see and feel what You see in and feel about my brother.” As we see even a small measure of God's glory in a person's life, we are to speak it to them.
- C. We are to see one another according to who they are in the Spirit (or in God's eyes), not the flesh. We must not regard or evaluate and define others according to the flesh or according to how they look or how much money, influence, or gifting they have, but see their success and value in Christ.  
<sup>14</sup>***For the love of Christ compels us...***<sup>16</sup>***from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh...***  
<sup>17</sup>***If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:14-17)***
- D. To live “according to the flesh” includes agreeing with the enemy's false narrative about others' lives. To live “according to the Spirit” includes agreeing with how He sees them in Christ.  
<sup>5</sup>***Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (Rom. 8:5)***
  1. To “set our mind” on the things of the flesh includes more than choosing *vices* like lust, anger, greed, etc. It includes agreeing with a dark narrative about the failures in the lives of others.
  2. To “set our mind” on the things of the Spirit includes more than pursuing *virtues* as love and purity, etc. It includes agreeing with His narrative about others and how He feels about them.
- E. The call to love one another requires a comprehensive re-ordering of how we think and process life. Seeking to love people like God loves us results in exposing our sin, need, and spiritual immaturity.
- F. God created each of us in a unique way as His workmanship (Eph. 2:10). Each person is a special object of His creative work—His work of art.  
<sup>10</sup>***We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works... (Eph. 2:10)***

- G. Our unity is directly proportionate to *how much we see* of God's glory given to other believers.  
<sup>22</sup>*The glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. (Jn. 17:22)*
- H. The redeemed are crowned with glory and honor by virtue of Jesus' heart, cross, and resurrection.  
<sup>7</sup>*You have crowned him with glory and honor...<sup>10</sup>*It was fitting for Him [the Father]...in bringing many sons to glory...*" (Heb. 2:7-10)*
- I. From eternity past, God's plan has been to give His people the riches of His glory as vessels of His mercy (Rom. 9:23-24).  
<sup>23</sup>*...that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,<sup>24</sup>*even us whom He called... (Rom. 9:23-24)**
- J. The greatest problem in the Church today is a *low view of God*, which is inevitably followed by a *low view of salvation*, resulting in a *low view of God's people*. A high view of God and His glory will lead to a high view of who the redeemed are in Christ.
- K. Because all people are created in God's image, they deserve to receive love from us (the love that we receive from God), even if they respond to it in a wrong way or even mistreat us.

#### IV. THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENTS: THEY FULFILL GOD'S LAW

- A. God's highest purposes are fulfilled as His people walk in love (Mt. 22:40).  
<sup>37</sup>*Jesus said, "You shall love the LORD...with all your heart...and with all your mind' ...  
<sup>38</sup>*This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>*The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup>*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Mt. 22:37-40)****
- B. *As yourself*: We are not called to love others "instead of" ourselves but "as" ourselves by using the same standard in measuring love for others that we use for ourselves.
1. We are to love our neighbors "as" ourselves or in the overflow of the gratitude that we have in being loved by Jesus in the way the Father loves Him, and thus loving ourselves in His love.
  2. We are to seek our neighbors' benefit "as," or "with the same focus and energy as," we seek it for ourselves. To walk in genuine love as defined by God is much more than sentimentalism.
- C. *Hang all*: Jesus emphasized how connected the two commandments are to God's eternal purposes. God's purposes as seen in the Law and Prophets depend, or hang (like a bucket on a rope), on love.  
<sup>8</sup>*He who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>*The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," ... are summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>... Love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10)**
- <sup>12</sup>*...whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Mt. 7:12)*