

## ***Session 7 Loving Others: God's Primary Plan Is the Local Church***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. God loves us with the intensity that God loves God (Jn. 15:9). Abiding in love includes taking the initiative to love others. He *empowers* us to love by receiving His love, and He *commissions* us to express His love to people who He loves. Our love for others is the measure of our love for Jesus. We do not passively wait, with a spirit of entitlement, for someone to love and befriend us.  
<sup>9</sup>***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love...<sup>12</sup>This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn. 15:9-12)***
- B. Our commission to love one another extends beyond loving only the people who enjoy the same things that we enjoy. The spiritually strong believers are to pursue the weaker ones, knowing that the weaker ones cannot enhance their natural resources, influences, or profile, etc.
- C. Jesus is retuning for a Church filled with glory that is established in every tribe and nation. His glory includes His love, power, and insight, etc., being manifest as believers love one another. He will have a people in every nation who will love others in the way that He loves them.  
<sup>27</sup>***...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church... (Eph. 5:27)***
- D. God ordained that each believer be a “joint of supply” that reveals His love to others.  
<sup>16</sup>***“... the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body... (Eph. 4:16)***
- E. The Father had a deep desire to have a family who experiences and expresses His love to others. Jesus’ primary revelation of the transcendent God of all power and splendor is that He is a father. He is a relational God. He thinks, feels, and acts like a father. He wants to share the family life of the Trinity with redeemed humans, who are invited and empowered to enjoy His love.
- F. The believers in each area are to participate in a local church. Together they have a corporate assignment to reveal the Father to other believers and to the lost. Jesus continues to proclaim, to make known, the Father’s name. The twofold result is that those who receive the Father’s love directly by the Spirit or indirectly through His people will surely love God and others more.  
<sup>26</sup>***“I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (Jn. 17:26)***
- G. The Father wants to express His heart as a father in every geographical place through spiritual families that give each believer care, love, and a sense of belonging. He is the father of His family, not just the leader of His army. He wants each believer to play their part in expressing His heart in the specific geographic area where He puts them in each season of their life.
- H. He wants unbelievers in every nation to see love consistently expressed in local churches to their weaker members and the lost. They will conclude that God is a father who inspires such love.  
<sup>35</sup>***By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (Jn. 13:35)***

I. One of Jesus’ greatest prophecies is that He will build the Church as spiritual families that are committed to the first and second commandments. Jesus’ top priority is to build His Church. The Church is God’s idea not man’s. He is returning for a deeply connected Church filled with glory.  
*<sup>18</sup>“I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Mt. 16:18-19)*

1. Jesus promised to release His authority to *bind* the works of the enemy and to *loose*, or release, the works of God.
2. The phrase *gates of Hades* speaks of Satan’s authority. Jesus promised that the power or authority of hell would not prevail against His people when they function as kingdom communities, or spiritual families (local churches). Imagine a people in whom the enemy has no inroads and where each believer is walking free of demonic influence in their life and in their family.
3. The condition for the fullness of this promise is that His people function as spiritual families. God has ordained the local church as a place of the greatest power, blessing, protection, and safety. He is changing the understanding and expression of the Church across the nations. The promise of a victorious Church operating in power is in the context of God building the local church, in which the strongest ones pursue the weakest.

J. The fullness of God’s purpose and power can only be experienced as the Body of Christ functions together. Walking in our full destiny, individually and corporately, is connected to our pursuing weak people in love.  
*<sup>18</sup>...to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height...  
<sup>19</sup>to know [experience and express] the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:18–19)*

K. The ***width*** of love speaks of embracing each type of person and personality in every nationality. The ***length*** of love speaks of reaching far beyond our failure in this life and continuing forever. The ***depth*** of love points to how far Jesus descended and what it cost Him to save us (Phil. 2:8). The ***height*** of love speaks of the measure of exaltation that we receive in His grace (Rev. 3:21).

L. One aspect of God’s love is only revealed to us as we give to others; another aspect is only revealed to us when we receive from others. Much is lost in our spiritual life (and in the life of our children) if we forsake assembling together and instead embrace a “churchless Christianity.”  
*<sup>25</sup>...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:25)*

## II. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (*i.e.*, FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Which point in this session would you like more understanding of?
2. Which point most inspired or challenged you? Why? What will you do differently to apply it?

3. Which point do you want to impart to a younger believer? Why? How will you elaborate on it?
4. What is one point in this session that needs to be emphasized to the larger Body of Christ? Why?