

Session 3 A Life That Manifests the Fragrance of God (Jn. 15:12)

“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)

I. THE COMMAND TO LOVE: PUTTING GOD’S GLORY ON DISPLAY

- A. John 15:12 is a reiteration of John 13:35 where Jesus declared that when His people love others it puts God’s glory and goodness on display for others to see what His personality is like, especially in His kindness for sinful people, and it is the way God has chosen to usher us into a supernatural quality in our inner life. By our loving others, Jesus looks attractive to those who observe it.

¹²*“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn. 15:12)*

³⁵*“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:35)*

²³ *“...that they may be made perfect in one [love and unity], and that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me.” (Jn. 17:23)*

- B. The Lord intentionally and joyfully bound His reputation on earth to the measure of love that His people walk in. His plan is to manifest His fragrance or glory into the earth (2 Cor. 2:14-15) through His people who are His “official” witnesses and ambassadors (Isa. 43:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:20).

¹⁴*...God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses [manifests, NAS] the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵*For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (2 Cor. 2:14-15)**

1. ***Fragrance:*** The purpose of fragrance is to attract. There is a lifestyle in which God’s fragrance is manifest through people. It wows, woos, and inspires believers and unbelievers.
2. ***To God:*** The Father is attracted to the beautiful lifestyle of the one who seeks to love deeply.
3. ***Always leads:*** God leads our life specifically to give us the best opportunity to “triumph” in our inner man. He has set us up for spiritual success gained by embracing the way of love.
4. ***In every place:*** His plan is that Jesus’ attractiveness be seen in us everywhere we go.

- C. People who walk in God’s love and joy while being mistreated or when suffering make Jesus look satisfying and attractive to those who observe them. When you have joy and confidence in Jesus and walk in love while being mistreated or when suffering, then people want to know how you do it. So they ask about “the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). They ask because they do not know how to have joy or to love difficult people when they are being mistreated or suffering.

¹⁴*But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake...¹⁵be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear... (1 Pet. 3:14-15)*

- D. God leads us in a way to triumph spiritually—after people slander us, then they observe our godly responses which leads some to glorify God. God’s advertisement to unbelievers is the joy and love we have in difficult times—it declares there is an all-satisfying God whose leadership is perfect.

¹²*having your conduct honorable...that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works [godly responses] which they observe, [they] glorify God... (1 Pet. 2:12)*

II. THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS (MT. 22:37-39)

- A. The two great commands are deeply connected. We love people best as an overflow of loving God, and we love God best when we seek to love people. By seeking and loving God, our lives are empowered to love people better. A man will love his wife better as he loves and connects more with God. Moms will love their children better as they love and connect more with God.

³⁷***“You shall love the LORD...with all your heart...”***³⁸***This is the first and great commandment.***

³⁹***And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Mt. 22:37-39)***

- B. **Premise:** Every human has great value and dignity being created in God’s image (Gen. 12:7). When we see human beings as created in God’s image, then we see that they possess great value regardless of the quality of their character or skills. By seeing God’s value and love for each person, we are energized to love them in a greater measure with more consistency. I have observed that when people see others as “Image Bearers” of God they love them more. It is hard to dismiss anyone—even the most sinful and broken people when seeing them through God’s eyes.

²⁷***So God created man...in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:27)***

III. REVIEW: ENCOUNTERING GOD’S LOVE AND JOY EMPOWERS US (JN. 15:9-12)

- A. Encountering God’s love and joy empowers us to walk in sacrificial love for others (Jn. 15:12). Notice the progression: we are to abide in God’s love (15:9) with a spirit of obedience (15:10), which in time results in experiencing His joy (15:11), which empowers us to love others in sacrificial ways (15:12). We lack the ability to love consistently without receiving a measure of joy.

⁹***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in [focus on, engage with] My love...***

¹⁰***If you keep My commandments...¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you...¹²This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn. 15:9-12)***

- B. **I also have loved you** (15:9): Love grows in us as we see how Jesus sees and loves us and how He demonstrates His kindness towards us, especially in our sin and failure (Eph. 2:6-7). His love for us is the basis by which *we see and love ourselves* through the lens of His grace (Mt. 22:39).
- C. **My joy will remain** (15:11): **God’s joy in us** includes: the **pleasure of interacting with Jesus** (Ps. 16:8; Jn. 3:29; 16:14) and **a deep sense of well-being** and confidence in His leadership (Rom. 8:28). His joy in us especially in times of suffering declares that the reality of relating to Jesus brings us an “all satisfying joy”—this displays the attractiveness of Jesus and makes others want this joy.
- D. **Love one another as I have loved you** (15:12): Here, Jesus tells us how far He is willing to go in empowering us to love people in the way that He does. God’s commands to us include His promise of enabling us to obey them. Love grows in us as we see the image of God in other people and as we see His love towards us. His joy in us sustains us through the sacrifices that consistent love requires—it empowers us to better understand how He sees others (even our enemies). We are filled with gratitude that God loves us in a way that we did not deserve. This empower us to love others.

- E. **Summary:** Having a kingdom mindset equips us to love others—even those who mistreat us.
1. We put Jesus' attractiveness on display by loving people who mistreat us (Jn. 13:35; 17:23).
 2. We see the image of God in others—seeing their great value and dignity (Gen. 1:27).
 3. We see God's love for us in our weakness and seeing ourself through the lens of grace (Jn. 15:9).
 4. We see God's love and investment in others—even those who mistreat us (Mt. 25:40; Jn. 3:16).
 5. We will gain more freedom from spiritual dullness by engaging in love (2 Cor. 4:17; Gal. 6:7-9).
 6. We see the beauty of compassion that helps people—they enjoy God and bless others (Mt. 9:36).
 7. We have the assurance of receiving eternal rewards for loving others (Mt. 10:42; Heb. 6:10).

IV. LOVING PEOPLE WHO MISTREAT YOU: THE WAY TO A SUPERNATURAL INNER LIFE

- A. We are to love people who mistreat us as well as those who are not interesting to us (Lk. 6:27-38). We naturally love people who love us and who enjoy the things we enjoy (Lk. 6:32; cf. Mt. 5:46). Luke 6:27-38 is the most detailed description of what it looks like practically to love others in the way God loves and acts towards enemies. We must realign our heart many times to respond in love.
- ³²“...*For even sinners love those who love them...*”³⁵***Love your enemies, do good...you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.*** ³⁶***Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*** ³⁷***Judge not, and you shall not be judged...forgive, and you will be forgiven.*** ³⁸***Give [mercy, money, etc.], and it will be given to you: good measure...running over...for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.***” (Lk. 6:32-38)
1. We will receive God's help as we act in the opposite spirit of our enemies—by loving them.
 2. Seeking to love those who mistreat us ushers us by the Spirit into a supernatural inner life—it releases God's fragrance every place we go, and it puts God's glory on open display.
- B. God loves people while they are unthankful and evil (Lk. 6:35); He loves by providing sun and rain to wicked men. God blesses evil people because it is His nature to love perfectly (Rom. 5:10).
- C. ***Sons of the Most High:*** In loving this way, you are proof that you are receiving God's love. This is the most convincing way to prove that God is a Father who loves broken people, even those who are ungrateful and evil. You will be a trophy of grace that displays the attractiveness of Jesus. Alfred Plummer (1852-1916), a Church of England pastor, said, “*To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human and to return good for evil is divine.*”
- D. Actively loving our enemies includes our ***words*** (bless), ***deeds*** (do good), and ***prayers***.
- ⁴⁴***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...***⁴⁵***that you may be sons of your Father...*** (Mt. 5:44-45)
1. ***Love your enemies:*** Enemies are adversaries who intentionally seek to hurt or hinder us.
 2. ***Bless those who curse you:*** We are to speak words of blessing to them and about them.
 3. ***Do good to those who hate you:*** We are to look for practical ways to do good to them.
 4. ***Pray for those who use you:*** By praying for an enemy, we stand in the gap before God for them. This increases our love. It is impossible to pray for someone without loving them.

- E. God promised that our inner man will be strengthened and renewed with His glory. Glory in this age includes a liberated heart with joy; in the age to come, it includes eternal rewards. We are not content to live in spiritual dullness but are zealous to experience more of glory. Being faithful when persecuted and loving those who mistreat us is the necessary path to experience more of His glory.

¹⁶*Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*

¹⁷*For our light affliction...is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:16-17)*

- F. Embracing this progressively ushers us into a supernatural lifestyle. We lose much good in our relationship with God by neglecting actively love enemies. If we get preoccupied with those who mistreat us, then we become far more vulnerable to being weighed down by offense and bitterness.

V. THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S GLORY: REVELATION OF HIS LOVING EMOTIONS

- A. Moses prayed to see God’s glory. God answered by promising to reveal His goodness and proclaim His Name (His personality and emotions) to Moses. God has the best personality. He is the most kind, good, pure, happy, smart, passionate Person that exists.

¹⁸*Moses said, “Please, show me Your glory.”¹⁹Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you...” (Ex. 33:18-19)*

- B. The very pinnacle of God’ glory is when He reveals and manifests His loving emotions (Ex. 34:6).

⁶*The LORD ...proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth...” (Ex. 34:6)*

- C. **The Lord is merciful:** The Lord is tender in relating to us in our weaknesses and sin. Mercy is the first aspect of His personality that He revealed to Moses; it is the one we need first and most. The Lord delights in mercy. It is one of His favorite things to do in leading the universe (Mic. 7:18).

¹⁸*Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity...He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)*

- D. **The Lord is gracious:** He does not give us what we deserve. He is generous in how He evaluates our weak efforts to obey and serve Him. He remembers our frailty and does not reject us because of our weakness. We may be surprised and exasperated by our weakness, but God is not.

¹⁰*He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities...*

¹⁴*For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:10-14)*

- E. **The Lord is longsuffering:** He bears long with us instead of “writing us off” or exposing our failures. He suffers long with our sinful responses and does not lose enthusiasm for us when we fail.

- F. **The Lord is abounding in goodness:** He overflows with good plans for us. The song that is recorded most often in Scripture is: “The Lord is good. His mercy endures forever” (1 Chr. 16:34; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3; 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11). God will not withhold His best from us (Ps. 84:11).

- G. God’s personality is loving as defined in Scripture. We are to express His love (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

⁴*Love suffers long and is kind...⁵is not provoked, thinks no evil...⁸*Love never fails. (1 Cor. 13:4-8)**