

Exuberant Christian Love and Deliberate Spiritual Growth

Christians should love fervently and give themselves to deliberate spiritual growth.

Introduction: Priming the pump for tonight's discussion.

- Let's begin with our own observations. Was there a moment where God spoke to you, showed you something new, or reminded you of a familiar truth through the message this week?
- Luke 13:35 says that men everywhere would know that we belong to Christ by the love that we have for one another. Let's remember that our greatest witness to the world is love for each other. Let's share any initial thoughts or reflections about the importance of this idea.

Exploration: Questions to guide our group discussion.

- Our Christian identity should result in exuberant Christian love for the Brethren. Peter taught us that we should love one another with several kinds of love, including friendship/brotherhood, and the agape love of God. Agape is love decided upon in advance. Let's discuss how powerful it is to make a conscious decision to love someone that depends entirely upon our will, and not on their response.
- Peter wrote that we should love one another sincerely, fervently, and with a pure heart. We learned that this means that our love shouldn't be fake or "put on", that it should endure over time, and that we should love free from impure motives like selfishly getting something in return. How does it feel to be loved like this, to love someone like this, and how does this contrast with the conditional love of the world?
- Our Christian identity should result in a heart for deliberate spiritual growth. Peter says that a Christian should desire spiritual growth. Clearly, this is an action of our will that involves developing an appetite that we didn't have before we knew Christ. He gives us a clue in 2:3 when he speaks of having tasted Christ. How does tasting Christ in salvation lead to an appetite for spiritual growth? What is the relationship between getting a taste of Jesus and desiring His Word?
- There are lots of ways that we go about ingesting the Word, but we have to be intentional in all of them. Since the Word is the means of our spiritual growth, let's share some tips and tricks for making a priority of the Word of God. What are we each doing that is working, and where can we use a tweak?

Additional Scriptures for Deeper Study:

- Matthew 22:36-40
- John 13:34-35
- 1 John 4:20-21
- Ephesians 4:29-32
- Luke 13:34-35

Application: How can I apply this to my life this week?

- Would you make a commitment to be a person who loves other Christians? It's easy sometimes to think of Christians in terms of "us" and "them." Is there a bias or a prejudice that needs to be addressed so that you are loving with true friendship, and with unconditional love decided upon in advance...especially in our local fellowship?
- When it comes to spiritual growth, we want to continue advancing. In Hebrews 5:12, the author chastised his audience for being immature. He says that they should be teachers, but they were stuck on the first things of faith. What would Jesus say to someone who was stuck and not progressing in Christ? How would our study this week inform that conversation?