

## LOVE AND JOY

**THE NEW TESTAMENT READING FROM FIRST JOHN GIVES QUITE A PICTURE IN WORDS OF “LOVE” AND ITS “BENEFIT” - “JOY”. THE WORD “LOVE” IS FOUND OVER 300 TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT! GOD, THROUGH SCRIPTURE, MUST CONSIDER IT AN IMPORTANT CHARACTER TRAIT FOR US TO HAVE. HOWEVER, CULTURE HAS DRAGGED THE WORD THROUGH THE MUD, WASHED IT, AND GIVEN A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO IT. “LOVE” TO MANY MEANS A FEELING. THE OTHER NIGHT WE WATCHED ONE OF THE HOME BUYING SHOWS AND THE COUPLE WENT INTO A HOUSE “LOVING” THE KITCHEN, “LOVING” THE MASTER BEDROOM OR “LOVING” THE HARDWOOD FLOORS. THE ROMANCE NOVELS AND MOVIES SUPPORT THIS IDEA OF A FEELING, SOMETHING YOU CAN TURN ON OR OFF QUICKLY.**

**FOR DISCIPLES AND FOLLOWERS OF JESUS “LOVE” IS DEFINED VERY DIFFERENTLY. THE DEFINITION WE USE IS FOUND IN I CORINTHIANS 13:4-8** *“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends....”*

**THIS IS OUR “STANDARD” BY WHICH WE SHOULD LIVE, BUT HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? BY OUR VERY NATURE AND FREE WILL WE DO NOT CHOOSE TO LOVE IN SUCH A WAY. LOOK IN GALATIANS 5:22 AND 23** *“By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.”* **THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO LIVE OUT THE DEFINITION OF LOVE FOUND IN FIRST CORINTHIANS. THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT MATCH UP WELL WITH THE TRAITS OF LOVE.**

**THE QUESTION IS “HOW DO WE RECEIVE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT” IN ORDER TO LOVE ACCORDING TO THE DEFINITION IN FIRST CORINTHIANS? LUKE 11, VERSE 10** *“For everyone who asks and keeps on asking receives; and he who seeks and keeps on seeking finds; and to him who knocks and keeps on knocking, the door shall be opened.”* **IN HOW MANY EXAMPLES DID JESUS TALK ABOUT JUST ASKING AND YOU WILL RECEIVE? JESUS TALKED ABOUT THE MAN PERSISTENT IN ASKING HIS NEIGHBOR AT ALL HOURS FOR SOMETHING OR AS JESUS SAID “you do not have because you do not ask”. WE ALL HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. WHEN WE ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BRING OUT IN US THAT WHICH IS MORE CHRIST-LIKE. WE CAN LIVE A LIFE WHERE OTHERS WILL SEE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR ACTION AS WELL AS THE LOVE DESCRIBED IN FIRST CORINTHIANS.**

**WHAT “ACTIONS” WILL PEOPLE SEE FROM US AS A RESULT OF THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT AND LOVE? THERE ARE FIVE TRAITS THAT WE CAN DISPLAY, NOT THAT THIS IS A COMPLETE LIST**

THE FIRST IS “**COMPASSION**”, THAT WE REALLY CARE ABOUT THE PEOPLE AROUND US.

**SECOND IS CONSISTENCY OF CHARACTER.** I AM SURE YOU KNOW SOMEONE IN THIS FAMILY AT CENTENNIAL THAT YOU CAN COUNT ON, BECAUSE OF THEIR PROVEN CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER.

**THIRD IS “COOPERATION”.** PAUL DESCRIBES A PERSON HE WAS SENDING TO HELP, BECAUSE “*he was his brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier*”. **IN OTHER WORDS HE WAS IN THE FAMILY OF GOD, HE WAS IN FELLOWSHIP, SERVING AND WORKING TOGETHER.** HE WAS A SOLDIER BECAUSE HE WAS IN A SPIRITUAL BATTLE- TO DEFEND, SUPPORT AND PROTECT EACH OTHER IN THE THE FAMILY OF GOD. ONE OF THE WAYS I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT IS DONE, IS WITH **PRAYER!**

**FOURTH IS “COMMITMENT”.** JESUS TELLS US “*let our yes be yes and our no be no*”. **WE CANNOT GROW WEARY OR GIVE UP AT THE FIRST SIGN OF DIFFICULTY. FAITH AND HOPE ALONG WITH PRAYER HELP US TO ACCOMPLISH THINGS FOR GOD THAT WITHOUT HIM WE DEEM IMPOSSIBLE.**

**FIVE IS HAVING “COURAGE”.** EVERYDAY THERE ARE PEOPLE THAT BECAUSE THEY STOOD UP FOR THEIR FAITH THERE WAS A COST. **WE MUST NOT BE DISCOURAGED, GOD IS WITH US.**

*THESE ACTIONS BROUGHT ON BY THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT AND LOVE WILL BRING JOY TO US, BECAUSE WE ARE LIVING THE LIFE THAT GOD DESIRES FOR US. **GOD BRINGS TO US REAL BLESSINGS, NOT JUST THE ABUNDANCE OF “THINGS”.** REMEMBER IN JESUS' OWN WORDS MATTHEW 6:31-33 “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.”*

**JOY IS A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** AND SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE TAKEN FROM US. PAUL WROTE FROM PRISON LETTERS TO THE GALATIANS AND THE PHILIPPIANS. **PAUL’S ENDLESS THEME WAS JOY AND REJOICING! HOW COULD HE DO THAT? BECAUSE HE HAD THE LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT! THERE ARE THREE PARTS TO THE JOY THAT PAUL HAD.**

**FIRST, JOY IS FOUND IN LOVING RELATIONSHIPS.** IN MANY OF THE LETTERS PAUL WROTE HE SPOKE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS HE HAD WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES. **RELIGION IS NOT ABOUT RULES AND REGULATIONS IT IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS!** IN RELATIONSHIPS IS WHERE GOD KNOWS WE WILL FIND REAL JOY.

**SECOND, JOY IS FOUND IN A GROWING FAITH.** AS OUR FAITH GROWS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS GROWS CLOSER AND WE EXPERIENCE MORE OF THAT JOY.

**THIRD, JOY IS FOUND IN LIVING A LIFE WORTHY OF OUR CALLING .** WHEN WE WALK IN THE SPIRIT WE WILL IN OUR ACTIONS DEMONSTRATE TO THOSE AROUND US A CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER.

**IN TODAY'S READING GOD IS DEFINED BY LOVE.** *THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLS WITHIN US AND THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT HELP US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AND DISCOVER JOY IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH ONE ANOTHER!*

HERE IS A STORY THAT SHOWS US **LOVE IS AN ACTION.** GOD LOVED US AND TOOK ACTION.

*A traveler fell into a deep pit & couldn't get out. Several people came along & saw him struggling in the pit.*

*The sensitive person said, "I feel for you down there." But didn't help him out.*

*The reflective person said, "It's logical that as long as there are pits someone would fall into one." But didn't help him out.*

*The artistic person said, "I can give you some ideas on how to decorate your pit." But didn't help him out.*

*The judgmental person said, "Only bad people fall into a pit." He didn't help him out either.*

*The curious person asked, "How did you fall into the pit?" He walked away scratching his head.*

*The perfectionist said, "I believe you deserve your pit." And left him in the pit.*

*The self-righteous person said, "You should have seen the pit." And walked away.*

*No one helped him out of the pit.*

*But Jesus, seeing the man in the pit, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the miserable pit.*

***It doesn't do any good to talk about love without demonstrating it. God demonstrates His love with action. He's proven His love for us. That is what the cross of Jesus is about. God loved us so much - He did something about it. He sent Jesus to die for us.***

IN VERSE 19 OF TODAY'S READING IT SAYS *"We love, because He first loved us"* **IT IS NOT A NATURAL THING TO DO. THAT IS WHY GOD HELPS BY GIVING US THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DWELL WITHIN, MAKING IT POSSIBLE TO LOVE OTHERS AS GOD LOVES US. GOD KNOWS WE WILL FIND JOY IN SERVING OTHERS.** IN ANOTHER LETTER, TO THE GALATIANS, PAUL ENCOURAGES THE GALATIANS 5:13-14 *"It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom."*

**MAY WE ALL BE THE PEOPLE OF GOD AND BY OUR ACTIONS CONTINUE** *"to be a caring family of disciples who know Christ and make Christ known in our community and around the world."* AMEN.