

Step By Step

Love - John 13:34-35

- Last week we intro'd this series that we are heading into based out of Galatians chapter 5, when Paul gives us a list that he calls the Fruit of the Spirit.
- And we pointed out that **Fruit**, in this context means, **“A work, act, or deed, that comes from or originates from something else.”**
- And this is what we so desperately need to understand, is that there is no part of the fruit of the Spirit that originates from us.
- And we do not have the ability or capability to manufacture anything genuine on this list in our own power
- Paul gives us this list of 9 things that we can begin to practice, and these are good and excellent moral things
- But they originate from God Himself and we can only begin to practice them if we rely on the Power of the Spirit
- This is a gradual, step by step process of sanctification in which we begin to practice things like the fruit of the Spirit.
- So we're taking this series step by step and walking through these fruit of the Spirit one-by-one so we can learn how to intentionally begin to practice each of these things in our spiritual lives.
- And the first Fruit of the Spirit that Paul gives us is Love.
- So we're going to look at what the Bible really says about Love, and look at the instructions that Jesus gives to His disciples in John chapter 13:
- ***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By***

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this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

-John 13:34-35 (ESV)

- PRAY
- *For many years, I struggled with an addiction... to Amazon Prime.*
- *I remember when I first discovered Amazon Prime, I thought to myself, “You mean to tell me, that from the convenience of my phone, I can find just about anything I need (more accurately: want), and it will be shipped to my doorstep, WITH FREE SHIPPING, in 2 days?!”*
- *This might be the greatest thing that I’ve ever realized! There’s nothing like having that beautiful brown truck roll up into my drive way and deliver a package to my doorstep. It’s like Christmas morning over, and over, and over again. It’s amazing.*
- *Now, to be clear, if it’s not Prime, I’m not messing with it. There may be something that I actually need to order but if I don’t see that*

Prime logo next to it, there’s no way I’m ordering that. 3-5 days shipping? Ha! Please. Who’s got time for that?

- *But by the grace of God, I got married before they started doing some of the free next-day shipping. Rachel put a handle on my addiction real quick or Lord knows I’d be in trouble if she didn’t!*
- *However, if I am honest with myself, I realize that my love for Amazon Prime is actually derived from my lack of patience.*
 - *All those who know me, know that I am not the most patient person in the world. I partially blame this on my upbringing as I was raised in a military family where we were raised to do things quickly and efficiently.*
 - *To this day, if I find myself moving slow in any capacity, I can still hear the booming voice of my father in the back of my head, yelling, “MOVE WITH PURPOSE!”*
 - *As a result, one of the symptoms is that I don’t like waiting for anything. I hate lines, I*

will do anything to avoid standing in a line. I will get the movies after the previews have already started, at an off day, at an off time, just to avoid a line.

- *I hate red lights. I'm the type of guy that will take a right turn at a red light just so I'm not sitting still. It normally doesn't get me where I'm going any faster, but in my head it feels like it.*
- *I hate traffic! I'm pretty sure there are some people who have lost respect for me as a pastor because they were in the car with me during traffic. But when I'm driving, I'm on a mission! No GPS is going to tell me what time I am going to get there, I'm the one gonna tell that GPS what time I'm gonna get there...CAN I GET AN AMEN?!*

- All of this bodes to be a problem for me because when Paul describes Love, the first word he uses is the word patience
- Many of you are familiar with 1 Corinthians 13 which is called the "love chapter"

- How many have had this read at your wedding?
- *Keep in mind however, not just couples, to the church*
- These truths definitely should be applied to your relationships and you marriages but the point of this passage was not to merely increase your love life, it was to instruct your everyday living in every single relationship in your life

- **16 Character Traits of Love:**

- I don't know about you, but pretty much none of these traits come naturally to me
- Is Patient. Is Kind. Does not envy
 - *We have already established that I am definitely not patient. Kind? I would like to think so, until I look at the definition of which is to be "friendly, generous, considerate." 100% all of the time? Not really. When it comes to envy, I'm naturally prone to want what I don't have, so I'm 0 for 3 right now.*

- Does not boast. Is not arrogant. Is not rude, does not insist on its own way
 - *Well, I'm naturally inclined to make everything about me and act out of my emotions. Also, I want what I want, when I want it. So, I'm 0 for 7.*
- Not irritable, not resentful, does not rejoice in wrong doing, rejoices with truth
 - I do get irritated. When I get irritated, I get resentful. ("Not resentful" can also be translated as, "does not keep a record of wrongs." Let that one sink in.) Also, I tend to make light of my sin, so none of those.
- Bears all things
 - I don't want to have to bear anything
- Believes all things
 - I'm definitely not quick to believe the best of anyone
- Hopes all things
 - Expect the best out of people? Sometimes, even that is to a fault
- Endures all things
 - Say one wrong about me or my family and your dead to me
- Love Never Ends
 - If my package doesn't arrive in that 48 hour period, my love for amazon prime is gone
- All of us may not be 0-16 here, but none of us are naturally inclined to be anywhere close to batting even .500
 - Where's the hope here?
 - *What this shows me is that there is a love that I can operate in that is beyond me because this love is obviously not about me*
- Throughout Jesus' ministry, whenever He was asked what the greatest commandments were, He always had the same answer.
 - Keep in mind, these Jewish people that Jesus would have been talking to, had about 613 laws that they were told that they had to adhere to in order to keep some sort of relationship with God.

- But Jesus said, out of these laws, if they had to be boiled down to 2, they would be, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matthew 22:37-39)
- Jesus is saying that if you could just love God and love people, you would be able to keep all of the other laws, no problem.
- However, right before Jesus goes to the cross. He has His 12 closest friends gathered around a table during what is famously coined as “The Last Supper.”
- This is the last extended time that Jesus has with His disciples before He is betrayed, arrested, and ultimately goes to the cross.
- And it’s during this time, Jesus takes the time to switch up the “greatest commandment” on them.
- In John 13:34, Jesus tells them, **“A new commandment I give to you, that**

you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” -John 13:34 (ESV)

- *He’s saying, I no longer want you to focus on loving in the capacity in which you want to be loved. I want you to focus on a love that is beyond you. I want you to look at the love that I have loved you with and allow that to be the standard for the love in your life.*
- I’m convinced that the best way I can love myself and others, is to accept the love that Jesus has for me.
- Furthermore, as a good friend told me one time, when I love God most I will love other’s best.
- Now that bodes the question: How do we define love?
 - We live in a culture that is obsessed with love, but rarely do we take the time to define what love is

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- We love love, we love to sing about love, watch movies about love, we love posts about love
 - Once I was with a guy who was scrolling through instagram while we were watching football. While he was scrolling, he came across a couple-y post and he instantly said, "Ugh, gross, they're so annoying." And while he was complaining about the post, he double tapped it! I'm like, "How are you gonna hate in their post and still give it a little insta-heart bro?!" But it wasn't that he hated the post, he just hated that he wasn't in the post. Deep down, he wanted to be able to put up a post like that, but he didn't wasn't at that point in his life at that time.
 - We all want it, we all crave it....we love love
 - I love, love! I'm a sucker for an Ed Sheeran love song. I love to tell people I love them.

Sometimes I feel like buddy the elf, "I love you, I love you, I LOVE YOU!"

- Back in college, when I was at North Greenville University, I led a college ministry on campus. One night after a service, I was hugging people and telling a bunch a people that I love them. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see a girl kind of side eyeing me, but I tried to pay her no attention and just kept telling people I love them. Finally she spoke and said, "What, do you just tell everyone you love?" Um, yes. "Doesn't that just devalue the word?" Um, no. How many serial killers do you hear of that say, "Oh, I'm like this because I was told I was loved WAY too much as a child."
- No, I believe the word "Love" should be a regular part of our vocabulary. Especially among Christians, and especially in our churches!
- I hope we have a culture here were people are regularly told that they're loved. But even

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more I hope and pray that every time we say it, we would actually mean it. And to do that:

- *We need a proper definition*
 - *Love cannot define itself, Love is not an intelligent entity, it doesn't have that kind of capability*
 - *Also, Love cannot be for me what it is for me, and you what it is for you because what happened when our ideas of love clash?*
 - *There has to be a source, there has to be a definition...and I believe with all of my being that definition is found in 1 John 4:8*
- ***“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” -1 John 4:8 (NKJV)***
 - God is the definition of Love. His character His nature defines what love is
 - God Loves us, He created us, and designed us to live in the context of true authentic love. That's why we crave it

- When we crave Love, we are actually craving God because God is Love,
- Jesus is the perfect personification of Love. He created Love, He sets the tone for what Love is!
 - Love starts with Him and was introduced by Him and initiated by Him, therefore He gets to define it.
 - Love and God are supposed to go together.
- You cannot remove God from love because when we do, we leave love open for interpretation, and chaos ensues
 - There is no love apart from God because He created it, He initiated it therefore He gets to define it.
- THE FOUR LOVES
- Now, when it comes to translating the word love from the bible into our English language sometimes it can get a bit tricky. Because the

english language is very broad but the ancient greek, (language of NT) was much more specific.

- And we have a hard time in translation because for us we could have 1 word for 8 different things, but the Greeks could have 8 words that for us would mean 1 one thing.
- In the ancient language, they had 4 words for Love

- **STORGE: FAMILY LOVE**

- “Natural affection or feelings you would have for a family member”
- This is the type of love that a Mother feels with her new born baby.
- This is also the love that you feel toward a family pet.

- **PHILIA: FRIENDLY LOVE**

- More commonly translated as “brotherly love,” Philia is the love that you and your friends feel for one another.

- This is the way that You and your BFF, your “ride or die” would feel about each other.
- By definition: “It is a strong bond based on shared experiences, mutual respect, and affection”

- **EROS: ROMANTIC LOVE**

- Eros is the love that gets the most attention and the one that we normally try to elevate about all of the rest.
 - Where we get the word erotic.
 - Eros is the warms and fuzzies. This is butterflies you get in your stomach when you see your crush.
 - Eros is the reason that the guy’s voice changes like an octave higher whenever he finally gets to talk the girl he likes for the first time.

- *Eros love is exciting but its also blinding*

- Do you see what all three of these loves have in common? They are all based on feelings.

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- *Storge: the way I feel about my family*
 - *Philia: The way I feel about my friends*
 - *Eros: The way I feel about my significant other*
 - BUCKET 1
 - All of these are good things
 - These are not bad things in and of themselves
 - Got created all of these to be enjoyed
 - But what we do is we try to fill our lives with these loves
 - *We have holes in our lives*
 - *Anger, insecurity, weakness, rejection, regrets, mistakes*
 - *And when we fill our lives with only these loves, there comes a point when we start to feel empty again...so what we do is we feel like we need to fill ourselves with a different relationship, or new friends, or a new family,*
- and we try to fill our lives with these loves again.*
- *And it feels good for a while, maybe a few weeks a few months, maybe even a few years, but it's only a matter of time before we will end up emptied.*
- Again, it's not like there is anything wrong with these things and these feelings...
 - However, the problem is that we try to find something within these loves that they were never supposed to provide
- These loves were never meant to fill your life
- Contrary to popular romantic fantasy...your boyfriend or girlfriend, your husband or wife, **CANNOT COMPLETE YOU**
- They can only **COMPLEMENT** you
- Your family, your friends, your significant other can never be the fulfillment of your life...putting that kind of pressure on them is dangerous and frankly selfish

- LOVE BASED ON FEELINGS WILL LEAVE YOU FEARFUL

- If we base our need for love around feelings, we will always live in fear that those feelings will leave.
- We'll live in fear that the feelings will go away and we'll be left alone.
- This is why a love based on feelings will also make you very controlling.
 - Because we'll live in fear that people might just change their mind about you one day and be gone
 - And it all stems from living in this perpetual fear of:
 - *What happens if I lose my family?*
 - *What if my friends don't like me if they find out about _____?*
 - *What if my boyfriend/ GF isn't feeling it anymore and they go with someone else?*

- *Naturally we'll think that we won't be able to go on if any of that were to happen and we'll try to control what the people close to us do, what they see, who they are around because the thought of them finding something better than us is terrifying.*

- *So whats the hope??*

- "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." -1 JOHN 4:18 (NKJV)

- There it is! Thats what I need! I need that PERFECT LOVE
- Thats where our 4th Love comes into play

- AGAPE: COMPLETE LOVE

- Unconditional love
- Agape love is completely separate from the other 3....because this love has nothing to do with feelings
- Agape love is all about action
- This love is active whether the feelings are there or not

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- The closest word we have in the English language is the word charity
 - *Which means, “helping regardless of whether or not the help is deserved”*
- Agape love is a love that gives everything of itself without expecting anything in return
- This love is a commitment to work for the good of other people
- Love based on feelings will leave you fearful but **LOVE BASED ON COMMITMENT WILL LEAVE YOU CONTENT**
- Early on in me and Rachel’s relationship, probably a little too early. I told her that I loved her. Now, I gave her a big monologue, but I said something along the lines of, “Look, I’m committing to be all in in this relationship. I’m choosing to go all in and see this all the way through. If you choose different, that’s fine, I’ll be ok. But I can confidently tell you that I love you, because I am committing to this.
- She said, “I’m really glad you told me that, but I’m not ready to say it yet....”
- But it took me a long time, and some pretty unhealthy relationships to get to the point where I realized that the healthiest human relationship you can be in, is where two people CHOOSE each other. But don’t NEED each other.
- As soon as I need another human being, I’m putting pressure on them to fill me in a way that they were not created or designed to do
- And that is not fair to them, and it’s not fair to me
- I don’t need a love based on feelings, I need a love that is based on commitment
- That starts with the commitment that Jesus made to go to the cross
- Jesus is the source and standard for this type of committed love.

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- THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE THAN THIS,
THAN ONE WOULD LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR
HIS FRIENDS

- And That's exactly what Jesus did for you and for me
- He showed the greatest commitment and act of love in all of human history whenever He poured out His blood on the cross for you and for me
 - Jesus did not die for you because He felt like it
 - He didn't feel like being mocked and having a crown of thorns buried into His skull
 - He didn't feel like being whipped to the point of having the flesh torn off of His back
 - He didn't feel like having giant nails driven through His wrists and His feet
- I guarantee you Jesus didn't get the warms and fuzzies whenever He thought about the torture He was going to endure. No, I

remember reading about Him sweating drops of Blood in the garden in anticipation of it

- But He committed Himself to going through with it because it was what you and I needed most
 - *And because He showed that sort of commitment to me then, I don't have to live in fear of Him leaving me now*
 - *Because God's love for me was not based around His feelings towards me, it was based on the commitment He made to me, whether I would reciprocate or not*
- And it's mind boggling to think that we add absolutely no value to Him. There is nothing we can do to make Him anymore perfect and Holy than He already is!
 - We cannot fill Him in any way!
- Yet, He still chooses to love us and give us Himself...that's the beauty of His love, that's what makes His love so incredible because it is completely selfless on His part

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- If you had to earn it, it wouldn't be true love
- But Jesus loves you with a love that is all encompassing, despite your holes and leaks you have in your life, His love completely covers you
- BUCKET 2
 - Every time the love of God or Jesus' love is referred to in the bible, it is always Agape love.
 - 1John 4:8, says God is Love [Agape]
 - Jesus was God in flesh, therefore He was Agape in flesh
 - He is the very embodiment of complete and true love
 - He's the Great I Am because everything I am not, He is. He's the beginning He's the end, He's everything in between
 - Colossians say that when we accept Jesus we are "Hidden with Christ"
- Colossians 2:10 "In Christ you have been brought to fullness"
- So now, even with all of my holes, and all of my leaks, all of my weaknesses and insecurities I can hide myself in Him and His love can truly complete me
 - And now I am hidden in Him, my life can be full and stay full
- And Now I can enjoy all of the levels of love because I'm not relying on them to fill me
- Now because I have agape, because I am completed and hidden in Christ, my job is no longer to try to be filled, but my job is to pour out
 - My job pour out and be the best family member I can be, I can pour out and be the best friend I can possibly be, I can pour out and have the best romantic relationship I can possibly have
 - *I can actually show genuine authentic selfless love, in all of these areas, because*

I'm not trying to gain something from anyone any more, I'm Just trying to pour out

- *Because I already have everything I need to fill me in Jesus*
- *This is the gauge in which people are going to truly know that we are disciples of Jesus*
- *It's when we pour out, give of ourselves, to be the best we can be for other people without expecting anything in return.*
 - *Its only in the complete agape-love of Jesus that we can begin to be that for each other*
- *Now as we close, let's look at an example of Jesus showing this Agape love in action. In John chapter 8, we read a very famous story. Starting in verse 3 John writes,*
- ***Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught***

in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear." -John 8:3-6 (NKJV)

- Here we see Jesus being **patient**. He **does not envy**, which can be translated "to be heated with anger." He wasn't concerned with position and power, He cared about people.
- He **does not boast**, He **doesn't act arrogantly**, He **isn't rude**, and even in the midst of these Pharisees disrespect and slander, He still is **not irritable**. Rather, He just stays quiet and writes in the sand.
- ***"So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped***

down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” -John 8: 7-9 (NKJV)

- Here we see Jesus showing more **patience**, He **did not rejoice in wrong doing**, He wasn't **resentful**, and **He did not insist on His own way**, He just let them be convicted by their conscience
- ***“When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” -John 8:10-11 (NKJV)***
- Here we see Jesus being **Kind**, He **kept no record of wrongs**, He **bears** all things by not lashing out or getting defensive, Furthermore,

He would **bear** the punishment for her sins on the cross.

- He **believed** and **Hoped** all things (By telling her to “Go and Sin no more”) He **Endured** all things, because even in the mess of that entire situation, He still took the time to love and care for that guilty woman, and didn't leave her when everyone else did.
- And then in verse 12, He rejoices with the Truth! ***“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” -John 8:12 (NKJV)***
 - *This is what the Love of Jesus does*
 - THIS IS AGAPE LOVE
 - THIS LOVE GIVES LIFE, NEVER FAILS AND NEVER ENDS
 - *This is the love that is beyond us!*
 - *Because I don't know if you're aware, but we were all caught red handed in our sin!*

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- *Law said guilty, demanded punishment, judgment and condemnation*
- *But instead Jesus extended grace and Agape Love.. He covered me, He protected me, He didn't leave me in my mess*
- *He was right there, hands extended, and all I had to do was reach back and He pulled me out*
- HE DEFINES LOVE, AND NOW HIS LOVE DEFINES ME
 - His Love completes me
- Family love powerful But God's Love is perfect
- Friendly love helps But God heals
- Romantic love will flood your emotions but ONLY God's Love will fill your soul
- Remember this is a love that is beyond us
- We cannot manufacture it on our own. This is a fruit, a work, of the Spirit!
- So if we're going to walk in Love, let's not ask the Spirit to teach us how to love, let's ask that He would love through us.
- Eric Ludy once said that If we are merely taught to love, we will be nothing miserable replicas.
- But if we are empowered to love by the Spirit, then the true Agape love can genuinely flow out of us
- So that's what we're going to pray for right now.