

Love

Fruit of the Spirit--part 1

April 5, 2015

DAY 1: Human love vs. God's love

Galatians 5:22, 23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

1. What's interesting is how many people would read that list of nine qualities and assume they're doing pretty good in most of them.
2. God wants to develop these nine qualities in our lives. He calls each of these a "fruit of the Spirit."
3. This begs the question, "What's the difference between what a human being can produce and what the Holy Spirit can produce in His people?"
4. For example, what's the difference between human love and the love God wants to grow in us? How would you answer that question?

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

⁴⁴ *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*

⁴⁵ *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

⁴⁶ *If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?*

⁴⁷ *And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?*

⁴⁸ *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

5. Human love was so poor, that in the Old Testament Matt. 5:43 was a step up(!) in the standard of human love! Re-write Matt. 5:43 in your own words.

6. Jesus follows this human standard with His standard in Matt. 5:44. What is it, and what differences are there in these two standards of love?

DAY 2: Human love driven by what someone does for me

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1. Yesterday, we saw that human love excuses itself from loving difficult people. Jesus' love is quite different. It finds a way to love people who don't love you, or who do far worse to you!

2. A second look at human love is found in Matt. 5:46. What is this human standard of love?

3. Jesus asks us two rhetorical questions to wake us up to the fact that loving someone who already loves us is not that big a deal. If we think we are a loving person because we "love" someone who loves us, our standard is pathetic!

a. Will someone get a reward for loving someone who loves you? Yet, we pat ourselves on the back as a loving person when we love someone who loves us. Is our own pat on the back a "reward" at all?

b. The second question is, "*Are not even the tax collectors doing that?*"

Tax collectors were thought of as shysters, men with no morality about them. What strikes you about Jesus' second question here?

4. Then, as if to say, "We shouldn't even be thinking of this as human love..." Jesus observes that we barely even ***greet*** one another unless we're greeted! What is the difference loving someone and merely greeting them?

5. What is Jesus trying to drive home to us about our human love?

DAY 3: Human love driven by self and self's interests.

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1. Human love may be seen in any of the following. Place a check next to the ones you have seen in your own life.

Human "love" excuses itself from loving difficult people.

Human love "loves" those who love them. (Even the despised tax collectors do that)!

Humans greet those who greet them. (Even pagans do that).

Human love "loves" *as long as* someone else does "their part."

Human love "loves" *because* someone is already loving you.

Human loves "loves" because "you make me feel a certain way."

Human love "loves" as long as it feels "loving."

2. What struck you from that list?

3. What do you see about your human love?

4. Check the following that most apply to you:

"Lord, I'm way more self-centered than I imagined."

"Just because I thought I was a loving person doesn't make me one."

"Lord, I am humbled by this. I need you to do a deeper work in me if I am to love without the trace of "What's in it for me?"

5. Out of both days' devotions on human "love" what is your biggest personal take away?

6. Ask God to make you aware when "self" is motivating "love."

DAY 4: God's love--part 1

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

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1. We've looked at the pathetic and self-centered nature of what we call human "love." Let's look at the standard Jesus gives us to shoot for in being a real loving person.

2. What reason does Jesus give us for loving our enemies and praying for people who persecute us? (Matt. 5:45).

3. "...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." He is not saying that you may "become" a son of your Father in heaven." Remember, Jesus was talking to His followers. He is saying something like, "That your love may bear the family resemblance, that of our Father in how He loves." What strikes you about loving difficult people and bearing the family resemblance to God our Father?

4. Jesus gives us a picture of God's love. What does God do every day with the sun? (Mt. 5:45).

5. Is this tremendous gift of the sun given to:

- Everyone? _____
- Only the "deserving?" _____
- God's favorites? _____
- People who are grateful to Him? _____
- People who are indifferent to Him? _____

6. God also sends rain on whom?

7. What strikes you about God's love in today's devotional?

DAY 5: God's love--part 2

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

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1. Theologians have taken this last verse and studied it as if it stood all by itself, but the context makes it crystal clear that "being perfect" is the equivalent of loving as our Father in heaven loves people.

2. Place a check in any of the following that indicate the kind of love God has, and wants to shape in us.

Love that is active, on the move, demonstrates His love.

Love that is intentional

Love that is long-suffering.

Love that is costly.

Love with no limit to what it will give for the sake of the beloved.

Love with no tinge of, "What's in it for Me?" in it. No, "What am I going to get out of?" It's not asking, "But what about My needs?"

3. Which of the items in question #2 ...

a. ...intrigue you the most about God's love? Why?

b. ...give a vision of the kind of love God is trying to build in you?

c. ...challenges you the most?

4. We started the week looking at Galatians 5:22. *The fruit of the Spirit is love ...*

5. Only humbling ourselves over our inability to get past human love and then relying on God to grow the fruit of love in us will ever make us love like God does!