

The Fruit of the Spirit – Love

An Introduction

Love is a commonly used word. I love chocolate. I love that sports team. I love playing games. I love my friends. With how often we “love” things, we may forget the power involved in love. If love describes both how we feel about food and our family, how does that change the statement “God is love” or “God loves me”?

Types of Love

There are four main categories that love tends to fall into – Eros, Storge, Philo, and Agape. (These are Greek words.)

Eros – Eros was the Greek god of love. The word represents what we consider today to be “romantic love.” Eros love is what you feel when you tell someone you’ve fallen in love with them.

Storge – Storge is what we may call fondness or affection. It’s a natural love – something you may feel towards your family or your pets. It also can be considered something that grows out of Philo into a more romantic love.

Philo – Philo is the love of friendship. It is a strong, intimate, and non-romantic love between people. In the Bible, it is often compared favorably with Agape love and, while there is distinction between the two, is considered similar.

Agape – Agape love is described as the highest, purest, and noblest form of love. It is the unconditional love, the love that will do anything for another regardless of cost. This is the form of love that is most commonly used in the Old Testament.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Exploring the Passage

- 1) What aspects of love are in this passage? How many of the four types do you see represented? Which ones?
- 2) Look at verses 1-3. Why do you think love is essential in everything the author talks about?

Read Matthew 5:43-46

Exploring the Passage

- 1) Why should you love your neighbor? What is Jesus trying to say about the distinctive love of Christians?
- 2) How does loving enemies mean praying for them?

Charting the Course

- 1) What have these passages taught you about love?
- 2) Think about the people and things that you love. What types of love do you feel towards them? Which kinds of love are easier or harder to show?
- 3) Love is one of the fruits of the Spirit of God. The fruit is what a plant has to show it is productive and alive. How does showing love demonstrate that the Spirit of God is in a person?

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?