



Fruit of the Spirit

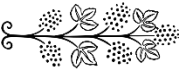




Lesson 1: LOVE



INTRODUCTION



Ruby Bridges lived in New Orleans in the 1960s during a time of forced racial integration of the public schools. At 13 years old she was the first black child to attend the formerly all-white schools. Each morning Ruby walked through a protective phalanx of US marshals. But they didn't shelter her from all the spit balls and taunts of the crowds. She spent each day alone with her teachers inside the school building—alone because the other students refused to enter.

One of her teachers would later tell an interviewer, “A woman spat at Ruby but missed; Ruby smiled at her. A man shook his fist at her, Ruby smiled again. Then she went up the steps and stopped and turned and smiled one more time. You know what she told one of the marshals? She told him she prays for those people, the ones in the mob, every night before she goes to sleep.”

That kind of love stands out. It shocks. It humbles. It changes people, and it even changes cultures. That is the kind of love the Spirit has equipped every Christian to live out. That is the love that came along with the faith in Jesus he worked in us.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD



God is love. Electric lights do not burn unless they are attached to a power source. Human beings cannot love unless they are plugged in to the one and only source of real love. Let's investigate what it means that “God is love.”

1 John 4:7-21 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- 1.) What is the highest expression of love that God has shown us? What are the characteristics of the love that flows from God?
- 2.) Which is the strongest statement: “God is love,” “God loves,” or “God is loving”?
- 3.) A friend from your church has stopped taking a relationship with Jesus seriously. “I don’t have time for that stuff anymore,” he tells you. “I think showing my spouse and kids how much I love them is more important than spending time sitting in a pew in some church.” What’s the fault in your friend’s thinking?
- 4.) Evaluate: Since God is love, we never have to be afraid that he will stop loving us—no matter what our sin, even if we choose to hate him.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

- 1.) Explain which characteristic of God’s love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13 is most important to you.
- 2.) Offer an everyday example of each attribute. Let’s make a list of the way love expresses itself.
- 3.) How have believers in your life exemplified these qualities of love that comes from God?

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S LOVE

Since God has poured out his love on us even though we don’t deserve it, how will we respond?

1 John 3:16-20 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹ This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

- 1.) How does God's love for us change how we think and live?
- 2.) 1 John 5:3 says, "This is love for God: to obey his commands." Explain the relationship between obeying God's commands and loving people as we have been loved by God.
- 3.) "I couldn't help but fall in love with her. I had no control." Compare this idea about love with God's love for us—and our resulting love for all others, including enemies (cf. Luke 6:27).
- 4.) Evaluate this statement: "I am committed to love you until God stops loving me"?

SUMMARY

All Christians are empowered to love with God's love because the Spirit of love lives within them. Spirit-worked faith in Jesus constantly connects us to the source of love ("God is love").

PRAYER