

Fruit of the Spirit - LOVE

Introduction

Love is a frequently used word. We use and hear the word of “Love” daily but yet how often we ponder the meaning of love? According to Wikipedia, love is any of a number of emotions related to a sense of strong affection and attachment. It sounds like our dictionaries have a very shallow definition of love. They describe love as emotions or feelings. But emotion and feeling change over time and how do we know which emotion and feeling is love?

If love is based on our emotion or feeling, then love is an unpredictable thing and it only happens by chance! Fortunately, there is a more concrete and in-depth definition of love which depicted in the Bible as shown below.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
(NIV 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

When I first came across these Bible verses 13 years ago, I was intrigued by it and was amazed that how could someone have such a wisdom to define the meaning of love so precisely. I always thought I knew what love was but not until I read these Bible verses. Now I understand that love is far more than just saying “I love you.” It is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

We all know love is a good thing and want to be loved. Then how do we cultivate this spiritual fruit in our daily life. Here is some practical means.

Sharing

Awareness – we need to constantly remind ourselves that God is love and we shall speak, think and act with love. Be aware of the weeds around us that oppose love. Hate is one of the weeds that oppose love. Many times we allow small or subtle hatred such as agitation harbour in our heart. These small weeds will soon grow becoming hatred and spread across the lawn (our heart) and take away the living space of the grass (love). Therefore, be aware of the weeds that are against love. Mindfully resist the temptation to harbour the weeds but like a good gardener, we shall root the weeds and nurture the fruit - love constantly.

When we are constantly in contact with God, He will help us to be aware of it. Sometimes, when we are angry or someone wronged us, we might want to get even or have negative thoughts, but the Holy Spirit, our wonderful Counsellor will remind us to walk in love. When we walk in love, with become the good ambassador for the kingdom of God as God is love (1 John 4:8).

Repentance – often we want to show love to others, especially our loved ones, but fail to do so because of our sinful nature. Selfishness, ungratefulness and unforgiveness pull us from treating others with love. The antidote to these poisonous weeds is to repent wholeheartedly to God and ask for wisdom and help to triumph over all the weeds that choke the growth of love. Only a fully

repentant heart can allow the Holy Spirit to root out the weeds and grow the fruit of love. We need to become like a soft-clay, where we could easily be moulded by God.

A pastor from South Africa once shared about his experience, that as an ex-army officer, he used to impose a military style discipline. His children would fear when they have done something wrong. Then one day as he read the bible, he came across the fruit of the spirit, he began to reflect upon his ways. He meditated on how he would respond in love if his children have done something wrong. And one day, one of his children had done something wrong, he called the child in a loving way. The child was astonished that the father had changed to a loving father instead of a military style father.

Action – love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is a word for action. Be patient and kind, do not envy or boast, do not be proud or rude or self-seeking or easily angered, do not keep record of wrongs, do not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, always protect, trusts, hope and perseveres. All these are action words. Just speaking or thinking of love is not enough. True love must be in action.

Jesus showed us the way in how to put love to action. Everywhere He went, He healed the sick, He fed the people, He taught the people and He transformed the lives of many. He had compassion. Compassion is love in action. Even to the point of dying on cross, Jesus went through it because of His love for us.

Questions for group discussion

1. Love has two dimensions as summarized by Jesus. How do you put these two commandments into daily practice?
 - a. Love God (Matthew 22:37)
 - b. Love your neighbour (Matthew 22:39). When was the last time you show love to others (your love ones and neighbour)?
2. Problems with loving others.
 - a. Love towards to our family. Do you love your closed ones as the way you should or you take them for granted that you can throw your temper before them without thinking? How can you improve your love towards your family?
 - b. Love towards the unlovable people. What does the Bible say about loving the unlovable people? Read Roman 12:20-21

Conclusion

Be aware of the weeds that choke the fruit of love. Repent to the Lord and ask for His help to root out the weeds. Put your love in action. When the Lord increases in me and me decrease, LOVE will grow!