

Studies in Christianity

S#1.

Spiritual Maturity #7

The Key To Maturity

S#2.

Text : II Pet. 1: 2-8 ; I Cor. 13: 1-8

A. We are nearing the end of a series within a series.

S#3.

1. Our overall theme is Studies in Christianity .. a study of the basics.
 - a. How does one transition into a relationship with God through Jesus?
 - b. What does it mean to “be born again?”
 - c. We observed some of the ways the believer’s relationship with God changed.
2. When then began to examine some more practical aspects of how to mature in Him.
 - a. We start our relationship with faith, but we are required to mature from there.
 - b. We learned that spiritual growth doesn’t just happen; we have to work at it.
 - c. It became clear that a total commitment was required and information needed.
 - d. Once we isolated ourselves from evil we then had to learn to control our desires.
 - e. The Christian life is a marathon, but our perseverance builds our confidence.
 - f. As we build assurance of Heaven we develop greater love and respect for God.
 - g. Then once our vertical relationship is strong we strengthen our horizontal relations.
3. Today we will concentrate on the crowning jewel of the Christian Character – love.

S#4.

B. We’ve been studying the building blocks of the Christian character sequentially.

1. HOWEVER, they need to be developed and practiced simultaneously.
2. Each trait needs to be developed in the mature presence of all the others.
3. Uniquely Christian; in the original language each trait is accompanied by a definite article ; the faith, the knowledge, the self-control, the perseverance, the godliness ...

S#5.

C. We have progressed through the process of maturing, but we need the keystone.

1. All Christians build their relationship with God based upon faith.
2. When we apply faith to our life it causes us to seek to do right, to be virtuous.
3. Our desire to do right can only be fulfilled if we learn what is right.
4. Once we learn how to please God we develop the ability to control the desire to sin.

5. As we develop this self-control we commit ourselves to *man up* and stay the course.
6. The only reason we persevere is because of our godliness - love and respect for God.
7. Our godly respect for God leads us to have a special relationship with His family.

S#6.

D. The keystone that hold it all together is sharing God's love for all His creatures.

1. **II Pet. 1: 7** – in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.
2. These qualities combine to make a Christian able to fulfill his purpose in life.
 - a. **Eph. 2: 10** – For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. S#7.
 - b. **II Pet. 1: 8** – For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

E. With this lesson we will attempt to :

S#8.

1. define “**love**” as used by God in this text.
2. demonstrate love to be a conscious decision of one's will
3. defuse love into some of its component parts.

I. What is the concept of love that is so common to the New Testament ?

S#9.

A. The word which is commonly translated “love” in the N.T. is “agape.”

S#10.

1. “**Agape**” appears 117 times in 106 verses in 5 unique forms.
2. Strong's Lexicon defines it as :
affection, good will, love, benevolence, brotherly love / love feasts
3. Of love William Barclay says :
Agape has supremely to do with the bible. It is a conquest, a victory, an Achievement. No one has ever naturally loved his enemies. To love one's enemies is a conquest of all our natural inclinations and emotions. It is, in fact, the power to love the unlovable, to love people who we do not like.
4. An author named Jim Berk who wrote a book on love described “agape” as :
Well directed, wholehearted, distinguished by its deliberateness and focus
5. An author whose name I forgot defined “agape” as :
A Love that is sacrificial and not based on performance, and is displayed by one's actions

B. The concept of love originates with God.**S#11.**

1. **I John 4: 8-10** – The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
2. **I John 4: 16** – We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. **S#12.**
3. **Rom 5: 6-8** – For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. **8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. **S#13.**

C. Who is to be the object of our agape ?**S#14.**

1. Loving God is the greatest command.
Matt. 22: 37 – You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your souls. And with all your mind. (*and neighbor as self*)
2. Our brothers and sisters in Christ.
John 13: 34 – A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another **S#15.**
3. Our enemies. (*In absence of warm and fuzzes, you can love people you do not like.*)
Luke 6: 27 – But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.
 - a. **Rom. 5** ... This is not easy, but Jesus loved you while you were His enemy.
 - b. Remember the parable of the good Samaritan .. The Jews hated the Samaritans.

II. Love is a conscious decision of one's will.**S#16.****A. Agape is not an emotion that we can just wait to happen to us.****S#17.**

1. A good way to be lonely is to set around waiting to fall in love.
 - a. Anything one can fall into he/she can fall out of if it is overturned.
 - b. Couples in counseling will often say, “We fell out of love.” **ERROR**
 - c. They made a decision to stop loving each other and break their contract.
2. Love is not an emotion that comes and goes, it is a commitment.

B. Many confuse lust, passion and desire for love.**S#18.**

1. One can easily “fall into” lust and just as easily fall out of it.

2. **II Sam. 13** ... Absalom raped his sister Tamar and then did not want her.
3. After 18 months of marriage the passion cools and many modern marriages end.

C. In the N.T. love is a command to be obeyed.

S#19.

1. **Matt. 22: 37** ... Love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself.
2. We are commanded to love the brethren.
I Pet. 1: 22 – Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, ferently love one another from the heart
- * 3. Were love an emotion it could not be commanded. (*cannot command an emotion*)

D. Love is a verb.

S#20.

1. It is something we DO ... not something we FEEL. (*not even a warm and fuzzy*)
 - a. **I John 3: 18** – let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.
 - b. **I John 3: 16** – We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. **17** But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of (for) God abide in him?
2. No one has warm and fuzzy feelings for his **enemies**, but we must love them.

S#21.

III. Like a prism .. I Corinthians 13 defuses love into some of its component parts.

A. Love is patient

S#22.

1. Literally .. Long-tempered
2. What irritates you ? Overlook it.

B. Love is kind

1. Doesn't treat them like they deserve.
2. Luke 6: 31 ... Treat others the same way you want others to treat you.

C. Love is not jealous (not envy)

1. Love is other people oriented .. “ seeking their highest good”
2. Phil. 2 ... “Regard others as more important than self”

D. Love does not brag and is not arrogant (Vaunteth not self, not puffed up)

1. Rom. 14: 19 .. Build up others
2. Luke 14: 11 .. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted

E. Love does not act unbecomingly (does not act unseemly)

1. Tactful and respectful
2. Our society is increasingly rude, crude, and tattooed

F. Love does not seek its own

1. Love is not about self .. just the opposite .. doesn't need to be #1
2. I Tim. 6:6 .. godliness w/ contentment is .. Heb. 13: 5 .. character free of love of \$

G. Love is not provoked

1. Not short fused .. CALM nature ,,, Prov. 16:32 .. who rules spirit than capture city
2. Literally : not easily sharpened, not easily motivated to irritation

H. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered, (thinketh no evil)

1. I Pet. 4: 8 ... Love covers multitude of sins (*no grudges*)
2. Thinks in terms of accepting .. Heb 10:17 .. lawless deeds I will remember no more

I. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness but Love rejoices with the truth

1. Rom 6 ... Some were continuing in sin that grace might abound
2. Love finds joy in what makes God and the brethren happy.

J. Love bears all things (Word in original means : to put a roof over)

1. Will keep things in confidence ... covers with silence .. I Pet 4:8 – covers a multitude
2. Will not broadcast every offense committed against them.

K. Love believes all things

1. Love has a positive attitude ... looking for the good in others ... not have to be right
2. Not always suspicious of others and of their motives. (*marriage & parenting*)

L. Love hopes all things

1. Expecting the best, not preparing for the worst
2. Never giving up on a person ... expecting things will get better.

M. Love endures all things

1. Begins with longsuffering and ends with endure ... doesn't surrender
2. Doesn't run away or become weary in well-doing.

CONCLUSION :

A. The study of love must be an ongoing part of every Christian's studies. S#23.

S#24.

B. Love is the keystone of the Christian's character, the most important attribute.

1. **I Pet. 4: 8** – Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another,
because love covers a multitude of sins.
2. **Col. 3: 14** – And above all these put on love, which binds everything together
in perfect harmony. (ESV)

S#25.

C. Let us agree with both Peter, Paul and the H.S. and make love our top priority.

S#26. ... Communion slide

Lesson Text :**II Peter 1: 2-8**

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; **3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. **4** For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. **5** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

I Corinthians 13: 1-8

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, **5** does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, **6** does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; **7** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.