

LOVE

Lesson Number Two

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23 January 1983

John 13:34 & 35 says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

And I John 3:18 says, "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth."

And I John 2:10 says, "He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling." Now, turn with me to I Corinthians 13:4 on Page 1000 in your Bibles.

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I Corinthians 13:4, "Love is Patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful;"

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In the same way that an artist combines colors to produce a masterpiece, the Bible reveals many characteristics which, when blended together, result in a beautiful portrait of Jesus Christ. The life of Christ on earth was a life of unselfish love from Bethlehem's manger to the mount of Ascension. There is no question that every characteristic of love is fulfilled in our savior. And the characteristics of love which were achieved in Christ should also be the goals of every christian as well.

"Love is Patient and kind;" How can anyone doubt that people are always hungry for kindness. In the middle of November last year, the Chicago Tribune published an article about a 70 year-old woman named Nancy who enrolled at Sneak Previews, Incorporated, a video dating service in Chicago. The manager told her that it was highly unlikely that anyone would respond to her videotape and asked her why she was intent on enrolling anyway.

"Because I'm very lonely," she answered, "No other reason. I just want to meet someone to share dinner with, to talk with on the phone, to pass the time. If I just had someone to sit and watch TV with. My husband died seven years ago. You get so lonely when that happens. Every year you get lonelier."

"Love is Patient and kind." The King James Version puts it, Love "suffereth long and is kind;" To be patient is to be long-suffering. But just being long-suffering isn't the whole story. It is also necessary to be kind at the same time. Many of us can claim instances when we had to suffer long but how many of us can testify that we remained kind throughout the time of trial. When I am suffering, it is usually a good time to tread very softly when you are near me. Oh, I TRY to remain kind and many times I do. But sometimes I become irritated by just a little thing in the midst of my suffering and then everybody near me suffers for a little while too! I'm certainly not proud of that but those times DO occur! We all have times when our suffering seems to overpower our best intentions. But, even at those darkest moments, if we can somehow recognize what is happening and throw ourselves at the foot of the cross, Jesus is there and waiting to hold us up and strengthen us to meet the trial.

A Pastor in Pennsylvania discovered two women living alone together in the neighborhood of his church. He could tell that they were obviously very lonely and he also

sensed that they were in need help and care. Rumors about their odd behavior finally prompted the pastor to ask one of the ladies of the church to attempt to visit them and see how the church might help in meeting some of their needs. He was careful to choose a woman who had been blessed with an extra measure of courage and kindness. But even she felt apprehensive as she walked up the path to the run-down house.

The door opened only the barest of cracks when she knocked and only grudgingly opened to admit her when she had blurted out that the pastor who had called the day before had sent her. All the shades were down and the house was as dark as a tomb.

The woman who had fearfully opened the door led the way to a bedroom where her mother lay, frowning and suspicious. The daughter's rambling explanations reminded the visitor of the vague reports of violence that she had heard about these women. Fear sprang up in her heart, but it gave way to unusual kindness and love as she began to concentrate on the thought, "God loves you and I love you." What a change she felt come over her as she began to really listen, without fear of what the woman might do to her! Before leaving the house she even put her arms around the big, straggly-haired woman and gave her a hug and a kiss. Tears came to the woman's eyes, and she held the visitor a long time. Here was the kindness of Christ reaching out to someone starved for love; and it opened the way to a new adventure for a number of people.

Two families donated coal to stoke the old furnace and heat the house; another gave a refrigerator; some contributed clothes; the church made a television set available; and the elderly mother was given badly needed hospital care. Children made cards and cookies. One man began to take care of the women's lawn. A neighbor offered the use of her telephone whenever needed. Another woman took time regularly to drive the daughter to the market for groceries.

Eventually the new friendships began to include a rather timid time of praying together, with tears of love and joy and thankfulness shining in all eyes. Then they moved into reading the New Testament, and discussed several verses before praying. Eventually a decision was made to receive Jesus Christ.

The difference became apparent in many ways - even in little things. The woman who first showed kindness once said, "We had invited the daughter to join us one evening. What a change from the bedraggled, sullen, unhappy person I had first met! She was wearing her best dress; her hair was attractively arranged. Now she had reason to feel like getting dressed up!"

What a privilege it is just to be able to get into a car and drive somewhere! How easy it is to forget what it's like to be without wheels. Yet how rarely do we ever think of extending such an ordinary kindness. For people like this lonely woman, a simple invitation to ride along becomes an occasion!

When the visits to this home first began the women often asked, "Why do you care? Why do you come?" And the reply was always the same: "Because God loves you, and I love you." What an evidence of the indwelling presence of

Jesus Christ we can Present when we express to others the warm loving-kindness that is characteristic of our savior.

Love is kind even when misunderstood and falsely accused. Love knows how to take sorrow and heartache cheerfully. CHRESTEUOMAI is the word translated "is kind". It literally means "to show oneself useful, i.e. act benevolently." It implies active service. Our old flesh is hasty, hotheaded, and unkind, but divine love is very different.

Christ spent his life seeking to make others happy. For thirty-three years he went about doing kind deeds, ministering to the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the bereaved, and even performing a miracle at a wedding feast. Jesus was kind!

Our savior was long-suffering with his weak-willed disciples who disappointed him so often. He was merciful to the despised and the mentally disturbed. He was long-suffering with Pilate, with the Roman centurion, and with the crucified thief. Our savior suffered long and was kind during his dying hours. After the nails had been driven home, Luke 23:34 records that he cried out saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

This love goes beyond understanding; yet this is the kind of love God wants to fill us with. What kind of love is this? It is a constancy of love amid neglect, ignorance, lack of appreciation, and even undeserved violence. Why can love endure? Because God is sovereign and everything belongs to him. He gives us the capacity to live victoriously. A love that suffers long, and is kind, is Power beyond our comprehension or capacity. The entire Bible is an illustration of God's long-suffering towards mankind. With monotonous regularity, the Israelites murmured, complained, and even forsook Jehovah, yet he suffered long and was kind.

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"Love is not jealous or boastful;" Jealousy caused Joseph to be sold into Egypt; his half-brothers were discontented because he was the favored son of Jacob. Cain's envy made him a murderer. Envy was the downfall of the older brother in the story of the Prodigal Son. Envy is essentially satanic wherever it appears.

Envy exists in almost everyone. It is a disease that disturbs the mind and consumes the body. Some people become physically ill because of envy. The Living Bible's version of James 3:14-16 tells us that jealousy is a characteristic of earthly wisdom which results in confusion and disorder and all kinds of evil. It says, "And by all means don't brag about being wise and good if you are bitter and jealous and selfish; that is the worst sort of a lie. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, inspired by the devil, and come from Hell itself. For wherever there is jealousy or selfish ambition, there will be disorder and every other kind of evil."

Turn to Galatians, chapter five, verses 14 and 15 on Page 1015 in your Bibles. King Saul envied David to such a degree that he lost control of his faculties. Envy is usually a trait of the carnal or unregenerate soul. In contrast, love rejoices when others excel.

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Galatians 5:14 & 15, "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another." In other words, if you are always critical and catty, watch out! Beware of ruining each other.

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The event of falling in love is one of the sweetest experiences humanity enjoys. The outflow of feeling which leads us to forget ourselves and Promise our beloved anything is familiar to most of us. We meet someone who helps us to leap over the walls of our own selfhood. We come out of our own concern and are caught up in the well-being of another. Without expecting it and without working towards it, we spontaneously and magnificently fulfill the law of God (towards one person!) by loving someone else as much as we do ourselves!

The catch is that we discover after a week, or a month, or a year that this high and lofty condition is temporary, or at best intermittent. The old self, which we thought we had set aside in our love for another, rears up and starts begging for attention, for flattery, for recognition. Only as our human love bows before the love of God and invites His humility and His Grace into the experience, can it become a dependable and lasting love that is not proud of its own abilities.

Pride is often at the bottom of our biggest blunders. A young scottish minister once stepped into the pulpit with pride and complete self-confidence, but his sermon acted on the congregation like a double dose of sleeping pills. The message was a failure and he knew it. As he left the pulpit in defeat an old lady whispered, "Son, if ye hadda gon up the way ye came doon, ye would ha came doon the way ye went up!" Love is humble. It does not boast about itself.

Love is not big-headed; it is big hearted. The greater a person's ability, the less boasting he needs to do; and conversely, the less ability one has, the more noise he has to make about it. Love sees ourselves as we really are in the sight of God. Turn to Romans, chapter thirteen, verses 8 through 10 on page 987 in your Bibles.

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Romans 13:8-10, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

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The love of Christ will inspire loving thought for others. Just as a mother, though fast asleep, is subconsciously alert to hear any sound from her child, so a believer who is given over to Christ will be sensitive to the needs of others. These needs are perhaps most glaringly obvious when we have lost a loved-one to our old enemy, death. What the world calls tragedy comes to everyone sooner or later. When we see others in grief, we are to support and strengthen them, but only in God's way. When my father died in March of 1980 at the early age of 56, there

were two kinds of people who approached me. Those who emphasized their own feelings of sympathy only called my attention to my bereavement. But the true comforters said, "God has never made a mistake. He knows what he is doing. We sorrow not as others who have no hope. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, which is far better." Such words turned my attention from myself, lifted my heart to Christ and established me in the certainty of God's unfailing wisdom. We are to give TRUE comfort to those who mourn.

Love is patient and kind. It is not jealous, does not brag, and is not arrogant. Proverbs 10:12 says, "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses." And Proverbs 17:9 says, "He who forgives an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter alienates a friend."

We live in perilous times when loving each other makes us consummate fools in the eyes of the world. Look at what we face in the world around us every day. II Timothy 3:1-5 says, "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people." But, in avoiding such as these, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of also turning away from our brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. I John 4:20 says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

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When I first started to work on this series of lessons, the first problem that I encountered was the definition of "LOVE" to be used in my research. By this, I don't mean a formal definition of the word but rather a delineation of which words in the scripture I would accept as meaning "love" or close to it. And, before I could resolve this question, I had to decide which version of the Bible I would work with because the word usage is different in each version.

The second question wasn't too hard: I wanted to present these lessons using the Revised Standard Version because that is what the Pew Bibles are. This makes it easy for everybody to stay together. But, all my reference materials (in fact, most reference materials that are published) were tied to the Authorized (or King James) Version. So the answer was straightforward: I would do the research using the King James Version and would shift everything to the Revised Standard Version for presentation purposes after the research was complete.

For the first question, I chose eighteen words in the King James Version which I felt together just about encompassed the concept of love. These eighteen words were ... beloved... beloved's (Possessive)... charity... charitably... love... loved... lovedst... lovely... lover... lovers... love's (Possessive)... loves (Plural)... lovest... loveth... loving... lovingkindness... lovingkindnesses... and wellbeloved. These eighteen words

combined appear a total of Seven Hundred and Two times in the King James Version of the Bible.

But, that's only the tip of the iceberg. Each time one of those words appears in the King James Version, it is a translation of a word in the original Hebrew of the Old Testament or the original Greek of the New Testament. And the words in the original languages appear at other points in the scriptures where they are NOT translated as one of the words on my eighteen word Love List. If you look at everywhere that the original language words appear without considering their translations, you find 1,977 appearances.

In attempting to carry out some sort of reasonable study, I was able to condense this list by about 50% by passing over what I call "coincidental appearances." For example, the Hebrew word TOB is translated as "beloved" in Jeremiah 12:7. That's one appearance. In its other 551 appearances, TOB is translated 356 times as "good" 73 times as "better" and 122 times as related words. The "beloved" appearance is coincidental.

But an opposite example is the Hebrew word HESED which is actually one of the two major words for love in the Hebrew Old Testament. In the King James Version, it is translated as "lovingkindness" 26 times and as "lovingkindnesses" four times. Of the other 219 appearances, 137 are translated as "mercy" and the rest are translated as "kindness" or one of its derivatives. But in over 90% of the 137 cases where the King James Version translates HESED as "mercy" the Revised Standard Version translates it as "steadfast love". In fact the Revised Standard Version translates it as one of my love words 182 times (as opposed to 30 in the KJV). It is also translated as one of the love words 149 times in the New English Bible, 162 times in the Good News Bible, and 172 times in the New International Version.

On meshing this all together, I have come up with a list crossing version barriers which includes 981 appearances total: 614 in the Old Testament and 367 in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, 42% of the appearances are of the word AHAB which we will be discussing next week. 41% of the appearances are of HESED which we are touching on this week. 9% are of DOD and the remaining 8% are of various other words. We probably won't have time to get into these less prevalent words in this study.

In the New Testament, 86% of the appearances are of AGAPAO and its derivatives and 14% are of PHILEO and its derivatives. We will be investigating these words in later lessons. We will also look in detail at the Greek words EROS and STORGE which do not appear in the Bible but which are so prevalent in Greek literature that they make a significant statement about the love described in the Bible simply by their absence from it.

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Perhaps "Loyalty" is the aspect of love most closely associated with the Hebrew HESED. As I've already alluded to, HESED is extraordinarily difficult to translate, not only into English but into almost any European language. It simply has no obvious equivalent. Nevertheless, it cannot be passed over lightly because it expresses one of the most profound ideas in Hebrew religion. It is strongly linked

with terms like devotion, fidelity, loyalty, and even "the knowledge of God."

The New English Bible employs several modifiers when translating HESED; Phrases like true love, love unfailing, unfailing love, constant love, strong love, faithful love and the New International Version also uses Great love and wonderful love.

HESED always indicates that a relationship of some kind exists. It may be a family relationship (by blood or marriage) or a kinship among clans. It may be the relationship of host to guest, of allies to one another, of friends, of ruler and subject, or of God and His chosen ones. HESED is not used to describe the loose feelings of comradeship between man and his fellowmen but rather between people who are in some close relationship to one another. HESED is also an indispensable part of that particular kind of relationship - that of covenant, which is so important in the old testament. Not every appearance of HESED involves covenant but every appearance of covenant involves HESED.

A covenant develops out of a warm reciprocal relationship like love. One does not make a covenant with someone he detests or opposes. But it is not love alone that is in view; it is a love strengthened by loyalty. Loyalty to the promises made and to the people involved. Turn to Exodus, chapter twenty-four, verses one through eight on pages 66 and 67 in the Bible. This is THE Covenant between God and Israel, the one that governs all subsequent relations between God and the nation. It is the vehicle God uses to express his love for his people. Although "covenant" is a legal word, it must be not be thought that "covenant" applies to relationships that are merely legal and nothing more. A contract is binding but a covenant is bound by love. There would be no covenant at all between God and the nation were it not for the fact that God loved the people. In his love he freely entered into a covenantal relationship with them. A word that suggests loyalty and constancy as well as indicating love is obviously a good word for the attitude of partners in such a covenant. Specifically, it indicates the importance and value of God's love for Israel.

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Exodus 24:1-8, "And he said to Moses, 'Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship afar off. Moses alone shall come near to the Lord; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him.' Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do.' And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be

obedient.' And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the People, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.'

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The covenant delineated responsibilities on both sides. God always fulfilled his but the Israelites fell short of the standard over and over. They Promised to obey; they Promised to be good; but their entire history was one of disobedience and whoring after other gods. And STILL God loved them and was loyal and faithful to care for them and call them back to himself. Consider the story of a father who brought his children before him one day and said, "UP until now, you have been too young to really understand this but the day has now come that we have to set UP some working rules in this house. You're going out Places on your own now; school, other activities, friends' houses and the likes, and you need to have rules to live by even when I'm not right there to direct you." So, he outlined the set of rules he expected them to live by and they all looked UP at him with shining faces and lovingly avowed, "Yes, Daddy! We'll do everything you've said. We'll obey you at all times!" Whereupon he disgustedly snorted, "Not likely; I know you! You'll disobey and get into all sorts of trouble. You're not worth the effort." And, with that, he walked out the door and never came back! By now, we're all probably thinking of various horrible and unpleasant things we would like to see done to such a heartless and wicked man. We wouldn't do that. We'd hug the kids and affirm our love for them even knowing right well that they would never be able to live UP to their Promises. Our knowing that they won't behave perfectly and that we'll have to face the unpleasantness of dealing with their misbehavior just doesn't have anything to do with how much we love them and how much we rejoice in their love for us.

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Let's stop at this Point and Pray together before going on.
