

The Heart of a Disciple: Abiding in Jesus' Love

Love God. Love one another. Love our neighbors. There are the commands that we have considered over the past three weeks. These are the three great loves that are to be found in growing measure in the heart of every disciple of Jesus. Not one of them is optional! And so, how do we grow in these things? Where do we start? Scripture makes clear that such love arises out of God's own love for us. We simply must experience the deep, wide, persistent love of God in Christ if these three love commands are to be more than just ideas, but actually the passion of our hearts lived out in our day-to-day experience.

Opening Discussion: When did you first begin to have an inkling that God actually loved you?

Read John 15:9-17

1. What does Jesus teach about the Father's love?
2. Read John 5:17-20. Verse 20 makes the point that the Father, in showing Jesus what He is doing, is expressing love to the Son? How does this kind of interaction express love?
3. In John 15:9, Jesus says that he has loved us AS the Father has loved him. What does this mean for us?
4. Read John 15:12-15 again. How does this help us understand how Jesus has loved us?
5. The command in 15:9 is that we are to abide in Jesus' love. How do we do this? How do we have an ongoing, consistent experience of his love for us?

Steve said:

When we immerse ourselves in the words of Jesus (and the Scripture more generally), His commands don't seem burdensome and unreasonable and a distraction from what we really want to do. We find ourselves increasingly wanting to be part of the family business; we long to be part of what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing in this world. As an expression of our love for Jesus, we keep His commands. In the process we experience His love in fresh ways. The people I know who love to obey Jesus' commandments would tell you that they experience His love in new and fresh ways all the time. What we've been talking about today is a make-or-break issue for us if we want to be disciples who love God, love one another, and love our neighbors as ourselves. That will never happen unless we abide in Jesus' love.

6. Would you say that you experience Jesus love in "new and fresh ways all the time?" Why or why not?

7. What helps you experience Jesus' love in tangible, life-changing ways? What needs to change for you to more consistently experience Jesus' love for you?

8. As you reflect back on the past three weeks and the love commands that we've looked at, is it clear to you how experiencing Jesus' love is vital and necessary if you are going to obey the commands to love God, one another, and your neighbor? Explain.