

Lesson 10: Love**What is Love?**

The final virtue listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7 is love (*agapē*). Different from “brotherly affection,” *agapē* love is not based in personal affection or friendship, but is a self-sacrificial service for others that is rooted in our will to honor and imitate the self-sacrificial love of God in Christ. And, as with the other virtues, Paul highlights the importance of growing in *agapē* love (2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Tim 6:11).

Exercise #1

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 is perhaps the most well-known passage on love in the Bible. In this chapter, Paul presents himself as an example of love that is to be emulated by his readers (12:31; 13:1-3, 11-12). Identify at least three things that this chapter teaches about love that we can use in our “pursuit” (1 Cor 14:1) of love. Describe the Christian who has “all knowledge” or “all faith,” but not love (13:2). Come to class with a brief story about someone you know who exemplified the love described in Chapter 13.

Why Love?

As with the other virtues, our love for God results in blessing in this life (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9), and the life to come (James 1:12; 2:5; 1 Peter 3:10). An oft-mentioned result of love for Jesus is obedience to Jesus, e.g., John 14:15: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (cf. John 14:21, 23, 28); and love for Jesus is repeatedly stated to manifest itself in love for the followers of Jesus (John 13:35; Rom 14:15). A specific result of obedience of the truth is “genuine” or “sincere” love (1 Peter 1:22), which is a Pauline term for virtuous, mature *agapē* love (e.g., Rom 12:9; 2 Cor 6:6; 8:8; Eph 6:24; 1 Tim 1:5);

Exercise #2

What according to the following passages should be the effects of love, especially in the church?

Phil 2:2

1 Thess 5:13

Eph 4:16

1 Peter 2:17

1 Peter 5:14

How Love?

While on earth, Jesus announced his love for the Father (Jn 14:31), and the Gospel writers repeatedly describe Jesus’ love for the men and women around him (e.g., Mk 10:21; Jn 11:5; 13:1; 13:23). Jesus’ command to his disciples was that they “continue in my love” (Jn 15:9), and Paul repeatedly exhorts his communities to live and be controlled by this love (Romans 8:35, 37; 2 Cor 5:14). It is a love that Paul most closely and clearly associates with Christ’s gift on the cross (Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2 cf. Rev 1:5). Paul’s own love for his fellow Christians manifested itself in very practical ways: admonishment of brethren (1 Corinthians 4:14); edification (1 Cor 8:1); tears and anguish of heart (2 Cor 2:4); and giving of the gospel and his own life (2 Cor 12:15; 1 Thess 2:8).

Exercise #3

Read the following verses and identify practices that help us to cultivate love in our hearts and habits:

Jn 15:13

Eph 4:15

Gal 5:13

Eph 5:1-2

Eph 4:2