

Five Qualities Every Christian Laborer Must Possess

Lesson 3—Godly Love

OVERVIEW

Background Bible Passage: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Key Verse: Luke 10:27

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- How strongly developed is this quality in your life?
- To what extent would you consider yourself a “laborer” for Christ? How does this quality play a role in that.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed on Sunday morning.

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

CONTACT 1--The first time a student is absent, give him a call.

CONTACT 2--Following the second absence, send him a postcard.

CONTACT 3-- The third week they are absent, pay him a visit.

THINK ABOUT IT: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, “It really doesn’t matter if you’re here or not.” Small things communicate great messages. Let the three “small” things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Opening Questions

SAY: Let’s talk about where you are in life for a minute. I want you to be honest and I want to go around the room and have everyone give an answer:

- *Name three things that you love?*
- *How much do you love these things? (If they want, they can gauge this on a scale of 1 to 10.)*
- *What would you be willing to give up for each of these things?*
- *Is there anything that you wouldn’t be willing to give up?*

Illustration: Imagine that someone offered to make you the richest person in the world. Then they offered you all the fame in the world. Then they offered you anything else you wanted—whether it is a certain person to love or a certain way you want to look. Think about it...how would you feel? You could have everything you ever dreamed of. Then at the end, they tacked on one condition: To have all this, you must walk away from Jesus and never talk to Him again. How do you feel? Centuries ago Augustine used this illustration with the point that the strength of the “chill” you felt in thinking about never being with Jesus is a measure of your love for Him.

- *Answer this to yourself—On a scale of 1 to 10, how deep does your love for Jesus go?*

SAY: Each week we’ve been talking about five qualities you must have to effectively live for Christ. So far we’ve looked at godly speech and godly conduct. Today we’re talking about godly love. To live an effective Christian life, you must have a life characterized by godly love.

BIBLE LESSON

- *How would you define “godly love”? (Literally, this would be “a love like God’s”)*
- *What are some ways that “love” is abused in our world?*
- *What are some ways that “love” is abused by Christians?*

SAY: Consider the following explanation of godly love:

“The word [*agape*, the Greek word for God’s kind of love used here in 1 Corinthians 13] occurs some 320 times in the New Testament. It is rarely used negatively. Since it is commanded it cannot be based on an emotion. On the contrary, it is based on the will. It is used as a command about nineteen times so, evidently, what is being called for is a decision. It is costly, as we learn from John 3:16. It demands the care and welfare of the loved one regardless of whether that welfare involves their hurting or healing; *apape* love always involves helping. Most of us know little or nothing about it, although it is the very essence of the Christian life.”¹

- *Is there anything you would add to this definition? Does anything about it stick out to you?*

SAY: Now let’s take a look at God’s definition of true love.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- *Is there anything that sticks out to you in these verses?*

SAY: The first few verses give us several unfortunate possibilities.

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- Verse 1—One might possess great gifts of communication without love—*What does it say this is like?* (A noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.) *What do you think this means?* (These instruments merely make noise. There is no music unless they are combined with something else. Likewise, a person who has great gifts of communication without God’s love will never make the “beautiful sounds” he was created to produce until his abilities are combined with God’s love. Apart from love, anything he can accomplish will simply be a discordant, obtrusive, and annoying noise, almost entirely without significance.)
- Verse 2—One might possess great gifts of comprehension without love.
 - a. This person has the ability to see divine truth: “And though I have the gift of prophecy...”
 - b. He has a great grasp of hidden secrets: “Though I understand all mysteries”
 - c. He has a great grasp of God’s Word: “...and all knowledge.”
 - d. He also has great gifts of confidence (“and though I have all faith...”) but without love *What does it say this person of great ability is like?* (He is nothing.)
- Verse 3—One might possess great goodness without love.
 - a. This person has great human compassion: “...I give all my possessions to feed the poor.”
 - b. He exhibits great personal sacrifice: “...and if I deliver my body to be burned...” This is an obvious reference to his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice, to become a martyr for a cause, to be committed even to death, even to be burned at the stake, but: *What does it say that such an act apart from God’s kind of love profits a person?* (It profits him nothing.) *Why do you think so?*

Choose a volunteer to read—Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

SAY: There are seven things that godly love exhibits and nine things it cannot tolerate:

(Note: The questions below are rhetorical.)

Godly Love Is...

- (1) Godly love is patient. *Are you patient?*
- (2) Godly love kind. *Are you kind?*
- (3) Godly love rejoices with the truth. *Do you rejoice with the truth? What about when you are confronted with your sin? Had you rather believe a lie?*
- (4) Godly love bears all things. The word “bear” means to “cover,” “protect” or “to put a roof over.” Godly love finds ways to cover and protect others. *Do you?*
- (5) Godly love believes all things. This doesn’t mean it’s gullible but ready to believe the best. *Are you?*
- (6) Godly love hopes all things. This “hope” is not like hanging from a rope and saying, “I hope it doesn’t break.” “Hope” in the Bible is a very strong word that carries with it a certainty of expectation. A good example is Jesus’ coming again being referred to as a “blessed hope.” It’s a certainty. In this case, love entertains

the certainty of great expectations. Love can look to the future with a smile. *Do you?*

- (7) Godly love endures all things. The word for endurance means, “To remain under the load.” In other words, life isn’t always easy but love doesn’t quit, neither in life nor towards others; Godly love lasts to the end.

Things Godly Love Cannot Tolerate...

- (1) Godly love is not envious or jealous. *Are you jealous?*
- (2) Godly love does not brag. It does not parade itself. *Do you?*
- (3) Godly love does not boast. *Do you?*
- (4) Godly love is not arrogant. It is not puffed up and self-centered. *Are you?*
- (5) Godly love does not act unbecomingly. The only other place this word is used is in 1 Corinthians 7:36, where it has to do with a man behaving properly toward his fiancée. One commentator writes, “*This is love in action in little things...Love knows how to behave as a gentleman or as a lady, not artificially but genuinely. It does not act or speak in an inappropriate way.*” ² *How do you behave?*
- (6) Godly love does not seek its own. It is not selfish. *Do you?*
- (7) Godly love is not provoked. It is never uncontrollably enraged. *Are you?*
- (8) Godly love does not take into account a wrong suffered. The word used here is an accounting term. Godly love bears no resentment. *Do you?*
- (9) Godly love finds no joy or pleasure in unrighteousness. *Do you?*

SAY: I want us to read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 again but this time instead of “love”, I want to insert the word “Jesus.”

Re-read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 inserting “Jesus” for “Love.”

SAY: This is a description of Jesus! He is the living example of godly love.

SAY: Now let’s read verses 4-8 aloud, but this time, I want you to insert your name, so instead of “Love is patient,” I want you to say, “[Your name] is patient, “[Your name] is kind ...”

Re-read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 inserting the students name for “Love.”

- *As you read this, is there any area where you feel you are lacking in love?*
- *What might need to change in your life for you to be known as a person of godly love?*

KEY VERSE

SAY: Now let’s move beyond a definition of love to take a look at love in action...

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Luke 10:27

- *How does this say to love God?*
- *How does this say to love others?*
- *What would a person be like who loved others as himself/herself? Would you want to be around this person?*
- *If how much you love yourself measured against how much you love others, which way would it lean—your way, their way, or would there be a balance? Why or why not?*

SAY: Consider this statement: “How you love God is reflected in how you love your neighbor. How you love your neighbor is reflected in how you love yourself.”

- *Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?*

SAY: Consider the following thoughts:

- (1) “Question: Why are some [people] so unlovable? Answer: Probably because no one has ever *truly* loved them! When others attach worth to us, we, in turn, tend to attach more worth to ourselves.” ³
 - (2) Authors and psychologist, Frank Minirth and Paul Meier: Depression can be defined at “Lack of intimacy with God and/or others.” ⁴
 - (3) Mother Teresa was often asked what she felt was the major problem in the world. Her answer? Loneliness. ⁵
 - (4) “Like Jesus, lay your life down for others and put others’ needs ahead of your own. I used to think the number of memory verses and converts you had was the highest measure of Christian maturity and Christ-likeness. Now I believe the highest measure is a four-letter word: L-O-V-E.” ⁶
- *Do you have any thoughts about these quotes?*

WRAP IT UP

SAY: To be effective in living the Christian life, you must possess godly love.

- *This week how will you love others—specifically: How will you love your parents? How will you love your friends? How will you love _____?*

Prayer Time

Pray specifically today that your students will love God first and their neighbor as themselves—that they will be people of godly love.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests

¹ John Phillips, *Exploring 1 Corinthians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 286-7.

² Ibid, 292.

³ Steve Shadrach, *The Fuel and the Flame* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2003), 30.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, 31.

⁶ Ibid.