

TEN QUESTIONS TO DIAGNOSE YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH (DON WHITNEY) WEEK 3: ARE YOU MORE LOVING?

In the Greek there are multiple words used for affection. The two most familiar are agapeo and phileo.

Phileo - to approve of, sanction, to like, to treat affectionately or kindly, to show signs of love

Agapeo – brotherly love, benevolent, deep affection,. Used of love of God to men, men to God, Christian to Christian. It is an all in love, committed and sacrificial love.

God's love for man was demonstrated by sending His Son as Redeemer. Christ love for man was demonstrating by coming to earth, living a perfect life, dying for our sins and giving to us eternal life.

So what is your love language again?

Martin Luther: “The more a person loves, the closer he approaches the image of God.”

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that **you love one another: just as I have loved** [“agapeo”] **you**, you also are to **love** [“agapeo”] **one another.** 35 **By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Distinguishing characteristic of a true believer is love for each other.

Note: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples”

Not just other believers, but all people ; ie as a Christian you should be known for your love!

If you are growing in your love for others, **then and only then are you growing as a Christian.**

If this is NOT true at any level, then your identity is either flawed or hidden from people.

God's Word puts a higher emphasis on love by Christians than anything seen in the world!

Joh 15:12 "This is my **commandment**, that you **love one another** as I have loved you.

Ro 13:8 Owe no one anything, **except to love** each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Ga 5:13 . . . but **through love** serve one another. 14 **For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

Eph 5:2 And **walk in love**, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1Jo 4:21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever **loves God** must also **love his brother.**

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

A. Whitney: “Love is the badge and character of Christianity.”

B. 1Co 13:1 ¶ **If I speak in the tongues** of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 1Co 13:2 And **if I have prophetic powers**, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and **if I have all faith**, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 1Co 13:3 **If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body** to be burned, **but have not love, I gain nothing.**

- C. Paul said, **“but have not love, I gain nothing”**
 1. **Similar to what Jesus said to the Pharisees**→God looks at the heart.
 2. You may have not murdered, but hate for a person is murdered in your heart.

II. DECLINING LOVE

- A. **Whitney:** *“as love grows colder, our sin increasingly manifests itself and we look more UNLIKE Christ.”*
- B. **1Co 13:4 Love is patient and kind;** love does not **envy or boast**; it is not **arrogant**. **5 or rude**. It does not **insist on its own way**; it is not irritable or resentful;
- C. **Patience wains with less love**→ “love is patient”
- D. **Unkindness grows with less love** → “love is kind”
- E. **Envy, arrogance, rudeness are all increased with less love**
- F. **More intolerant with** those around us and love ones.
- G. **Develop a “I deserve more” or “I have my rights” attitude.**
- H. Love **is not irritable or resentful**, without it we become more angry, irritable, faultfinding.
- I. **Plenty time for things but no time for the people in our lives!**
- J. Fail to stand up and protect each other.
- K. **Fail to love when we fail to love enough to confront sin!**
 1. **Neglected responsibilities of a believer is failing to confront sin.**
 2. Today in the church and we see it in parents with wayward children!
 3. Church discipline is too invasive, to unkind, but you are willing to let your brother or sister ruin their lives, and their testimony without any concern?
 4. Letting a friend defame the name of Christ and His church is NOT love!
 5. **Mat 18:15-20 is not a penalty for sin, rather it is a life raft for a brother in Christ**
 6. **Lack of concern for the Lost** is a sign of declining love in a believer
 7. **Ro 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.**
 8. Care about them genuinely → **Ro 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.**
- L. **Not Perfection, But Direction**
 1. No person is perfect--Only Jesus Christ loved perfectly.
 2. **John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**
 3. **Many are slow to love, but the point is this, “Are you progressing in Christlike love or are you getting worse?”**

III. WHAT KIND OF LOVE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

- A. Standard for love? **Scripture is the standard:** defines, explain practice of love
- B. **Natural Affections are Counterfeits**→ parents love children naturally
 1. Lost people usually have an affection for offspring
 2. **Cannot become proud of ourselves because we have such good affections toward family and friends.**

3. **Innate to love those who love you back—**
4. **Natural love can be a pretense or counterfeit for the love that only the Holy Spirit can give.**
5. **Jonathan Edwards regarding imitation love** (book *Religious Affections*)
 - a. *“Tis the chief of the graces of God’s Spirit, and the life essence and sum of all true religion; and that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most contrary to hell and the devil. But yet it is ill arguing from hence, that there are no counterfeits of it. It may be observed that the more excellent anything is, the more will be the counterfeits of it.”*

C. **Self-Love Counterfeit**

1. **“what’s in it for me”**, a “please me first” love.
2. Benefits to others is only a side affect to what it does for me.
3. A **“get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the can”** love!
4. **Man’s love for a woman can be visibly genuine in all the things he does for her—but he is only genuinely interested in what she does to or for him.**
5. Parents or children acting as if they love the other only for what they can get.
6. **Not Christlike love and does NOT indicate growth in Christlikeness!**

D. **I love you if you love me Counterfeit**

1. Quid pro quo Love → I will love you if you love me
2. **Worldly love**, similar to “what’s in it for me” love.
3. [Lu 6:32](#) "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. [33](#) And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.
4. “Full of affections for some and full of bitterness towards others.”→Look for approval and love those who provide it!
5. Do well in public and do anything publicly, but in private hold disdain for their own spouse or family!
6. Whitney: *“The test of Christlikeness is not the greatness of your love towards those who love you, but the bounty of your love toward those who do not.”*
7. [Mt 5:43](#) ¶ "You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ [44](#) But I say to you, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**
8. **How do you do with those who are difficult to love?**

E. **Unbalanced Love Counterfeit**

1. Love to take care of the needs of others but doesn’t care to get involved with emotional, personal or spiritual needs.

2. Or have a heart for their soul but never their physical needs.
3. Might give them the gospel some times but discount physical help also.
4. Jesus cared for both physical and spiritual man.
5. **Mark 6:** Jesus felt compassion for the crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He had preached but when He discerned the need for physical food, he provided that also!
6. **Need for the gospel is the greatest need of all people.**
 - a. True love will always look for a way to bring spiritual food to the starving soul
 - b. But we show the love of Christ by also helping physically when it is called for.
7. **1Jo 3:18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.**

IV. REAL LIFE CHRISTIAN LOVE

A. Christians growing in love demonstrate it in 3 areas (Whitney)

B. #1. Love for other Christians will continue to increase.

1. Love for the brethren is to be visible and obvious in the life of a Spirit filled person.
2. **1Jo 3:14 ¶ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.** Whoever does not love abides in death.
3. **As did Jesus, we are to have a special love for the brethren.**
4. **Ga 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.**
5. **NOT seeking vindication when offended:** **1Th 5:15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil,** but always seek to do good **to one another** and to everyone.
6. **1Jo 3:16 By this we know love,** that he laid down his life for us, and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.**

C. #2- Love for the Lost

1. Christ commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel.
2. Jesus speaking to the rich ruler did not ridicule →felt compassion, spoke truth in love
3. **Paul defines spiritual maturity: one who knows truth and can shares it in love:**
 - a. **Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children,** tossed to and fro, and **carried about** with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; **15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up** into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

4. Paul, sent as the apostle to the Gentiles!—> 1Ti 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I **speak the truth** in Christ, *and lie not*;) **a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.**
5. **More like Christ, more we desire to tell others about how to know Him!**
6. **More we understand that all will stand before the judgement seat of God, more we should weep for those that do not know Him!**
7. Worldly love, “don’t want to get involved and make them upset” love.—> **Upset on Judgement Day?**

D. #3– Love for Family

1. Easy to counterfeit love in workplace, in public—>Hard to fake it at home!
2. Husbands are commanded to love wives as Jesus loved the church!
3. Wives were just simply commanded, “love your husbands”.
4. **Love should be displayed the greatest within the walls of our Christian homes.**
5. How expressed?
 - a. More gratitude towards them
 - b. More patience with them
 - c. Less anger towards them
 - d. More Physical Affection (need I explain!)
 - e. More time with them
 - f. More generosity, etc
 - g. Sometimes just listening will demonstrate love the most!

V. REAL REASON FOR GROWING IN LOVE

- A. Lost and believers outwardly can express love.**What is the difference between the two?**
- B. Motivation—> why are you doing it? What is in your heart?
- C. **Reason in the heart of a believer:** “I want to grow in love because I want to be more like Jesus Christ as this pleases my heavenly Father.”—>adds power and quality to love
- D. **Only able to love like Christ because God’s love has been put in us.**
 1. **Ro 5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**
 2. **Will never love our enemies unless God gives us the power and the conscience**
 3. We love as an **overflow of the love God gives to us.**
- E. **Paul reminds us that we too were just like them B.C.**
 1. **Eph 2:1 ¶ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, . . . were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 ¶ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,**
 2. **This is how we as believers can love others — because God first loved us.**
- F. **More we are satisfied in the love of Christ, more we will grow in love ourselves!**

VI. HOW CAN WE GROW IN LOVE?

- A. **2Co 9:8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that **having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.**

B. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS:

1. Meditate on love as the most visible mark of a Christian.

- a. Think about Christian love, Can you see its evidence in your life?
- b. Love is not a spiritual gift, it is a requirement
- c. **1Jo 4:8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

2. Consider the Love of God for you.

- a. **1Jo 4:7 ¶** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.
- b. Consider how God demonstrated His Love. How Christ demonstrated His Love.
- c. Pray for strength to have strength to love like Christ
- d. **Eph 3:18** may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
- e. “God is love and having communion with God will cause us to grow warm in love.” (1600's Dutch minister)

3. Look for Assurance of Faith in Loving as God loves.

- a. Loving as Christ is evidence that you are loved by Him!
- b. Would you not strive to love even more?
- c. As already read: **1Jo 4:7 ¶** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

4. Delight in Imitating God

- a. Straight up command: **Eph 5:1 ¶** Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children. **2** And **walk in love**, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
- b. Loving the difficult is hard but when you accomplish it you should be proud in the Lord that you are acting like Christ!

5. Identify a Person (s) Where You already KNOW you need to grow.

- a. Maybe your family? Wife, children? Co-worker?
- b. What is one way you could demonstrate love (from the heart, not just out of obligation)
- c. This requires to the most trust in Christ, that He will do it for you?

- C. Does anyone see the love of Christ growing in your life? Set a goal to change that in the near future!