

WHAT IS GODLY LOVE?

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INTRO

Pastor Faber has been teaching about the four inheritances we celebrate during Advent: love, joy, peace, and hope. We see these candles are plugged into the wreath, and the wreath represents God, meaning that God is our source for love, joy, peace, and hope. And today we have lit the fifth candle, which represents Jesus Christ, making Him the Father's ambassador to mankind.

It was God's driving desire for fellowship with mankind that caused the Father to give His Son as the perfect love offering needed to give us the greatest Christmas present of all, salvation.

It is appropriate that, on this Sunday, we pause to examine the depth and power of God's love. It is important to distinguish between God's love and human love without God.

Everything God has done for us stems from His love. Since God is love, He desires a genuine relationship with someone He can love, and who can choose to love Him in return, freely.

To establish this love relationship based on free will, He created mankind in His image and likeness. His image represents His glory, while His likeness is reflected in the fruit of the Spirit. The most crucial aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is this God-originated love, known as agape in Greek.

Apostle John defines God's likeness as love in 1 John 4:7-8.

Apostle Paul describes the qualities of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, providing his definition of love.

If this is correct, then God is love, and we are created in His likeness; therefore, we are also meant to both receive love and to love others.

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However, because of Adam's sin, what we were originally created for has been overshadowed by sin.

Because of the reason for the season, Jesus our Savior, we have been redeemed, and now the battle for our soul begins.

As we seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, our growing love for God begins a healing process for our soul.

As healing takes place, our soul gradually reabsorbs God's love. The rate of healing depends on how actively the believer seeks it. The more time dedicated to seeking, the quicker the healing happens.

Once healing is nearly complete, God's love starts to overflow into the wounded hearts of our loved ones and then into our other neighbors. When this overflow touches others' hearts, your name becomes synonymous with love.

In doing this healing of your soul, you have been laying claim to your inheritance – to become a ***child of love***.

Apostle Paul has defined the inheritance of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. There are "15" articles of inheritance that all believers are to work toward the ownership of.

As we examine these "15" articles of inheritance, recall Pastor Faber's teaching that love is a 'giving' word, not a 'taking' word. Love involves giving, and the greatest example is the Father giving His Son. We must also learn to give unconditionally.

Another key point revealed by highlighting these "15" aspects required for godly love is the revealing "15" main reasons we find it difficult to be a

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godly lover. By examining the antitheses of these "15" positive aspects of love, we can see the character flaws that man must overcome to become a godly lover. For example, the positive aspect is 'kind.' The negative character flaw that must be overcome is being 'unkind.'

Let's do a brief review of these 15 ingredients for becoming a godly lover.

Patient – Give time to heal. We often want the wounded soul to heal on our schedule rather than respecting their need for healing time. We don't wish to be their long-suffering servants. However, when we are the ones hurting, we behave very differently. As the wounded, we feel compelled to share every detail and expect words of sympathy from others. Yet we forget to treat others as we want to be treated.

Kind ---- Give grace to those who hurt you. Revenge doesn't aid healing; grace does. However, it's difficult to extend grace when your mind is filled with anger. Our anger stems from self-centeredness instead of being focused on God. Only when we are grateful and aware of God's grace can we truly be kind to others. Cultivate a heart of thankfulness to replace those fleshly thoughts.

Don't envy – Be a giver. Envy and jealousy are alike; both imply that God does not fulfill my needs. By cultivating a daily-bread attitude of gratitude, rather than a weekly one, we can replace sins such as envy with thankfulness.

Don't boast – Give glory to God and be humble for what He has done through you. When we serve, the left hand should not know what the right hand is doing. Rejoice and be happy with God knowing your good deeds.

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Not proud – Give God the words of praise, and remember, without Him, you are just a bag of dirt. (That was for you, Scott T.)

Not rude – Give positive and encouraging words. Avoid using demeaning nicknames or making comparisons between individuals. Keep in mind Jesus's teaching that calling a brother 'Raca' or 'fool' can lead to correction.

Not self-seeking – Give, give, give must be the mindset. Adopt a mindset of sacrificial giving, which fosters a God-seeking heart. Continuously count your blessings to let gratitude dominate your thoughts.

Not easily angered – Give love, joy, and peace. However, you cannot give what you don't have in your soul. First, seek God's love, joy, and peace, and set aside all your anger.

No records of wrongs – Give mercy and second chances, because God has done that for you. You cannot forget, but you can choose to forgive. A Christlike heart keeps no record of wrong, because such a record destroys fellowship.

Hate evil, love truth – Give godly advice. Avoid gossip, rumors, and innuendos.

Always protects – Giving sheltering prayer, protecting the wounded soul. Be a person who stands in the gaps of the other person's spiritual wall until their wall is rebuilt.

Always trust – Give with integrity and go beyond expectations. Share more than what's required, as generosity demonstrates love and fosters trust. If asked to walk one mile, offer to walk two.

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Always hope – Giving inspirational words breaks the bondage of darkness.

It gives someone purpose and a goal to focus on.

Always perseveres – Give a love that walks, not just talks. Be there when darkness tries to overcome. Let your light break their darkness.

Never fails – Give as God has given to you – 7 times 70. Don't give up on anyone, because God has never given up on you.

Where does the power behind these verses originate? It is God. Essentially, these verses depict God's love. Let's revisit these verses by replacing the word love with God.

Aren't you glad that God is a patient lover of you? Aren't you glad He is full of grace? Aren't you glad He is slow to anger? Aren't you glad He doesn't keep records of wrong? Aren't you glad, aren't you glad, aren't you glad, that His love never fails?

This validates what Apostle John said in 1 John 4:7-8: **God is love.**

By living and sharing love, we mimic God's love. Since **God is love**, we, as mimicking believers, are love, also.

Now, replace the word "love" in the same verses with your own name. How well are you embodying those qualities? In verse 11, reflect on the transition from being a child to becoming a godly man. Verse 12 describes us as a dim reflection of God's glory, but when we face Him directly, we will be fully known and glorified.

I take each one of these "15" virtues of God's love, and I grade myself: (1) means I'm still very childish, and (5) means I'm a godly man.

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It helps me identify my weaknesses in my spiritual path and understand why I find it hard to serve as I desire. I aim to be a conduit of God's love to others, but my low scores prevent my soul from healing, causing me to leak God's love rather than overflow it to those with wounded hearts. With time, perseverance, and belief in God, my dim reflection will brighten, and my childish ways will become godly, and God's love will overflow into the hearts of others. Praise God.

BIG PICTURE

We are created to love and to be loved, but without our inheritance of love from the Father, we are gongs and cymbals filled with good intentions, making noise but without changing any hearts. However, with God's love, we will become great servants.