



# Teaching God's Word to Train Disciples

## Fellowship BIBLE CHURCH

Audio of Pastor Don Griffin's sermons is available at  
<http://www.fellowship-katy.org>

When I was 14 years old, I worked full time during the summer for a car lot. I had a number of responsibilities. I was to sweep the floor, restock the coke machine and put battery chargers on cars that would not start. One of my main duties was to get the used cars looking good enough to sell. That meant I needed to clean out the inside and put armor all on it. I washed the outside of the cars. Then I would polish the outside and then follow the polish with a wax. The whole process was to make those cars look as good as possible so that someone would want to buy them.

## Building a Church God Can Use

### Loving one another

### Part 2

That's because people buy things that look good. That's what advertisement is all about, making things look as good as possible to the consumer. Can you imagine selling a cold drink with an ad that says, "Our drinks may not taste as good as the other brands. They may not be as refreshing, and you may not get as many ounces, but they are a nickel cheaper than most other leading brands." That kind of ad is probably not going to sell cold drinks. People buy things that look good to them.

And the same is true for building a church that God can use. If we want to have a church that God can use, our church must be attractive to those in our community, and I am not talking primarily about a building. A beautiful building may possibly draw someone to visit the church, but it is people who have been made inwardly beautiful by the spirit of God who attract people to Christ. What is this inward beauty in Christians that is so attractive? More than any other thing, the world needs to see the love of God coming through the lives of Christian people.

"Love is the medicine for the sickness of the world." So said noted psychiatrist Dr. Karl Meninger.

He summarized his therapeutic approach this way: "Love cures. It cures those who give it and it cures those who receive it."

Love truly is good medicine. It has been said that the three most powerful words in the English language are "I love you."

At the close of his ministry, Jesus looks forward to his death on the cross, the open tomb and the ascension.

Knowing that he is about to leave, Jesus prepared his disciples for what was to come. It is here that he makes clear what will be the distinguishing mark of the Christian:

*My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:33-35)*

The mark that Jesus gives to label a Christian, not just in one era or in one locality, but at all times and all places is love.

It is possible to be a Christian without showing the mark, but if we expect non-Christians to know that we are Christians, we must show the mark.

### WHAT IS LOVE?

#### 1. LOVE IS AN UNPAID DEBT

*Romans 13:8, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another...."*

God first loved us, and it is our responsibility to respond in love to Him and to other people. The debt

we have to love is so enormous that we will never be able to pay it off.

Love is not like a bank book with payments that you finally work down so that you finally make your last payment and have nothing left to pay. It is the one debt we can never repay.

Each day as we get up, we are to think, "Today I will meet many people who need the love of God." Each day in the office or the classroom or working the third shift at the factory, we should look for ways in which we can show love to others.

## 2. LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

*Romans 13:8b-9, "for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. 9The commandments, "Do not commit adultery; "Do not murder; "Do not steal, "Do not covet, "and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

All the "Thou Shalt Nots" ultimately flow from love. If you love your neighbor, you won't hurt him. If you love him, you won't kill him. If you love him, you won't steal his money or his good name. And if you love him, you won't begrudge him his prosperity or get angry because you have less than he does.

## 3. LOVE IS A COMMITMENT

Some would say that love is just a feeling. But that is not what the Bible says. It has much to do with our emotions, but it isn't just a feeling. In fact, when our relationships rely upon love to be a feeling, we're in trouble because our feelings change, don't they? We don't always feel the same way today as we might tomorrow or we did yesterday.

Others would say that love is uncontrollable. It just happens to us. It's an overwhelming feeling that sweeps people off their feet when the right two eyes meet. They don't have to know one another. They

don't have to know one another's values or backgrounds. It's just this tingling, gushy overwhelming sensation.

The Bible doesn't say that. In fact, the Bible says that love is a choice.

Somebody has said that love is the mental and emotional commitment to care and act like we care even when we don't feel like it.

If all of us were honest, we would say there are times we don't feel like loving our spouse, our children or our friends.

We don't feel like loving our job or the people we work with. Love is a matter of choice. It's my choosing to be committed to another person, even on the days I don't feel like it.

## 4. LOVE IS A FAMILY CHARACTERISTIC

Ephesians 5:1, "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children..."

Some actors or comedians can take on the facial expressions and the vocal inflection of a famous person. Some imitations are good (Elvis impersonators), but they're no substitute for the real thing.

There's more to imitating God than just talking the talk. Some people think that if they just quote enough Scripture enough times in enough conversations, they'll be Godly. Quoting Scripture is a good thing, but there is more to imitating God than just knowing and quoting Scripture. So, how do we imitate God?

*Ephesians 5:1-2), "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ loved you."*

That's how you imitate God: you love people. I like Eugene Peterson's translation from The Message: "Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents."

Note the word therefore at the beginning of Ephesians 5:1. It refers us back to 4:32, which tells us to be "kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." That's

the essence of imitating God, being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

God's purpose has always been to make us like himself. Romans 8:29 tells us that the reason for our salvation is that we might be "conformed to the image of his Son." Because Jesus was a servant, we are to be servants. Because God is love, we are to "walk in love."

## 5. LOVE IS THE MAIN THING

If I were to ask you to complete this sentence, how would you complete it? "My aim in life is..." If you had to boil it down to one word, my aim in life is success, my aim in life is fame, my aim in life is approval, my aim in life is achievement, and my aim in life is wealth. What would it be if you had to say my aim in life is?

Your priority determines the kind of choices you will make in life.

For example, if the priority in my life is to have fun, then I will always choose the thing which will be the most fun to me. Your aim in life determines everything that you do. If your aim in life is security, then you will always choose that which looks to be the safest. Every person has a dominant value that directs his life.

*1 Corinthians 14:1 in the living bible says "make love your greatest aim." Paul tells us exactly how important the priority of love is.*

*1 Corinthians 13:1, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

Haddon Robinson said, "Imagine you have a \$50 bill, so you go to buy some groceries. The clerk takes your \$50 bill, puts it in the cash register. A little later

the manager needs some money to pay an electrician and takes your \$50 bill, leaves an IOU, and pays the electrician. The electrician realizes he needs some gas for his truck, so he goes over to the Gulf station, fills it up, pays for the gas with your \$50 bill. The man who runs the station has your \$50 bill and the landlord comes over and wants to be paid. So he takes your \$50 bill and several others and gives them to the landlord to pay the rent. The landlord is going to mail a letter to his daughter down in university in Rhode Island, so before he goes to the post office to send the letter, he takes the 50 dollars and tucks it into the envelop as a token of his love. A day or two later the young lady gets that gift and, grateful to her dad, she takes that \$50 bill, goes to the bookstore, and buys two textbooks. The manager of the bookstore takes your \$50 bill and several others to the bank, and as the teller is counting out the money, he comes to your \$50 bill and discovers that it's counterfeit. Now that bill has gone all over doing good things, but when it comes to the bank where only real values count, it's discovered to be worthless. In a similar way it's possible to minister the gifts God gives you, do all kinds of things with it, but when we stand before God with whom only real values count, if we have not ministered with love we ourselves are nothing."

a) WITHOUT LOVE ALL I SAY IS INEFFECTIVE

b) WITHOUT LOVE ALL I KNOW IS INCOMPLETE

c) WITHOUT LOVE ALL I BELIEVE IS INSUFFICIENT

If you have the kind of faith that moves mountains, but don't have love, God puts under your ledger, your name, and He puts a zero by it. He says it means nothing.

*Galatians 5:6 says, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."*

d) WITHOUT LOVE ALL I GIVE IS INSIGNIFICANT

e) WITHOUT LOVE ALL I ACCOMPLISH IS INADEQUATE

Life minus love equals zero. He says it over and over again. Our goal should be to live in such a way that people see the love of God coming through our lives.

It was said of the early Christians that their impact on society was due to their great love for one another. That is still true.

There was a survey done of Muslims who have converted to the Christian faith sometimes at great personal cost. The survey (which was over a 16 year period and involved 750 former Muslims) said the number one reason Muslim leaders chose to follow Christ was the lifestyle of the Christians among them.

## HOW TO BECOME A LOVING PERSON

### 1. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE IN THE SAME FAMILY WITH ALL OTHER BELIEVERS

*Romans 12:10 "Love one another with brotherly affection"*

The words, "brotherly affection" comes from two Greek words that have been joined together: *philos*, which means tender affection, fondness, devotion,

and *adelphos*, usually translated "brother;" but it literally means "one born of the same womb."

So the Scripture is talking about "tender affection owed to those born from the same womb." All Christians have been "born of the same womb" through the new birth.

I have 1 brother Gerald. In many ways we are alike, and in many ways we are different. We have different habits and hobbies, different likes and dis-

likes. Yet one thing binds us together. We come from the same womb. That fact means that there will always be a special place in my heart for my brother. There is a bond between us that time and distance cannot break.

The same truth applies in the spiritual realm. Everyone who belongs to Jesus belongs to me. We are to love all true believers everywhere all the time.

## 2. ADMIT YOUR SIN

There is no way that you can be in a loving relationship with someone and at the same time have ongoing, unresolved issues with that person.

For love to thrive, people are going to have to admit the wrong they have done and forgive one another. The problem often is that we don't want to admit that we have done wrong, and we have been raised in a world that tells us we're not responsible for our sin.

In his book *There's a Lot More to Health Than Not Being Sick*, Bruce Larson reports on the work of two doctors at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington.

Psychiatrist Samuel Yochelson and psychologist Stanton Samenow studied the federal prisoners who are sent to them for treatment.

Their conclusion is simple: We are not effective in changing criminals because we refuse to allow criminals to be wrong. Instead of allowing them to face their misdeeds and take responsibility, we ... think people who commit crimes must be "ill" in some way.

The two doctors say that if you treat a criminal as someone who has consciously chosen to break the law, then he can be challenged to change his behavior.

But if you tell him he's not responsible because he is "ill" or "insane," the doctors believe there is no therapy which has any hope of producing lasting change.

If you want to be able to truly love and be loved, you have to be willing to take responsibility for your sin.

Back in the 60's, folk singer Anna Russell wrote about the world in which we live:

I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalyzed

To find out why I killed the cat and blacked my husband's eyes.

He laid me on a downy couch to see what he could find,

And here is what he dredged up from my subconscious mind:

When I was one, my mommy hid my dolly in a trunk,

And so it follows naturally that I am always drunk.

When I was two, I saw my father kiss the maid one day,

And that is why I suffer now from kleptomania.

At three, I had the feeling of ambivalence toward my brothers,

And so it follows naturally I poison all my lovers.

But I am happy; now I've learned the lesson this has taught;

That everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault.

It is a fundamental requirement to being a loving person that you be able to say, "I was wrong."

*Proverbs 28:13, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."*

When we sin, Solomon says we only have two options. Either we admit we're wrong, or we deny we did wrong. You will never grow spiritually and become the loving person you should be until you are willing to confess your sins and forsake them.

### 3. UNDERSTAND THAT DIFFERENT DOESN'T MEAN WRONG (Rom 12:16)

One of the barriers to loving people is the fact that they often don't seem to have the sense to do things the way we do them. For example, some people are brought up having a very strict time for dinner every night. Others make it up as they go. That's a very small thing, but it can turn into a big issue. Neither is right or wrong. They are just different.

*Romans 12:16 "Live in harmony with one another"*

When people sing or play harmony, they are not playing the same notes. They are just able to play different notes together in such a way that they complement one another.

That's the way it is in the church. We don't all look alike or act alike, talk alike or think alike.

But before you get "bent out of shape" because someone doesn't do everything the way you do, realize God made him that way.

God wants us to accept one another just like He has accepted us.

When we do that, the harmony of our differences will make a beautiful sound for the world to hear.

We would take giant steps toward winning people to Christ if we learned to truly love. We all need to commit ourselves to fulfilling this greatest of all God's desires for our lives.

Christ's prayer and making the Gospel look attractive to our watching world if we each would make this pledge:

I will listen more and criticize less. I will encourage more and discourage less. I will never ever say anything negative or critical about a brother or sister in Christ behind their backs. I will always speak face to face and then only after searching my own heart to try to make sure, that I am operating from the best motives.

Imagine the impact Jesus could have on our world and our town if we demonstrated that kind of unity. I would like to see what would happen, wouldn't you?