

The following series of daily readings and questions has been designed by Pastor Tom Cullen to lead up to the sermon for the coming week. There are five daily studies for each week. Allow about 20 minutes a day to complete each daily devotional.

The weekly sermons can be listened too at sbc.com

Each week's daily devotional guide is also available online at sbc.com under the small group tab.

Pray: Write out your prayer to God.

Endnotes

1. George Appleton, *The Oxford Book of Prayer*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 55.
2. Stephen Olford, *Not I But Christ* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1995), 117.
3. From the hymn entitled *May the Mind of Christ My Saviour*. By Katie B. Wilkinson. # 375 in the *Canadian Baptist Hymnal*.
4. From the song entitled *How Great Is your Love* by Mark Altrogge. 1991 Integrity Music
5. Bo Stephens, *Abide in Christ* (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Press, 2007), 69.
6. Andrew Murray, quoted in Bo Stephens book *Ibid.*, 69.
7. From the Hymn *And Can It Be?* By Charles Wesley, Norman Clayton Publications, Co. 1986.
8. Gene A. Getz, *Loving One Another*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1979), 25-26.
9. Stephen Olford, *Ibid.*, 126.
10. Gene A. Getz. *Ibid.*, 125.
4. If we are lacking in one or more quality, how can these be attained?

Week 6: Picking over the produce

Reflection and Prayer:

“A Christian man moved into a community with a notoriously disagreeable neighbour. When informed of the character of this individual, the Christian remarked, “If he disturbs me, I will kill him!” The statement reached the ears of the neighbour who went out of his way to torment the new settler.

“But every offense was forgiven and met with love until, at last, the contentious neighbour was completely won over. ‘I was told he would kill me,’ he said, ‘but I didn’t know he would do it with kindness.’

“A living, loving Christian is the most unanswerable argument for Christianity.”⁹

“What are you doing (or not doing) as an individual to contribute to the love, righteousness and unity that Christ prayed for in order that your immediate family and local church might be a dynamic witness in the world? What can you do immediately?

Personal Goal _____

“What are you doing to share your faith with others – with your neighbours, with those you work with, your friends? Do these people even know that you are a Christian? Is your life attractive to them? Do they know what your hope really is? If not, what can you do that you are not doing in order to communicate these facts?”¹⁰

Personal Goal _____

On June 25, 1967 the Beatles participated in the worlds first global television link. The program was called, “Our World” and it was broadcast via satellite to 26 countries and watched by 350 million people. The BBC had commissioned the Beatles to write a song for the UK’s contribution to the program. The song that Lennon and McCartney wrote and sang that day would become an anthem for a generation. It was called, “All You Need Is Love.”

It’s a catchy song (you’re probably humming it in your head right now!) but it’s not really true. Love is not all we need. Don’t get me wrong, love is very important in this world, and as we shall see, even commanded by Jesus Christ, but it isn’t the most essential. In fact it’s outright impossible for us to produce in all its fullness without the one essential ingredient. We cannot love without Christ.

This week our focus is on the closing verses of John 15:1-17 and here we discover that love is a product of abiding in Christ. It is as we the branches attach ourselves to Christ the vine that His love courses through our spiritual veins. It is as we make our home in Christ’s love that we are able to love those around us. Really, the Beatles should have sung, “All You Need Is Christ” because He is the source of our love for the world and our fellow Christians.

Of course, this changes the way we read Christ’s words. He says, “My command is this: Love each other.” (John 15:12) We read that and think that this is something that we have to do. And so we struggle and strive to be loving to others. But when we realize that Christ is in us and as a result, His love – His great self-sacrificing love – is also in us, then we no longer respond to Christ’s words as something we have to do, but now these words are something that we are able to do.

Pray: Lord, my heart is not large enough,
my memory is not good enough,
my will is not strong enough:
Take my heart and enlarge it,
Take my memory and give it quicker recall,
Take my will and make it strong
and make me conscious of thee
ever present,
ever accompanying.¹

Read: John 15:9-17; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Focus: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; John 15:9

1. Jesus says that we are to abide in His love (verse 9). That is, we are to make our abode, our home, in His love. What does this mean for you? (Review your answer from Week 3 – Day 4. Has it changed?)

2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Read it again, but this time insert the phrase, "Christ's love for me is ..." before each description given.

Pray: Lord, as I open your Word today teach me. As I think about your Word today, mold me. As I live your Word today may others see You in me

Read: John 13:31-38

Focus: "By this all will know that you are my disciples"

1. It has already been mentioned that John 15 is part of a discussion that Jesus is having with His disciples. It begins at chapter 13 and runs through to chapter 16 with chapter 17 being Jesus' prayer. Throughout this section Jesus uses the phrase, "by this all men will know you are my disciples." Look up the three passages below and discover the three characteristics that attract people to Christ.

John 13:34

John 15:8

John 17:20-21

2. How well are you displaying these three qualities?

3. How well is our church displaying these three qualities?

Relationships with other Christians

- ___ I am willing to serve others in love even when I am not given public recognition.
- ___ I am actually looking for opportunities to be a servant.
- ___ I am praying for other Christians at least as much as I pray for myself.
- ___ I am willing to become involved in other Christians' lives.
- ___ I am sharing a significant percentage of my money so that the body of Christ can function adequately.
- ___ I am using my other material possessions to minister to others; in other words, I am practicing hospitality.

Relationships with non-Christians

- ___ I have asked God to help me "love my neighbour as myself."
- ___ I'm actually reaching out to establish friendships with non-Christians.
- ___ I am concerned that non-Christians understand the Gospel and become Christians.
- ___ I make an effort to meet new people – both Christians and non-Christians.⁸

Pray: Write out a prayer to God.

3. Which characteristics of Christ's love in 1 Corinthians 13 do you find hard to believe when applied to His relationship with you?

4. I find 1 Corinthians 13:8a to be amazing. Have you found Christ's love toward you to be unending and dependable? How?

5. How faithful has your love for Him been? How can you spend more time reflecting on His great love?

Reflection and Prayer:

"Notice the absolute dependability of Christ's love – 'Love never fails.' (1 Corinthians 13:8). Even though the disciples of Christ wavered in their affections toward their Master – betraying, forsaking, and denying Him in one form or another – His love was unending. 'Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end,' (John 13:1), to the uttermost. What was true of His love then is equally true of His love now. This unendingness of the Saviour's love is a quality of His infinite character. And it must be true of us if we claim that this Jesus dwells in us.

"One day C.H. Spurgeon was riding in the country when he saw a weathervane on a farmhouse. He observed that inscribed upon that weathervane were the words, 'God is love.' Telling his driver to stop, he stepped out of his carriage and walked over to the farmer. Pointing to the weathervane, he asked, "How dare you

put up a weathervane that reads, 'God is love,' as if God's love changes with every breeze that blows across your farmyard!

"The man replied, 'Sir, you have totally misunderstood me. I put that sign up there to show that regardless of which way the wind blows, God is still love.'"²

How would you describe your abiding in Christ's love?

- A. I abide in part of Christ's love but not all of it.
- B. I try to abide in Christ's love but often fail.
- C. I believe it is possible to abide in Christ's love and I trust Christ to make it a reality.
- D. I have given up everything in order to abide in Christ's love.
- E. Other _____

Pray: Dear God, "May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self-abasing –
This is victory."³

Tuesday February 28

A command to love

Pray: "Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them. The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands. Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name. Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me." (Psalm 119:129-133)

Read: John 15:12: 1 John 4:7-12

Focus: A new commandment

1. Where does love come from? (see 1 John 4:7)

He loved. the cross had not yet happened. What is the example that Jesus gives them in John 13?

2. What does it mean to love as Christ loved given John 13?

3. Is this the same as "laying down one's life for his friends"?

Reflection and Prayer:

Check yourself, in what ways are you loving as Christ loved? In what ways are you being selfish?

Family relationships

- ___ I want to be served rather than to serve.
- ___ I want to be first rather than last.
- ___ I want more than others, rather than less.
- ___ I want to be honoured rather than looking for opportunities to honour others.
- ___ I want to be the center of attention rather than giving others attention.
- ___ I want what I want now, rather than making sure others' needs are met first.

Reflection and Prayer:

“ ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’ How can we begin to learn the mystery? First, we must confess that we must enter an entirely new manner of life, because we have never yet known Christ as the Vine in the completeness of His life-giving, transforming power. What is involved in this transaction? A surrender to accept cleansing from self and the entanglements of the world system, to live all – out as Christ lived for the glory of the Father. Then we are driven with the faith that this “as I have loved you” is what Christ is ready to make a reality, the intimate life the Vine will maintain in the branch that is dependent on Him.”⁶

Pray: Write out your prayer to God.

Thursday March 1

Following Christ’s example

Pray: “And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour’s blood?
Died He for me, who cause His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God shouldst die for me?”⁷

Read: John 15:13; John 13:4-17

Focus: lay down your life ...

1. When we think of Christ’s love we immediately think of the cross. Certainly it is there that He laid down His life for us. But when Jesus spoke to His disciples about loving others as

Who has revealed God’s love to us? (see 1 John 4:9) How?

2. If we are the branches attached to Christ the vine, what must be coursing through our spiritual veins? (see 1 John 4:7,8)

3. What do you think of when you read the word commandment? Is it a negative or positive connotation?

Reflection and Prayer:

In the introduction to this study Pastor Tom wrote:

“Of course, this changes the way we read Christ’s words. He says, ‘My command is this: Love each other.’ (John 15:12). We read that and think that this is something that we have to do. And so we struggle and strive to be loving to others. But when we realize that Christ is in us and as a result His love – His great self-sacrificing love – is also in us then we no longer respond to Christ’s words as something we have to do but now these words are something that we are able to do.”

Does this fact change the way you think of your ability to love others?

How is Christ's love demonstrated in your life?

- A. I love as Christ enables me and as I rest in His love for me.
- B. I have some love for my brothers and sisters in Christ but not the quality and quantity of Jesus' love.
- C. I don't have much love for others.
- D. Other _____

Pray: Write out your prayer to God.

Wednesday February 29

Loving others

Pray: How high and how wide,
How deep and how long,
How sweet and how strong is Your love.
How lavish Your grace,
How faithful Your ways,
How great is Your love, oh Lord.⁴

Read: John 15:12; 1 John 3:11-24

Focus: ... As I have loved you

Note: This is the second time that Jesus has used the phrase, "as I..." in our John 15 passage. The first time is in relation to His obeying His Father's commands (verse 10). These two small words are important because once again they emphasize the truth that there is to be perfect likeness between the vine and the branch.

1. What is your approach to Jesus' command to love one another as He loves you?
 - A. I trust that He will enable me to obey this command.

- B. I have tried to obey but seem to fail more often than I succeed.
- C. It is impossible, so I don't really worry about trying to obey.
- D. Other _____⁵

2. In 1 John 3:24 who is able to obey the command to love one another? Does this affirm or deny the teaching of John 15:1-17?

3. Describe the quality of Christ's love according to 1 John 3:16 and John 15:13.

4. How are we to love others?

5. What evidence is there in your life that you are loving other Christians as you should (outside your immediate family)? List five things you have done in the last two weeks that reflect this love:

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.