

RELATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

CULTIVATING LOVE THROUGH DAILY CONNECTION

Shifting from what destroys to what nourishes relationships Galatians 5:21–23

21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Truth & Love Partner to Produce Maturity | Ephesians 4:15

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

God's Nature Shapes Us | 1 John 4:7–8

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Remain | John 15:4–5

4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Love is Sacrificial | John 15:12–13

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Love is THE Priority | Matthew 22:37–40

37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

LET'S OBSERVE THE TEXT...

Observe Ephesians 4:15

- Truth without love can crush, and love without truth can confuse.
- We're not called to choose one or the other, we're called to mature in both.
- Growth is the goal, both personal and communal.
- Truth becomes digestible and transformational when it's delivered with love.
- Love doesn't avoid truth...it carries it gently

Observe 1 John 4:7-8

- Love isn't just something God gives, it's His very nature.
- If God is in us, love should be what naturally grows out of us.
- When we refused to love others (even difficult ones), we're not just being mean...we're misrepresenting who God is.
- Loving people is one of the clearest signs that we truly know God.
- ***For cross-reference, read John 13:34-35**

Observe John 15:4-5

- Fruit isn't a product of trying harder, it's the result of remaining connected to Jesus.
- "Apart from Me, you can do nothing" means we can't fake real love for long.
- The source of spiritual fruit is relational, not transactional. It comes from abiding, not performing.
- When we feel spiritually dry or unfruitful, it's often because we've disconnected from our source.
- This verse invites us to check our connection daily, not just our behavior.
- ***For cross-reference, read Ephesians 5:1-2**
 - The call to imitate God is rooted in relationship as loved children, not performers
 - Love is not a vague feeling, it's a lifestyle of sacrifice, just like Jesus modeled.
 - "Walk in love" means making daily decisions that reflect God's heart, even when it costs us.
 - Sacrificial love doesn't center around "me" or "my comfort"...it's about serving others, even those hard to love.
 - Imitating God means letting the fruit of His Spirit reshape how we treat everyone, not just our favorites as He treated us while we were still sinners.
 - ***For cross-reference, also read Luke 6:35**



Pause Observations for an Application Question

Applying John 15:4-5 - What does "abiding in Jesus" look like in your daily rhythm?
What tends to disconnect you from that source, and how can you practically reconnect?

Observe John 15:12-13

- Jesus sets the standard: "Love each other as I have loved you."
 - It's the fuel that puts grace & mercy into motion.
- His love was sacrificial, not selective or comfortable.
- Real love makes space for inconvenience, forgiveness, and choosing others above ourselves.
- Loving well starts with staying connected to Jesus daily. He is the source of that kind of love.

Observe Matthew 22:37-40

- Loving God fully naturally spills over into loving people well.
- Every command in scripture is summed up in how we love.
- "Neighbor" doesn't mean just people we live next door to, people we like or agree with, it means everyone we encounter.
- This kind of love takes intentionally daily decisions. It's how we live out our connection to Jesus.
- ***For cross-reference, read 1 John 3:14**



CONCORDANCE ACTIVITY



Love: (agapē)

Strong's G26

Found in Galatians 5:22



Imitators: (mimētēs)

Strong's G3402

Found in Ephesians 5:1-2



Sacrifice: (thusia)

Strong's G2378

Found in Ephesians 5:1-2



LET'S READ THE AFTER-SUMMARY TOGETHER

We were never meant to live this life disconnected from our source. John 15:4-5 reminds us that fruit does not grow from effort alone, it grows from connection. It is easy to think spiritual fruit is about doing more, but Jesus flips that idea on its head. He says, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." That kind of statement is not about control, it is about intimacy. He is not demanding, He is inviting. Staying connected to Jesus makes the fruit possible, but daily decisions make that fruit visible. Stewardship of fruit is stewardship of relationships. Every decision, every conversation, every moment is a seed or a weed.

How we speak to others, even when we are "right," reveals what is really rooted in us. Ephesians 4:15 shows us that truth without love can destroy, but love without truth can mislead. Maturity is not about picking sides, it is about holding both in tension. Tone, timing, and motive matter. Truth becomes transformational when it is delivered in love, and love becomes real when it refuses to avoid truth. This is what it means to grow up in Christ, to speak truthfully and lovingly, and to reflect Jesus in how we treat others.

1 John 4:7-8 could not be more clear: if we do not love, we do not know God. That can hit hard, especially when loving others feels inconvenient or undeserved. But God's love is not a feeling. It is His nature. If He lives in us, that love should come out of us, even when we are tired or annoyed or hurt. John 13:34-35 confirms that love is actually our credibility. Closely knit to our identity. It is how people know we are really His. Not by how well we teach, or how much we know, our church attendance record, or how right we think we are...but by how we love.

Jesus keeps raising the bar. In John 15:12-13, He tells us to love like He does. Not selectively. Not when it is easy. His love made space for sacrifice, and that is the model we are called to follow. Ephesians 5:1-2 echoes that calling; walk in love. Sacrifice comfort. Serve the difficult. Love in a way that does not center on "me." And Luke 6:35 takes it even further...love your enemies. Do good without expecting anything in return. This is not just feel-good kindness. It is a lifestyle that reflects the heart of God.

And then Jesus sums it all up in Matthew 22:37-40. Love God fully, and love people as yourself. Not some. All. That is not a suggestion, it is the core of everything He teaches. Real love is not passive. It is intentional. It is a daily decision to reflect the character of Christ. 1 John 3:14 reminds us that love is the evidence we have passed from death to life. So we do not just "feel" love, we choose it. We live it. Every relationship, every word, every interaction is an opportunity to reflect the fruit of the Spirit. Maturity is not being "nice" or knowing more Scripture. It's living scripture. Having it transform every fiber of our being. Maturity is becoming more like Jesus. And we grow that way, not by performance, but by remaining in Him.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- ***Applying John 13:34-35** - If someone were to watch how you treat others this week, would they be able to tell you follow Jesus just by the way you love? What might need to shift so that your love points people to Him?
- ***Applying Matthew 22:37-40** - In what ways does your love for God overflow into how you treat the people around you? Who do you struggle to see as your "neighbor," and how can you shift that perspective?
- **Applying Ephesians 4:15** - When was the last time you had to speak a hard truth to someone? Did you do it with love, or just with frustration? How could you have communicated differently to reflect both truth and love?
- **Applying 1 John 4:7-8** - Is there someone in your life right now who is difficult to love? What would it look like to reflect God's nature toward them instead of your natural response?
- **Applying John 15:12-13** - What's one way you can choose sacrificial love this week...even if it costs you your comfort, time, or pride?
- **Applying Ephesians 5:1-2** - What's one area of your life where it's hardest to imitate God's love; your home, work, friendships, or social media? How can you practice sacrificial love there this week, even if it costs you something?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, we come to You with honest hearts. We repent for the times we have withheld love. When we've been selective, guarded, impatient, or just too caught up in ourselves to see the people around us. Forgive us for being stingy with the very thing You've been so generous with. You never hesitated to love us, even when we were difficult or distant. Help us to reflect that same kind of love. Not just when it's easy, but especially when it's inconvenient.



God, we ask You to highlight the areas in our lives where Your love can grow deeper. Show us where we've drawn lines that You never drew. Give us conviction when we're holding back, and soften our hearts where we've become numb. Fill us again with Your Spirit so we can love boldly and freely. Expand Your Kingdom through the way we live and love. Multiply the impact of our kindness, our patience, our truth spoken in love. Let our lights shine so bright in this dark and loveless world that people see You in us...clearly, fully, and beautifully. In Jesus name, amen.

WHAT'S AHEAD...

Next Week

We will carry on into Galatians 5 as we study "Joy" as a fruit of the Spirit.

Homework

Read John 16:20-24.