



FEED MY SHEEP

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All We Need Is Love, *Part 1*

The previous four issues of *Feed My Sheep* were literally entitled “Feed My Sheep,” and focused on the difference between two Greek words (*phileo* and *agape*), both translated by the English word “love.” That was setting the stage for this small series which will deal with the fruit of the Spirit called “love.”

We shall begin our study with part of that long passage beginning in Matthew, chapter five, generally called *the sermon on the mount*. A vast crowd of disciples were following Jesus and hanging on His every word, because He taught them “as one with authority” the Bible says, not as the scribes.

In other words, unlike when the scribes taught, when Jesus taught, there was something about Him and about what He taught that just resonated within the innermost being of the people who heard Him. What an experience that must have been!

Nevertheless, we who believe in Him have His Holy Spirit and therefore, when you read the Bible, do you not sometimes have that feeling of resonance deep within your soul and spirit? In this passage, Jesus warned his hearers to...

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

This is a continuation of our occasional studies on the fruits of the Spirit. A fundamental reason why we have been learning about the fruits of the Spirit, of course, is so that we can know how to nurture and grow them in our own individual lives, so that we can produce the sweet fruit in our character which is pleasing to the husbandman, our heavenly Father.

But a side benefit, as it were, of learning about the fruits is that we also learn to recognize both the good fruit and the bad fruit in others, and when we have a question in our mind about a particular person and their motivations, we can simply look at their fruit.

In doing so, we are making a judgment, are we not? People have asked me to do some Bible lectures regarding judging, and so I note here that we all make judgments every day of our lives. Jesus says we will know a tree by its fruit, and that implies making judgments.

Therefore, when Jesus commanded elsewhere in the sermon on the mount to “judge not, lest ye be judged,” it was not a blanket command that we are never to make any judgments. It has to be understood in context.

To continue with this idea of being fruit inspectors, we must also be mindful and careful that we do not judge a person rashly. In other words, a sin in a per-

son's life does not necessarily make him a wolf or a false prophet. I am convinced that Jesus' command to look at the fruit has to be understood as meaning that we are to look at the *overall pattern* of the life of a person.

Otherwise, we would have to say that David, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Reuben, Simeon and the NT Simeon; namely, Simon Peter, and you and me, and *everyone else who ever lived* is a wolf because they/we produced some bad fruit from time to time. Therefore, if a person has a preconceived idea in their heart that so-and-so is not really a true Christian, that he's really a wolf in sheep's clothing; then they are sure to find something evil in their targeted person's life to justify their foregone conclusion that he is a wolf. Do you understand?

At this point, pretend you are in my live audience and you can actually hear a one-minute excerpt from an old, and very popular song by the Beatles. The title is *All You Need Is Love*. I bet many of you can hear the tune in your mind and hum it right now. I am entitling this series "All We Need Is Love."

When that song came out—what year was it? 1969 or '70?—so I was about 20 or 21 years old, and I loved all the Beatles music. In the rock band I was in at that time, we used to cover (play) a lot of their tunes.

I sang the words (see below), but as I look back now, I realize that very often—whether it was the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Eagles, Moody Blues, or whoever—I didn't pay much attention to what the words were actually saying. But now as I listen to them, I believe I have my senses trained to discern much of what is good and what is evil. (Cf. Hebrews 5:14) I don't know that there is anything particularly evil in the lyrics of this song. Most of the words in this song, though, seem pretty shallow to me now...cute, but with no real depth to these lyrics:

*There's nothing you can do that can't be done.
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung.
Nothing you can say but you can learn how to
play the game. It's easy!*

*Nothing you can make that can't be made.
No one you can save that can't be saved.
Nothing you can do but you can learn how to be
you in time. It's easy!*

But we want to focus on the chorus, ...

It's e-ea-sy. All you need is love. All you need is love. All you need is love, love, love is all you need.

At this stage in my life, wherein hopefully some wisdom has taken root, I would have to suggest that "to love" is NOT so easy, but love is all we need...if we understand *love* correctly. So the Beatles were correct on that particular little point, but I feel certain that they had no inkling what true love was all about back when they were in their early twenties. Nor did I understand much about love then. Who does, when you're 21? Unless you have been someone like Timothy in the New Testament (NT) who was trained from a child in the ways of the Lord (2 Timothy 3:15).

So any of you children who might be hearing or reading my teaching or that of other teachers of the good news, I want to just inform you of how blest you are to be able to learn from God's Word at a young age—to be trained in the paths of righteousness and *true* love. You are far ahead of me when I was your age, so thank God and thank your parents.

The "detour" of the previous four issues was a relevant side trip because it has given us some familiarity with the different meanings of the word "love" as used in the NT. We saw those different meanings illustrated in that breakfast-on-the beach scene where Jesus asked Peter three times "do you love Me?"

Just in brief review, we spent some time identifying and defining four or five specific Greek words which are translated as "love." We found that the lowest level of love—eros love—is a selfish and childish love; it is a what-you-can-do-for-me type of love. That is the kind of love that I believe the Beatles (and almost all "popular" music) had in mind in almost all their music. It is a sex-for-sex's sake type of love (the "one night stand" variety). The English word "erotic" is derived from *eros*, but we should not automatically condemn erotic (sexual) love, because sex in its proper context is a good and beautiful thing ordained by our Creator-God!

We also learned that that word *eros* was not even found in the Greek NT. Nevertheless, I am sure we would all agree that the Bible is replete with stories and examples of the eros-type of love. Two that come to mind are David and Bathsheba, and Amnon and Tamar. In the NT, what about Ananias and Sapphira

and their love of money? Selfish, wasn't it? So the word *eros* per se is not in the Bible, but the examples of eros-love are myriad in the Scriptures.

The Greek word describing the next level of love is found quite commonly in the NT in its various forms: *phileo*, *philanthropia* and *philadelphia*. That is the type of love characterized by tender affection, where we are fond of people based on feelings and emotions. *Phileo* love *sometimes, but not always* defines a 50-50 type of relationship. It is the kind where I'll-treat-you-right-if-you-treat-me-right. Or "I'll treat you right if you meet all my expectations, if you give me all my rights, or what I think are my rights. But if you don't, then I won't love you either."

Moreover, we noted that there is an intermediate stage where those *phileo* words (*philanthropia* and *philadelphia*) are sometimes used to describe some steps beyond that 50-50 stage. It is characterized by that warm and tender affection we mentioned, and by a feeling of high regard and respect for another person which allows us to overlook many shortcomings in the object of our affection.

It is a *phileo* love which might approach an 80-20 or a 90-10 type of relationship. All well and good, but it still falls far short of the highest form of love, which in Greek is denominated by the word *agape*. When we read this passage in Galatians 5:22 about the fruit of the Spirit,

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

...do you think that word *love* there is *agape* or *phileo*? It is *agape*, of course. So from this point forward in these studies, since we are trying to learn *how* we can manifest this type of love, our focus will be on what the Bible has to say about *agape* love, and not on *phileo* and its forms—except that we may mention them in passing or to show contrast. So, continuing to review...

The key to understanding *agape* love is that it is a love that is irrespective of rights. In other words, it is a love that loves unconditionally. It is not self-centered at all. It is not even a 90/10 attitude. It is 100 percent other-centered. It is based upon principle, not feelings. It is the principle that I love you because I have made a decision to love you. The results of that type of love

are actions, behavior and *doing*, as opposed to *feeling*. Feelings are fine and are also an outgrowth of *agape* love, but we should not *base* our love primarily on feelings because our feelings change every day and even from hour to hour!

With that much review under our belts, (repetition is a key to learning) let's see what Jesus had to say about *agape* love. During the three and a half years of Jesus' public ministry He was always just as gentle and peaceful a person as one could ever meet—with the notable exceptions of when He drove the money-changers out of the temple.

All He ever did was to teach people how to love. Then He demonstrated love in action by **doing**, by how He treated people: by healing people and by counseling hurting people. If you are alive and breathing, then you and I and everyone else hurts at some time or another, don't we?

Yet, despite Jesus' most loving and peaceful demeanor, there were always those nasty people who despised and hated Him. Who were they? The scribes and Pharisees. Or today we would say (most of) the media and (most of) the lawyers, and we would have to include (many, if not most of) the clergy because the scribes and Pharisees were both part of that group as well. They were always following Jesus around, monitoring Him, and trying to verbally and philosophically trip Him up.

Incidentally, why did those scribes and Pharisees despise and hate Jesus so much? ...A person who just went about doing good and loving people? Because they envied Him and were jealous of Him, of His popularity, of how the people *flocked* to Him. After all, when the great Shepherd arrives, one would *expect* people to flock to Him, wouldn't we?

So here then is one encounter between Jesus and a scribe and we want to notice first what Jesus says about *agape* love, and then we can also take note how Jesus treats this scribe.

Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

In Matthew's account the question is, which is the great commandment? To answer the scribe, Jesus

quoted from the Scriptures; specifically, Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31 And the second is like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly [wisely], he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

I think that Jesus was in essence telling this scribe that, Well, sir, you do understand with your head; now if you can translate that into action (doing) from your heart, then you will be in the kingdom of God.

Let's analyze the first and greatest commandment. I think we will see that it constitutes the whole duty of man—namely, to love God. Why? Because it says:

Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
and with **all** thy soul,
and with **all** thy mind,
and with **all** thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.

Hmmm... Doesn't that include just about everything we are? If we love God with ALL of our heart, mind, soul and strength, what else is there? And then Jesus continued, saying...

31 And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Think about it, if we love God with *every* thing we have, how much is there left over to love our neighbor with? Nothing. Zero! And yet we are directed to love our neighbor also. Therefore, it is obvious that loving one's neighbor and loving one's self is *included* in loving God. Thus we deduce from this that we demonstrate our love for God *by* loving our neighbor. This lines up with many Scriptures, one of which is ...

1 John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Okay, so far, we have seen that the two great commandments tell us *who* we are to love, and *to what extent* we are to love (with all our heart, soul, mind and strength), but how do we do that? How do we know when we are fulfilling the law of love?

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

John was here only repeating what the Master had taught him, when He was still with him in the flesh, because in his gospel, John had reported the words of Jesus when He told the apostles this:

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Do you think this is important?

(To be continued.)

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of Dr. James W. Bruggeman and it is sent out freely. However, we reserve the right to discontinue sending it at any time to any one. The donations and tithes of those who are blest, taught and fed by this publication make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts can be sent to PO Box 5695, Asheville, NC 28813. Thank you.