



HOPE Church Fall 2020 Life Groups – Sunday, 10/25/2020 sermon notes

This week's sermon emphasized the fundamental importance of having a sincere love relationship with God and asks, "What does God want from us?" Simply answered, it is to love Him first in every part of our being. Why? Because God knows that this is the way we will fulfill what He created us to be!

Luke 10:25-28 – 25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

John 21:15-17 – 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love* me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love* you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love* me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love* you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love* me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love* me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love* you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. (*see Pastor's note)

Pastor Keith explained that fulfilling God's plan for your life begins with, is lived in, and ends with loving our God – *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* – more each day. Keith also shared that loving God first will always lead us to the second pivotal aspect in Luke's passage above: love your neighbor as yourself. However, in order to accomplish this we must be healthy in our love for Jesus. This becomes the starting point where we can truly begin to empathize and care for others because *we are rooted* in God's unconditional (Agape) Love! It is here where we find fertile ground to reap a godly harvest because we know, without a doubt, that Jesus is the only real and true and consistent answer to people's struggles. This Love is born of the Holy Spirit and goes beyond mere intellectual or emotional comprehension of God's truth. In Christ, we must actively seek to fully embrace His Love because ultimately, it enables our souls to find healing and our lives to be purposeful. However, a love-relationship with our God is not about achieving a personal sense of self-actualization^[1] but rather it is about embracing **God-Realization** and *that makes all the difference* in how we will live out our lives. As another contemporary Pastor puts it, "*Love starts and stops with God. He is the Author. He created it out of His very nature and He desires that we share and experience this wonderful gift to humankind.*" Pastor Keith also encouraged us to, "**Just love Jesus more everyday!**" If we truly want to become all who God created us to be (e.g. a better parent, or friend, or spouse, or co-worker, etc.) it begins with seeking to genuinely love our God first. Jesus is asking each of us, "*Do you love me?*" What is your answer?

Note - If you were part of a **Rooted Group**, take a look at the readings in **week 2, day 3** for additional perspective on God's love for each of us as well as **Week 6** regarding finding purpose.

Sermon points for discussion: *The focus this week is to have a genuine discussion about loving God and loving others. We know what the "right answers" are, the real issue is to what extent we are truly seeking to live this out in our own lives. From the moment of our salvation in Christ, we become an adopted child and a work-in-progress right up to the day of our redemption (Phil 1:6). The Holy Spirit begins to grow us up in Christ to the extent we cooperate, and that process causes us to confront aspects of ourselves that require repentance. Further, we also encounter aspects in others that can make it difficult to like – much less love – them. Look at the other verses of scripture listed below for additional insight into answering the questions below and be honest with yourself – and your group – with anything you need help with. Remember, we're all*



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in this together in Christ (and we all need encouragement, guidance and accountability to become all He has created us to be)!

Point 1 (Luke 10:25-28): *Fulfilling God's plan for our lives begins with, is lived through, and ends with loving God more each day and doing so will lead us to love our neighbors as ourselves*

1. Do you completely trust in God's unconditional love?
 - a. If yes, share with the group what enables you to do so.
 - b. If not, what is holding you back from completely trusting in His love?
 - c. Do you ever feel as if you need to earn His love?
 - i. If yes, what do you think is causing you to feel that way?
2. What does "loving God" mean for you personally?
 - a. Asked another way, if Jesus asked you, "Do you love me?" what emotions or thoughts does this invoke within your own soul?
3. Are you loving God in the ways that He teaches us to do so?
 - a. If yes, share how you are doing so and if there is an area you feel that you are weak in, ask your group to help you seek God's wisdom and to become stronger in your own love-walk with God (Col 3:16-17)
4. Do you feel like you are loving others as you would love yourself?
 - a. Asked another way, do you believe you are loving others as Jesus loves you (i.e. John 13:34)? Is there any aspect in your own love-walk with others that you need God's grace and help to improve upon?

Point 2 (John 21:15-17): *Becoming all who God created me to be begins with having a genuine love for God through Christ, my Lord and Savior.*

5. Do you feel that you are living a Spirit-filled life of fruitfulness for God?
 - a. If yes, share with your group what you are doing and how it is impacting others
 - b. If not so much, what do you think is holding you back from doing so?
6. Meditate upon the other verses of scripture below. What thoughts/feelings do they invoke within you about God's Love or upon loving God? Is there a verse you would add to the list below that came to mind? Why?

Prayer time? – If your group seeks individual prayer requests at the end of the meeting, think about your answers to these questions and any specific aspects that you feel like you want/need to grow stronger in. Ask your group to pray specifically for you to hear God's voice, to know His wisdom, and to embrace His love such that your love-relationship with Jesus grows deeper and stronger each day!



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Other verses of Scripture to consider:

1st John 3:14-17 – 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us*, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, *let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.* (emphasis added)

1st Peter 4:8 – Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins

1st John 4:19 – We love, because He first loved us.

Galatians 5:22-23 – 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

1st Peter 1:8 – Though you have not seen him, *you love him*. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory (emphasis added)

John 14:15-16 – 15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever

Colossians 3:14-15 – 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Jeremiah 31:3 – v the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you

John 13:34-35 – 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1st Corinthians 13:2 – If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing

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Christlike love develops unity in the body – Hope Church

“When we look at the Fruit-of-the-Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, we can look at it like this:

- Joy is **love** enjoying
- Peace is **love** resting
- Patience (or, longsuffering) is **love** waiting
- Kindness is **love** reacting
- Goodness is **love** choosing
- Faithfulness is **love** keeping its word
- Gentleness is **love** be able to empathize
- Self-control is **love** being in charge

This kind of love is not something we can work up on our own; it is an outflow of the Holy Spirit.”

- Quote and excerpt taken from Stanley, Charles F, 2008 - *The Handbook for Christian Living: Biblical Answers to Life's Tough Questions.*

*** Pastor's note:** While English has only one word for “love,” there are quite a few in Greek. There is **Eros** for erotic love (none of the Greek words in the New Testament translated, “love,” in English as Eros), **Phileo** for friendship, or brotherly love and then there's **Agape**, the sacrificial, unconditional love. In the passage John 21:15-17 above, Jesus uses the verb form of Agape in the first two of His three questions and the verb form of Phileo in the third, while Peter responds with the verb form of Phileo all three times.

1. The concept of “self-actualization” finds its definition and home in Humanistic Psychology. It is a very alluring concept and it appears to align with some of the principles we find in Scripture. However, Christianity – a relationship with Holy God through Christ Jesus – transcends mere humanistic self-actualization because the source of who we are, how we love and our purpose become intimately linked with God as opposed to being only self-directed and self-comprehended. For a brief tutorial on self-actualization, see the article found at: <https://positivepsychology.com/self-actualization/>