

What Is True Love?

LESSON BY BRANDON WHITSETT (FOR LADS TO LEADERS/LEADERETTES)

Introduction: What is true love? Have you really experienced what true love is? Think about it for a moment. The Bible has a lot to say about love. The word "love" appears 323 times in the New King James Version of the Bible. As we begin to read through these verses we learn a lot about our God and what He requires of us.

The Lads to Leaders convention this year is focusing on James and I and II Peter. Specifically, the book of James uses the word three times. It is found in **James 1:12** when it says, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*" Later in **James 2:5** he says, "*Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*" And, finally, in **James 2:8** he says, "*If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well.*"

In these three Scriptures we can see that we should love our God, love our brothers and sisters, and we should also love ourselves. After reading what James had to say about love, I realized that we need to study more about the true meaning of love. To make sure that we are doing things correctly. I would like to discuss with you today How God Loves, Whom We Should Love, and How Can We Show Love Like God. First of all.....

Discussion:

How Did God Show His Love?

The word love is defined as a profoundly tender and passionate affection shown to another person. It is also defined as affectionate concern for someone, it is a virtue that represents all kindness, compassion, and unselfish loyalty. It is benevolent concern for the good of others. Doesn't that describe our God? He is tender. He is passionate. He is kind. He is compassionate. He is unselfish, loyal, and benevolent.

If you have read your New Testament you know that it is also expressed in **John 3:16** which says, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" Would you sacrifice your only Son? I know I probably wouldn't. Especially for people that hate me or do not praise me. But, that is exactly what God did for us.

John the apostle is also the one who wrote these words: "*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*" (**I John 4:7-8**). And, there are many ways He shows us His love. Of course the main one is the cross and the sacrifice of Jesus, but there are so many more. Think about the avenue of prayer, daily blessings, and salvation. Second of all

Whom Should We Love?

The Bible says we should love many things. So I picked out three specific items for our study today to make it more simple. God says that we should love one another in **John 13:34-35**. This we can do, right? We can learn to love one another. But, we are not done.

We are told to love our neighbors too. What does that mean? Jesus says that should include loving our enemies in **Matthew 5:43-44**. That's much different. But, before we deal with how we do that let me again remind you why we do this.

In **Deuteronomy 6:5** we are also told "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*" If we love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength, that include learning to follow in His footsteps. God loves everyone! So should we! That leads us to our final question....

How Should We Love?

One of the greatest chapters written by Paul is found in **I Corinthians 13**. I feel that when we consider his words, and the words of James, we will see that the best way to show love for one another starts with Christian service. Doing good works which is what Paul tells us to do in **Galatians 5:13-14**.

As for our enemies, we need to pray for them. Which we are encouraged to do in **Luke 6:27-28**. Now, some of you might be thinking.... sure I'll pray for my enemies if that means praying for God to bring vengeance upon them! That is not what Jesus is talking about. He is encouraging us to pray for their souls. For their salvation. God does not want them to be lost! We shouldn't either.

Conclusion: As I close my lesson, I want to tell you how I came to know this kind of love. My Christian family. They have shown me love by their Christian example. They have helped me and my family in times of need. They listened to me when I needed to talk to someone. They encouraged me to lead singing, preach, read Scripture, and wait on the Lord's table. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be going to Lads to Leaders.... That's exactly what James is talking about! Faith without works is dead. We need to live our faith! God tells us to love. But God also tells us to work! We need to get out there and work.....showing Christian love.... until Jesus come!