

Love, Love, Love

LESSON BY ALEXIS DELOACH (FOR LADS TO LEADERS/LEADERETTES)

Introduction: What is true love? Think about it. When you turn on the radio, what do you hear? Songs about love. When you go to the movies or turn on the television, what do you see? Shows that have love in the theme. When you go to the bookstore, what books are the hottest sellers? The ones that pertain to love. LOVE, LOVE, LOVE! It's everywhere.

People are quick to say they love their friends. They love their cell phones. They love their church. They love their family and even their boyfriends. But, you have to wonder, do they really know what love means? We probably use the word too much today. And, we have watered down the meaning. In fact, many young people today say that they love someone, when really they have NO knowledge of true love.

But, we have something we can do about it....We can open our Bibles and see God's meaning for this word and the emotion it produces in our lives. I would like for us to take a look at the book of James and see if there is something we can learn about love....

Discussion:

James Teaches Us To Love God

The first scripture that deals with love in James is found in **James 1:12**. 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.*"

Notice that James does not say He will give a crown of life to those who love God's blessings. He does not say that God rewards those who love His grace, mercy, or forgiveness. NO! He says the crown of life will be given to those that love Him! You need to love God for who He is. Not for what He has done. Or what He will do for you.

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?*" The question he asks is already answered isn't it? God HAS promised the poor the opportunity to be rich in faith. Jesus taught this in the Sermon on the Mount. He also taught that the poor in spirit inherit something.....Do you remember what that was? They will inherit the kingdom of heaven.

This provides us with a great responsibility, therefore....

James Teaches Us To Love Our Neighbor

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.*" This chapter shows you how to do that. You cannot show partiality and you must not encourage favoritism. Remember that we must love all people equally and fulfill the great commission fairly. God is not willing that any should perish. . . . God so loved the world. . . . Those verses give us direction!

James shows us that partiality is a sign of immaturity and vain religion. We must not degrade ourselves by becoming judges and critics. He shows us how people are often blinded by riches. We look down on people if they don't talk like us or look like us. If they seem out of place, we often mistreat them. That is not being Christ-like!

In fact, Jesus did not discriminate in any way. He loved Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans. He died for everyone to have eternal life. Isn't that what it says in **John 3:16**? Besides who determines rich and poor? Who determines who is right or wrong? Are we going to concern ourselves with the world's standards or see people through God's eyes? God sees the heart. This may be the reason that Jesus tells us that we should also love our enemies in **Matthew 5:43-44**. It is our job to teach, preach, and encourage. He alone can be our judge! It is His job, not ours!

We need to live like we have a purpose. God has a plan for me. And, God has a plan for you. Which leads me to my last point.....

James Teaches Us To Love Ourselves

My momma and my daddy always tell me, "You should love your husband as much as you love yourself." James says that is true when it comes to loving your neighbor as well. We need to learn to love ourselves before we can truly love someone else. Let's look at Paul's definition of love in **I Corinthians 13**.... he says, "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.*"

Paul's definition sounds a lot like perfection, doesn't it? That's what we should be striving for. You are perfection in the making! As we grow up in Christ we strive to see ourselves the way God sees us. We recognize our potential. We see God's plan unfolding and we can't wait to see what is ahead. We know that He gives us talents. He provides us with blessings. And, He will NEVER, EVER give up on us! If He is with us, who can be against us?

Conclusion: So, let's put this together.... James says we need to love God, love our neighbor, and love ourselves. Does that sound familiar? Jesus taught this in **Mark 12**. These are the two greatest commands! Do you know what love is? Because if you do, you will love your God, love your neighbor and love yourself. There are a lot of people in this world that need to hear about the love of God. Will you share His love? Will you work until Jesus comes? Or will you sit at home and keep it to yourself. What would Jesus do?