



CULTIVATING LOVE

In Hebrews 10:24, we are told, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” I have spoken a great deal about what Jesus said to the church of Ephesus in the Book of Revelation. The thing that displeased him the most was that they had left their first love. His remedy to this was laid out in Revelation 2, and focused on 3 things. First, He told them to remember. The Lord directs the church to remember where and when they had fallen. The second thing He said was to repent. He **commanded** them to repent. They had to sense the need to return and restore the love that they once possessed. The third thing was to do the first work.

The Lord’s rebuke of the church in Ephesus is a strong warning that a church can work hard to have concerts, feed people on a regular basis, do a lot for the community in encouraging senior citizens, reach out to the youth, fight hard against false teachers, and yet, **because of the lack of love**, be in danger of Divine Discipline. It can have a magnificent building, a large congregation, an attentive staff, a large budget, dynamic teaching, an awesome music ministry and singers to go with it, and still be dying from within from a lack of love. *Love is vital to the spiritual health of the individual believer and to the local church. No matter how impressive a church may appear to be on the outside (or inside it) can be in trouble.* So, cultivating love *within* the church body is a subject that is dear to my heart and it should be close or dear to all of us. One of the things that I have asked God repeatedly for is to not allow us to lose touch with the New Testament spirit and practices of love.

PURSUING LOVE IS A MUST

I believe that every believer should be concerned about the loss of love in the family of God. Although God ultimately keeps us in His love and motivates us to love, there is also a human side of the equation. The Word of God directs all believers to pursue love; to keep ourselves in the love of God; to abide in Christ's love and, as I have said so often, to walk in love.

It is vital to our church and to every Christian community and the spiritual health of individual believers that we know how to not only cultivate love, but to protect it.

The nature and practice of love is a life and death issue to the local church.

We do not want to hear the Lord say to us, "I have this against you." It is our responsibility both individually and corporately to cultivate and guard love.

We must learn how to grow in love as individuals and as a church family. We must motivate ourselves and others to love, as John said in 1 John 3:18, "in deed and in truth." If you feel or sense that this Agape love is dying within you, you must make it your personal mission to revive and restore the pursuit of love. Since the love we seek to display is Christ's love, there can be no better starting point than to study what God says about love in His Word. It is the gold standard for defining divine love and for correcting our false notions about love. One thing I have heard Christian husbands and wives say is "I love you, but I am not in love with you." This is a statement that the Bible does not teach. Nothing but the Word of God, along with the Spirit of God, can awaken our desire to love and transform our sinfully selfish hearts to love as Christ loves. If the scriptures do not inspire us to follow after the requirements that God sets out for love, then nothing else will.

This week, I am asking all of you that are fasting with us to go meatless. We will now remove all meat products from our diets and make this compatible to a Daniel Fast of all vegetables. This is in addition to what we have already decided to sacrifice for this month. It is important that we finish this Consecration in the right spirit. If some of you have broken fast because of medication or health issues and you have done what you can do, God will honor your sacrifice. Believe me. I look forward to seeing you here for prayer on Monday & Friday. Please be here. We hope to see you soon.

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. Remember from where you have fallen." Rev 2:5

Remember ~ Repent ~ Do The First Works