

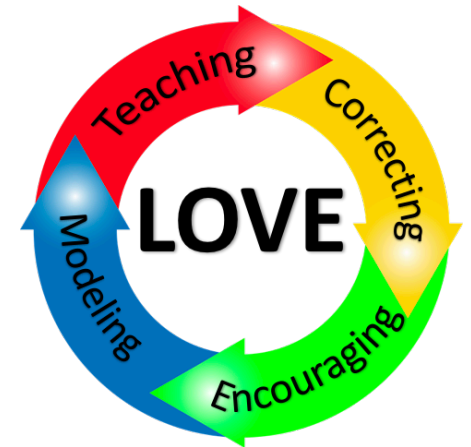


# *FALL 2018 DEVOTIONAL*

*WEEK 4: Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> – Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>*

**DISCIPLES  
MAKING  
DISCIPLES**

Helping Others Follow Jesus



## ***I AM HOPE***

**Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church  
Dr. D.Z. Cofield, Senior Pastor  
Mark Slone, Devotional Editor**



**Monday, October 29, 2018**

## **“The Depth of Christ's Love”**

*Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

### **Ephesians 5:2 (NLT)**

When people meet my sons, Mark II and Michael, I often hear that they act just like me. In musical environments, I tend to be tough, demanding and no-nonsense . . . some people call me mean (which I personally think is untrue). But people who get to know me see that there is another side of me, a gentler, patient, compassionate side. Both of my sons have these traits. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, children imitate their parents. They learn how to speak and act by watching their parents and doing what they do.

Paul encourages us to live a life filled with love, with Christ as our example. To fully understand this passage, we need to look at some of the preceding verse. *“Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.”* Ephesians 5:1 (NLT)

The Amplified Bible says that we are His *“well-beloved children.”* God wants us to understand how wide, how long, how high and how deep His love for us is . . . and to love others the way He loves us.

In the scripture, Paul shows us the depth of Christ's love for us. He *“loved us, and gave himself for us.”* The giving of Himself is the demonstration of His love. Notice that the

cost of His love was Himself—His life! It wasn't just money or time or energy or inconvenience or even suffering; it was sacrifice to its fullest extent. He gave Himself. Know that this love, His self-giving, was for YOU. Christ loved you and gave Himself for you. Know that God was pleased with His Son's act of sacrificial love. Verse 2 says that Christ *“loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.”* When God bowed down over the love that his Son poured out for us on the cross, it was a fragrant aroma to Him. God loves the Son's love for us.

Because we hear about God's love for us so much, we can become desensitized to the weight of this knowledge. We have to look at something lesser, be amazed, and then look back to really feel the wonder of the original. Chuck Colson told the story of a group of American prisoners of war during the Second World War, who were made to do hard labor in a prison camp. Each had a shovel and would dig all day, then come in and give an account of his tool in the evening. One evening 20 prisoners were lined up by the guard and the shovels were counted. The guard counted nineteen shovels and turned in rage on the 20 prisoners demanding to know which one did not bring his shovel back. No one responded. The guard took out his gun and said that he would shoot five men if the guilty prisoner did not step forward. After a moment of tense silence, a 19-year-old soldier stepped forward with his head bowed down. The guard grabbed him, took him to the side and shot him in the head, and turned to warn the others that they better be more careful than he was. When he left, the men counted the shovels and there were 20. The guard had miscounted. And the boy had given his life for his friends. Jesus loved you this way...ONLY MORE!

As a child imitates his parents, so ought a believer to imitate God.

***There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13 (NLT)***

– Min. Mark Taylor

***Tuesday, October 30, 2018***

### **“Love to Death”**

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

**Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)**

It is hard to love those who have hurt you the most. The unfortunate thing is the people we love the most can hurt us the most. They know the most about us and, can push all the buttons we have. Love is at times a battle because, it is a act of the will. Has a loved one ever hurt you so bad that you thought you would never forgive them or, made you never want to do anything for them ever again? What do you think Jesus Christ thinks about a church that he died for because of their sins? It was because of the church Jesus had to die. Should He love us less? By no means.

In our focal passage we look at Paul's writing to the church of Ephesus. Paul gives us male followers of Jesus instructions on how we should conduct oneself in the

context of marriage. Paul's words given to him by God, echo throughout the generations, and should be a foundation of any marriage relationship. I am certain all people would say you should love your spouse, but to what extent? The writer tells us that man should love his woman to death. A man should be willing to give himself up for his wife. A husband should drop himself and who he is for his wife. Christ gave His whole self-up for the church. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Jesus became sin for us and took the punishment for our sins on the cross. Jesus gave up heaven, comfort, power, and riches for His church. Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death. For a husband, he should be willing to give up any and everything for his wife. You say but, she doesn't or she does these things, and you don't understand. You choose her; you should love her, and what she does doesn't negate your responsibility. Ladies if he is not willing to give up anything for you then, he is not for you! It is a hard text to swallow if you are a husband trying to follow what God has told us to do in marriage.

The only way a man can give up himself is by the Spirit of God. A natural man cannot give up himself, without Jesus. A husband has to die to himself and love his wife to death, because, Christ loves us first. No matter what!

**A lack of love is a little bit of hate.**

– Min. Dennis Campbell, Jr.

**Wednesday, October 31, 2018**

## **“When Being in Debt is a “Good Thing”**

*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.*

**Romans 13:8 (NASV)**

“Lord knows, if I knew then; what I know now, I would have never signed on the “dotted line.” I remember they came to my college and it was a long line of students eagerly waiting to sign up for a Discover Card. After talking with the Discover Card Representative, I was pumped and ready to sign my papers. She had rather quickly shared with me that as long as I make the minimum payments of approximately \$25 to \$40 a month, that I could have up to a \$1000 credit limit to spend on anything I wanted. Now as a struggling college student, I felt as though I had won the lottery. You see, I felt that since I had a job at the time that making these monthly payments would be no problem. But what I know now is that this Discover Card Representative didn’t talk about several key things that was extremely important to know. She didn’t talk about the high interest rates. She didn’t talk about the importance of making payments on time. She didn’t talk about how getting behind on your payments can cause you to be in debt for many years to come. She didn’t mention how it can effect you negatively when trying to purchase a house in the future or even a car. In fact, if I were to be honest, I don’t think I even knew there was such thing as a credit report.

However, there is one thing I wish I had known and that is Romans 13:8. If I had known our devotional verse, I would like think that I would have been more cautious to sign on

the “dotted line.” Because the first four words of Romans 13:8 says, “*Owe nothing to anyone....*” But I was as naive and innocent as a 2-year-old toddler trying to put their curious fingers on a hot stove. And boy did I get burned. And although I’m doing better now, I’m still trying to recover from that initial seed of debt that was planted in me so long ago. Why? Because the consequences of being in debt can have a negative impact for many years to come.

So My friends if you find yourself in financial debt, let me encourage you to do whatever you can to get out of debt because the first four words of Romans 13:8 clearly states that we are to “*Owe nothing to anyone....*”, which implies that if we find ourselves being in debt that we ought to always strive to “get out of debt” but when we keep reading this verse we discover that being in debt can be a “good thing.” “*Owe nothing to anyone EXCEPT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.*” In other words, Paul is saying that the only debt that should remain outstanding is our Love for one another.

Unlike the bill collector, when the “Love collector” comes calling we should always answer the phone. The Love collector could be your neighbor. It could be that homeless man or woman holding up a sign, “Just Hungry.” The “Love Collector” could even be someone that God has been tugging at your heart to forgive.

Has the “Love Collector” been calling you to make a payment? Remember, my friends, it’s ok to pick up the phone. This is the only time when being in debt is a “Good Thing.”

### **How much love do you owe?**

– Min. Terry Borens, Jr.

***Thursday, November 1, 2018***

### **“What Matters Most”**

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.*

**Galatians 5:6 (NASB)**

Have you ever packed your car for a trip and get ready to go only to find out you can’t find your car keys? How about you showed up at the airport or at a concert or a game with all of your gear only to discover you forgot your ticket at the house? Sometimes we can get so caught up in all the peripheral details and wind up forgetting about what matters the most.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, the prevalent issue was the Judaizer’s threat that was introduced to us in Acts 15. These folks taught a combination of God’s grace and human effort. In order to receive the grace of God one must be living according to Jewish customs (i.e., the Law). In

particular, circumcision was promoted as necessary for salvation. Become a Jewish proselyte first and then a person has earned the opportunity to come to Christ. It was simply another way of saying you had to earn your way into the kingdom. Paul worked hard to refute this teaching because if you can earn your way into glory, by acts like circumcision, then it nullifies the concept of God’s grace.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 1:9 “*There is nothing new under the sun.*” We can apply this passage to mean that this problem continues today. We call it legalism. Unfortunately, a lot of folks struggle in this area of performing rituals or works, in addition to receiving God’s grace. Understandably, it can be hard to believe that there’s a concept that exists where you are freely given something, so precious as eternal salvation in a world, where it’s often harshly taught that ‘nothing in life is free.’ However, if most Christians were completely honest with ourselves we would too realize that we also struggle with far too much emphasis on outward performance rather than an inward change. Unfortunately, it ends up resulting in running off folks from our fellowships and creates a bad witness for the Kingdom. When we put more emphasis on items such as avoiding alcohol or tobacco, tattoos, strict dress codes, etc., thinking that they make us more spiritual, when in reality none of them are any guarantee of spirituality, we fail in our mandate to love all people.

However, none of these things matter in the long run. Paul tells us that in Christ rituals don’t avail us anything at all. What matters most is our faith working itself out through love. Both faith and love are dependent upon the other and neither work without the other. “*Without faith it is impossible to please God* (Heb. 11:6) but without love, all the

faith in the world means nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). No one loves someone or something that they don't have faith in. Love wants converts to Christ, but it is faith that goes and preaches the Gospel.

We must be mindful to keep our focus on what really matters and it's not about what someone is wearing or even if someone is baptized. It's displaying our faith in God by loving those He loves, and that's all people. Judgment is God's business and He keeps that to Himself; but He gives us the job of being Him on Earth, and the best way to accomplish that is to love, because God is love. How can you show today the love of God to someone in the body of Christ as well as to someone who needs Christ?

Show your faith in God by your deeds of love to ALL people. Not only to those you like or don't know, but also to those who are your enemies.

**“It is not living that matters, but living rightly.”**

– Socrates

– Min. Aaron Simpson

**Friday, November 2, 2018**

## **“The Most Essential Ingredient”**

*<sup>8</sup> Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without complaint.*

**1 Peter 4:8-9 (NASB)**

In every great recipe, there is an ingredient that if left out would make the pleasure of eating that dish less than enjoyable. It is the ingredient that everyone mentions when they hear that you are cooking a certain dish. They ask about it, because they know that if the dish is going to be worth eating, then this ingredient must be included in the mix. So it is with love! For any and every relationship to function at its optimum level, it must have the one ingredient that will build and sustain the relationship through its ups and downs in life. The ingredient is Love!

As the apostle Peter gives instructions in chapter 4 on living for God, he reminds the people of God of the importance of making sure that they preserve their love for each other. We all have differences. We differ in our past. We differ in our personalities; and we differ in our preferences. We all still have a sinful nature and can be led by our flesh from time to time. So, we are bound to have disagreements with one another as well as disappointments in each other. God is instructing us as believers to be diligent in always making sure that love is present and active in the midst of our encounters with one another, so that the outcome is one that is pleasing in His sight.

Then Peter states a fact concerning love. He says, *“love covers a multitude of sins.”* The word “cover” means to hide or conceal; to keep secret. This is in no way not calling or acknowledging sin for what it is. It is letting the sin between believers be dealt with in a way that it stays between them and is handled by them knowing that God knows everything, including the confession made concerning the sin. It is our love for one another that brings one to confront or confess sin to one another. It is our love for one another, that makes us willing to be accountable to one another in how we live among each other. It is our love for one another that helps us look for the opportunity to be a blessing and not place blame or cause shame to the other; to do good and not bad; and to love and forgive and not place guilt or find fault. It is our love for one another that tells the world we belong to Christ!

*“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” – 1 John 4:8 (ESV); “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” – John 13:35 (ESV)*

**HOW IS YOUR LOVE FOR OTHERS? DON'T FORGET THE MOST ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT, LOVE!**

**Love is the key to keeping relationships in harmony.**

– Min. Ronell Peters