

LIVING OUT A LIFE OF LOVE

Ephesians 5:1-2

Key Biblical Principle: **Jesus intends for Christians, and His church, to be characterized by a life of love.**

Matthew 22:34-40 "... which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: "**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **Love** your neighbor as yourself. **All** the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments".

John 13:34-35: "A new command I give you: **Love one another**. As I have loved you, so you must **love one another**. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you **love one another**".

Ephesians 5:1-2: "Be imitators of God, therefore as dearly loved children and **live a life of love just as Christ loved us** and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God".

As Christians, and as a church, how do we live out a life of love on an on-going basis? There are many characteristics of a loving person and a loving church ... here are three such characteristics:

- 1) **Forgiving**
- 2) **Accepting**
- 3) **Grace oriented**

FORGIVING

A Key Principle: **We are to forgive as Jesus forgives us!**

Colossians 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you**".

How does Jesus forgive us?

Does He forgive all our sins or only some?

Does each forgive each sin fully or partially?

Does He hold our past forgiven sins against us, or do we have a clean slate?

Does He forgive us because we deserve it, or is it based on grace?

Does He forgive us freely (unconditional), or make us pay a price (conditional)?

Jesus story (parable) on forgiveness from Mathew 18:21-35

Background: King = God, Servant = us

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. ²⁸"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' ³⁰"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³²"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

ACCEPTING

A Key Principle: **We are to accept other people, just as Jesus has accepted us!**

Romans 15:7 "Accept one another, then, *just as Christ accepted you*, in order to bring praise to God".

Romans 14:1 (MSG) "Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do".

Jesus example: **Samaritan women at well (John 4:1-42)**

Background: woman, not a man; Samaritan; "big time sinner" (5 time divorcee, living with man in adulterous relationship).

John 4

13-18

¹³Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." ¹⁶He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." ¹⁷"I have no husband," she replied.

¹⁸Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

25-26

²⁵The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." ²⁶Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

27-30

²⁷Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" ²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" ³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

39-42

³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴²They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Another example of Jesus: **Adulterous woman (John 8:1-11)**

John 8:1-11

¹But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a

woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. ⁷But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Lesson from the church at Philippi (Acts 16:11-40; Philippians). We should accept people despite differences in gender, marital status, age, race/ethnicity, economic class, personal needs or anything else!

| <i>Differences:</i> | Slave Girl | Lydia | Jailer |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Gender | Female | Female | Male |
| Marital status | Single | ? | Married |
| Race/ethnicity | African | Asian | European |
| Economic class | Poor | Rich | Middle-class |
| Age | Young | ? | Middle age? |
| Personal Need | Psychiatric | Emotional | Spiritual |

Lesson from the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 6:9-11): We should accept people no matter what they have done in the past.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

GRACE

A Key Principle: **We should exhibit grace to others, just as Jesus has shown grace to us!**

2 Timothy 1:8-10 "...God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life – **not because of anything we have done** but because of His own purpose and **grace**".

2 Peter 3:18 "... grow in the **grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ "

2 Timothy 2:1 "... be strong in the **grace** that is in Christ Jesus".

Jesus example: **Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Luke 19:1-10)**

Luke 19:1-10

¹Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" ⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Jesus example: **thief on the cross (Luke 23:40-43)**

Luke 23:40-43

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"

⁴¹"We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. " ⁴³Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."