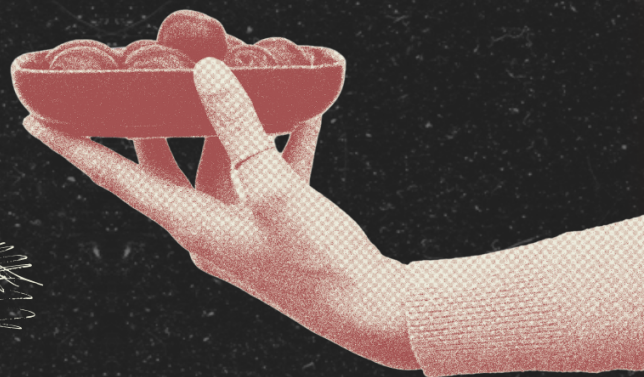


Fruit of the Spirit



LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS
GOODNESS
FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS
SELF-CONTROL



“LOVE”

1CORINTHIANS 13

Love is the foundational fruit of the Spirit and all the others flow from it. Drawing from Galatians 5, Pastor Stephen contrasted self-centered “works of the flesh” with Spirit-produced love that overflows toward God and others. God’s love is fundamentally different from human love. God, as Trinity, infinitely and eternally pours His love out within the fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit. He does not need Creation in order to love or be Love. Human love, on the other hand, is distorted by sin into self-protection, selfish ambition, jealousy, and manipulation. By grace and the transforming power of the the Holy Spirit, God redirects believers’ affections away from the self and toward God and His people. The love of Christ is a willing, sacrificial, gracious, merciful, patient, and outward-focused love. This is evidence most clearly in His incarnation and death on the cross. Pastor Stephen concluded by applying these truths to the life of the church. Genuine Christian community is not built around affinity groups of shared interests and stations, but around the gospel and Spirit-formed love for one another.

// GETTING THE MESSAGE

:: How is 1Corinthians 13:1-3 a picture of misplaced love for self rather than spirit-wrought love? How have you seen this manifested in your own life?



// GETTING THE MESSAGE

:: Stephen taught us that God's love is not driven by neediness in Him, but simply because that is Who He is. Why does it matter practically that God's love for us is not driven by anything He needs from us?

:: What are some ways that Christian relationships and Christian churches would grow if the love talked about in verses 4-7 were evident in everyone's lives?

:: Read Philippians 2:1–4. Pastor Stephen noted that Paul wrote this to counter the Philippians' natural self-seeking. What does "**counting others more significant than yourselves**" look like in your life? In the church?

:: Read 1John 2. How is the fall of Adam and Eve a picture of the lusts of this world, as outlined in verse 16?

:: How was Jesus' rightly oriented love on display when he rejected these same lusts while being tempted by the devil in the wilderness?



// GETTING TO CHRIST

:: How is Jesus the perfect personification of the love that we see in 1Corinthians 13:4-7?

:: Pastor Stephen says Jesus' love was "ready and willing". He eagerly approached lepers and the Rich Young Ruler with compassion. How did the Lord love these individuals? (Compare and contrast.)

// GETTING TO YOU

:: Stephen mentions "*affinity groups*" in churches that silo people by age, interest, or status. How does the gospel challenge your natural preference to gather only with people like yourself?

:: Romans 9:11 and Ephesians 1:4 teach us that God's love preceded any human action. God loved us when we were unlovely. How does knowing you were loved "**before the foundations of the world**" affect the way you love others who have nothing to offer you?



// GETTING TO YOU

:: Stephen asked: "*How many church splits would be mitigated if people loved with patience, kindness, and bearing all things?*" How would conflict in a church look different if it was marked by the fruit of the Spirit rather than the works of the flesh?

// GETTING TO OTHERS

:: Seeing love in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, How should Christian love shape the way we evangelize, especially toward those who are hostile or indifferent?

:: Drawing on the book *Compelling Community*, Pastor Stephen described a church united across socioeconomic, cultural, and political lines by the gospel alone. Read **John 13:34-35**. How does the internal life of Piqua Baptist either support or undermine our outreach to the community?

:: Love "**bears all things**" and "**endures all things**". Evangelism and missions often involve years of investment with little visible fruit. How does grounding your witness in a patient, enduring love—rather than results-driven love—help to sustain faithfulness over the long haul?

