

### WHAT IS LOVE?



Why do we make such a big deal of Valentines Day? Stores, offices and school classrooms display hearts, candy and flowers, all the icons of this special day in mid February. Children exchange Valentines with their classmates. Spouses plan for a special evening out. Everyone seems to be searching for a way to let that special someone know that they are loved. But what is love?

In *Galatians 5:22-23* love is listed as the first of the fruits of the Spirit. ***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.***

It has been said that love is the glue that holds the world together. Songs resound with titles like 'Love Makes the World Go 'Round' and 'Love is a Many Splendored Thing'. But love is more than that. Love, true love, goes beyond what makes me feel good and searches to find what can I do for you.

Our society today is extremely self centered. We are constantly looking for our own needs to be met and gravitate to what makes us comfortable and happy. The love that God wants us to share with others is His love. His love is

giving and sacrificial. *John 3:16* states ***"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in His shall not perish but have eternal life."***

So love is not so much about the gifts we give as it is about the reason behind wanting to give them. The flowers and candy, the loving words and that special time together are all vehicles through which we show our love.

Jesus left us with a new commandment, to love one another. He directed us to love one another with the love that He has shown for us. *I John 4:7-11* states ***"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. .... This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."***

So what does this kind of love look like? We are given a clear picture in the verses of *I Corinthians 13:4-8*. ***"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."***

This is love. This is what we are to emulate. This is the first of the fruits of the Spirit. As we read these words most of us would have to say we fall far short of loving others as God desires. Today, let us look past ourselves and ask God what He would have us do for others to show His love to this world.

The answer we are looking for may be found in *I John 3:16-23*. ***"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in Him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set out hearts at rest in His presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts and He knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us."***

This, then, is our mission. This is love.

