

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: **STUDY GUIDE: WEEK THREE**

TOPIC THREE: THE GREATEST IS LOVE

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK THREE:

I will begin this week's teaching by looking at the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” **(1 Corinthians 13:1-3)**

In this passage of Scripture the Apostle Paul emphasised that no matter what we do in our walk with the Lord and for God, if it is not undergirded by love it will profit us nothing and we will not make an impact on the lives of others. (We have become sounding brass or a clanging Cymbal.) We are now living in a world that is crying out for genuine love in many ways. We see growing acts of terrorism even here in Australia and people becoming more and more caught up in accumulating things and possessions rather than developing loving relationships with others. I heard someone once say, that in the world “people love money and use people” but as Christians we need to “use money and to love people.” Given the world that we are now living in, both as a Body of Believers (the church) and individually we can make a great impact in this world for eternity.

Jesus Himself said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see you good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Over the weekend I shared at two churches on the importance of love in our lives. My sermon notes for these messages are attached as our primary study notes for this week's teaching as well as the Christian Growth Key No. 26 – The Greatest is love (1 Double Sided Page)

This topic has been burning in my heart as I believe that the last great revivals will be ones which see the love and presence of God in our lives and churches being so evident that people are drawn to Christ in us the hope of glory. **(Colossians 1:27)** There is another saying, “People do not care how much we know, but they do want to know how much we CARE” “... and a word spoken in due season, how good it is! **(Proverbs 15:23)**

As believers if we have Christ's compassion in our heart we will be passionate about loving others into the Kingdom of God. If we truly touch the heart of God we will be radically changed and our lives will be characterized by: i) a burden to pray for others, ii) an urgency to share our faith with others as God gives us opportunities, iii) it will change the way we live our lives. We will be more others focused and generous in our giving and more prepared to make sacrifices for others and iv) we will live our lives with eternity in mind, (being more focused on storing up treasures in heaven - helping to see precious souls coming to Christ and fulfilling God's plan for their lives) than on pursuing the things of this world. **(Matthew 6:19-21) (Matthew 6:24)** The Parable of the Sower – **(Mark 4:1-9 and Mark 4:13-20) (Colossians 3:2)**

For a number of years early in my Christian walk I tried to work out and intellectualise how I should live as a Christian. Then one day the Lord spoke to me simply, “Just love Me and love others” It was like the penny dropped and it completely set me free of striving to live out the Christian walk. I loved the Lord and with His love I had the ability to love others. Jesus Himself said in the Gospel of Mark,

“‘And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. ‘And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” **(Mark 12:30-31)**

It is in the doing of the first command and abiding continually in Christ **(John 15:4-5)** that we have the ability to live out the second command to love others as ourselves. Because of our relationship with Jesus Christ we have the ability to love others with the agape love of Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” **(Romans 5:5)** As a church we also realise the importance of CARING for people one person at a time.

I WILL NOW LOOK AT SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO CONSISTENTLY LOVING GOD AND OTHERS AND HOW OUR CHURCHES CAN BETTER LOVE OUR COMMUNITIES TO CHRIST

- 1) **Jesus is our role model as believers of what it is to live for Him and what true love is. Jesus,**
 - Went out of his way to help people (John Chapter 4:1-42) – The woman from Samaria
 - Took off His glory in heaven to enter this world to reconcile us back to God. He first reached out to us. He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)
 - Came to serve others and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28)
 - Was prepared to make sacrifices to see people come into the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:57-58)
 - Was concerned also about the practical needs of others (Matthew 15:32)
 - Never gave up on people. Though Peter denied Christ, Jesus never rejected him
 - Was full of love and compassion for others and forgave his persecutors (Luke 23:33-35)
 - Never rejected those who came to Him (and had a great love for the lost. **Every single person is important to God** (Luke 15:4-7) The world is full of hurting individuals
 - Prayed for His Disciples and all who would believe in Him for protection and unity (John 17:6-26)
- 2) **A loving local church has the potential to transform a community. As a church we need to:**
 - Warmly embrace all new comers (James 2:1-5) The importance of creating community and family
 - Ensure that relationships and people take precedence over programs and traditions
 - Actively reach out into the community with the practical love of Christ – Sharing bread with the hungry, clothing the naked, bringing in the poor (Isaiah 58:6-7) (James 1:27)
 - We need to encourage all members to USE their God given gifts (**To give of themselves**)
 - Cultivate an atmosphere of love and acceptance in all of our meetings
 - Create a hunger for God's presence as we create an atmosphere of worship in our meetings
 - We need as pastors to **preach the word** to help people grow in Christlike character
 - We need to help all believers to be connected to small groups to have their pastoral needs met. It is within the context of small groups that Christians can be loved and encouraged to become strong in their walk with the Lord and to grow in their love for others. Small groups help to connect people to the life of a local church. (Matthew 20:19-20) (Hebrews 10:23-25)
 - Making mature loving disciples is a key to having a healthy loving church
- 3) **As a leader** (and all Christians are called to reign with Christ here on earth) – Revelation 5:10 **we need to model what it is to live the Christian life. As leaders,**
 - We need to make our primary focus one of getting to know Christ is a deeper way ourselves
 - We need to spend much time with the Lord so that we not only preach the message but live it out in the way that we love and relate to others. We must never get too busy to spend time with the Lord. We need to be an example to those who have been entrusted to our care (1 Peter 5:1-4)
 - As parents, how we live our life will have a greater impact on our children's lives than what we say. If we want our children to grow up loving the Lord we too must be in love with the Lord
 - As pastors and leaders, we need to pour our lives into our key leaders and mentor them so that they have the right heart to also train up others for ministry. (2 Timothy 2:1-2) What is in the hearts of the key leaders of our church will influence the culture and atmosphere of our church. Mentoring others matters and is a key to seeing churches growing healthy.
- 4) **Some Biblical things to consider regarding keeping our love for Jesus and for others strong**
 - Always making our relationship with Jesus our highest priority in life (Psalm 63:1-5)
 - The importance of continually renewing our mind with the Word of God (Rom 12:2) (Joshua 1:8)
 - The absolute importance of CONTINUALLY forgiving others (Mark 11:25)
 - We cannot say that we love and know God if we don't love others (1 John 4:7-8) (1 John 3:14-15)
 - Love is also practical (Acts 4:32-35) (1 John 3:16-19) and others focussed (Philippians 2:3-4)
 - Love means that we are also prepared to be inconvenienced (Mark 6:30-34)
 - We need to learn to love unconditionally – When we choose to love others the feelings follow
 - Our love for other believers is what makes the world know that we are Christ's disciples
 - We need to always do all things as to the Lord and then we will not become discouraged when we do not feel appreciated by others (Colossians 3:17) (Colossians 3:23-24)