

# WALKING IN THE SPIRIT



**Walking in the Spirit (Bible Study)**

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## INTRODUCTION

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# WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

In order to make a diamond look really beautiful, you have to put it on black velvet. The black velvet absorbs light, but the diamond takes the light and reflects it. In Galatians 5, God uses the works of the flesh as the black velvet to show off the beautiful Fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh show that you are walking in darkness, but the Fruit of the Spirit shows that you are walking in the light with the Holy Spirit. The works of the flesh are natural, but the Fruit of the Spirit is supernatural. The works of the flesh are what sin does in us. The Fruit of the Spirit is what God does through us.

In this series, we are going to take one week to focus on each of the qualities known as the Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. All the qualities—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness (gentleness) and self-control—are qualities we see clearly in the life and temperament of the one Perfect Man, Jesus Christ. There are lots of laws to try to keep us from walking in the flesh, but no one makes laws against the Fruit of the Spirit. These are good qualities that everyone wants more of in their lives.

The Fruit of the Spirit is not a to-do list. After all, what does a tree do to produce fruit? Nothing. According to John 15, Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. The Fruit of the Spirit is something that grows out of our connection to Jesus.

God, the good gardener, wants to grow us to become more like His Son Jesus. He may prune us and cut back parts of our lives. He may transplant us to a different environment or cultivate and change the soil we are in. But whatever He does is meant to bring us to maturity and to produce fruit. We trust that God will use this study to help you grow. If you enjoy it, please consider inviting others to go through it as well and share the message with someone else who needs it.



God does not change us  
in order to love us. He loves  
us in order to change us.

ADRIAN ROGERS

## WEEK 1

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# HOW TO LOVE LIKE GOD LOVES

### ■ INTRODUCTION

People talk a lot about love—it's the favorite focus of songwriters and poets. The word has been so misused and twisted that we don't understand what genuine love is. Is it oceans of emotions? "Feelings, nothing more than feelings"? An uncontrollable passion? Some have the idea that love just "happens" to us, and we're more or less victims or recipients of it. We fall in love, then we fall out.

Biblical love is something much different. Biblical love is God's volitional action toward us. We receive it, reciprocate with a decision to trust, follow and abide in Him, and allow His love to flow through us to others. Galatians 5 lists nine qualities of the Fruit of the Spirit, and first on the list is love. In this study, we'll learn what's true and what isn't about love. You can't produce it. You can only allow it to flow from God through you as you abide in Jesus. When we receive the gift of salvation, we receive a divine nature. The nature of God comes into us. This love is not the work of the flesh; it is the Fruit of the Spirit.

### ■ PRAY OVER IT

*Dear God, I know that I have a limited understanding of love. But I know that You are love and that You love me more than I could possibly imagine. Help me to understand what love looks like to You. It is steadfast, sincere. It serves others and is not focused on self. Give me the strength to abide in Jesus so that I can love others the way You love them. Channel Your love through me to others, especially those who are difficult to love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## DAY 1

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# WHAT IS LOVE?

### ■ PONDER IT

One reason we get confused about this is because English has only one word for it: *love*. But in Greek, the language in which much of the New Testament was written, there are four words for “love” because there are four different types of love. So much of the confusion about the concept of love can be cleared up by looking at these four types of love:

- **Eros** is romantic love, the love between a man and a woman.
- **Phileo** (fi-LAY-o) is brotherly love, friendship love, comradeship.
- **Storgé** (STOR-gay) is the love family members have for each other.
- **Agapé** (ah-GAH-pay) is God’s love—the love He extends to every person.

With storgé (family love) and phileo (friendship love), it’s easy to storgé our precious family members and phileo our friends. Those feelings come naturally for us. God also emotionally loves us, His children. He loves the Body of Christ. He loves you, for you are His child. But agapé love requires no feelings or emotion.

Biblical love, God’s agapé love, is not a feeling. It may contain feelings. It may result in feelings. But when the Bible speaks of love, it’s not talking about feeling something. The Bible commands us to love, which tells us that love is not primarily an emotion. You cannot command a feeling or demand that someone feel a certain way. Biblical love is not an emotion or a feeling; it is an action.

Agapé is something you do. It is the love that is most prominent in the Bible: it is the way God loves all mankind. God has and does agapé the entire world—just look at Calvary and how John explains it.

**Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:7-11).**

God is agapé love. He is the One who shows us what this kind of love looks like. He is also the One who empowers us to love like He does, even when it seems impossible.

#### ■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What relationships in your life show the different kinds of love? Is love primarily a feeling or an action? How does your answer to the previous question affect your perspective on love?
- Spend a few minutes meditating on 1 John 4:7-11. What does this tell us about God's love and how we ought to love one another?



## DAY 2

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# AGAPÉ LOVE IS AN ACTION, NOT A FEELING

### ■ PONDER IT

Agapé is an act of your will, not an emotion you feel. Because it's something you do, no feelings are required. God can command us to agapé one another because agapé is an action.

When the Bible says “Love (agapé) your enemies,” it's not just a suggestion. It's a command. You'll be upset or frustrated trying to emotionally “love” your enemies until you understand that agapé requires no emotions.

**“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-48).**

In this passage, Jesus points out that even people who don't believe in God are capable of loving people who love them and treat them well. That part comes naturally. But if we want to love supernaturally, then we must love the people who don't like us or treat us well.

If love were an emotion and you had to “feel warm fuzzies” about someone, it would be impossible to “love your enemies,” to agapé someone who's harmed you or hurt someone dear to you.

When you operate with agapé love, you make a choice—apart from emotion or feeling. You choose to conduct yourself in a non-vengeful, respectful way toward that person. If you have a mean neighbor or

co-worker, you do something kind for them, even if you don't feel like it. It's an act of your will—something you do. No emotions required. If you choose to pray for that person, you will see God slowly change your heart toward the one who offends you, or He will change that person's heart toward you. But the act of praying is something you can choose.

When you grasp this, it will be like setting a great weight down. You'll no longer feel guilty for lacking the emotion of love toward those who've wounded you or those you may be justifiably estranged from. Feelings of love are not commanded. You are only commanded to agapé.

#### ■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What is your response to the fact that you don't have to feel an emotion in order to love a difficult person with God's agapé love?
- Think of the most difficult person in your life. How will the fact that you aren't required to feel warm fuzzies of emotion toward that person help you act in a loving way? How is God asking you to act toward that person today?

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If you would measure your love  
for your Father, you must measure  
your love for your brother.

ADRIAN ROGERS

## DAY 3

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# LEARN TRUE LOVE FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 13

### ■ PONDER IT

The best description of agapé love is found in 1 Corinthians 13, known as “The Love Chapter.” Throughout the chapter Paul uses the Greek word ἀγάπη (agapé) for love that refers to God’s unconditional, divine love.

**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).**

Anything we do without love is simply not worth doing. Love is the first in this list of the Fruit of the Spirit. It’s a very important quality for us to cultivate in our lives.

**Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy... (1 Corinthians 13:4)**

**True love is steadfast.** God’s agapé love suffers long and enables us to be patient. It enables us to forgive 70 times seven. We often love someone to a certain point and then stop loving and caring when we are hurt or offended. But God’s love never gives up and never stops caring. When you quit loving, at that moment you become unlike the Lord Jesus.

**Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end (John 13:1).**

**True love is serving one another.** It is kind. Agapé love serves those who don't deserve to be served. It gives people what they need, not necessarily everything they want.

**For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (Galatians 5:13).**

**True love is sincere.** Agapé rejoices when another is blessed. If you're an envious, jealous person, it's because you do not love the person you're envious of. If you cringe when someone you love is praised or affirmed, if you think that person's gain is your loss or a criticism of you, then you don't love sincerely.

**A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones (Proverbs 14:30).**

**By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom (Proverbs 13:10).**

#### ■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What is something you have been doing that has not been done in love? Ask God to help you find a way to do it with love.
- Which one of the points about true love is easy for you? Which one is the most difficult? What is God asking you to do as a result of what you have learned today?

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If you need encouragement, give it.  
If you need love, give it.  
Whatever you need, give it away.

ADRIAN ROGERS

## DAY 4

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# TRUE LOVE IS NOT AS EASY AS YOU THINK

### ■ PONDER IT

We are going to continue looking closely at 1 Corinthians 13.

**...love does not parade itself, is not puffed up (1 Corinthians 13:4).**

**True love is not self-love.** Agapé enables you to be humble. It doesn't swagger. Pride and love do not dwell in the same heart. If you're filled with egotism and pride, you're hard to be around, and you're argumentative. If there is fighting and arguing in your home, it could be a sign that egos are competing against each other—self-love against self-love. Agapé quiets ego and pride.

**“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27-28).**

**[Love] does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil (1 Corinthians 13:5).**

**True love is self-restraining love.** Agapé doesn't give others what they deserve but what they need. If others have wronged you, find a way to be kind. Even if they don't deserve it, agapé serves them. Do good for your enemies, speak well of them, pray hard for them. A rude person doesn't know how to think of the other person. Courtesy is love in the little things. If you don't love in the little things, you won't love in the big things. Agapé gives you the strength to be courteous.

**True love is self-denying love.** Agapé doesn't say “Me first.” Anytime you hear a person say “I know my rights,” they're not speaking from love. When you were saved, you were crucified with Christ and so were all of your rights. You're not your own; you're bought with a price. He has

commanded you to love. When we stop thinking about our rights and seek to bless others, our world will change.

**True love is serene love.** It does not explode, but instead brings peace. Are you easily provoked? Do you have a hot temper? It's a sign that on the inside you're not filled with love. If you want to know what you're full of, just see what spills out when you're provoked. Agapé is not easily provoked.

**True love is sacrificial love.** Agapé doesn't keep a record of faults. It's not a collector of grudges. Sacrificial love forgives, and it costs to forgive. There's no forgiveness without someone paying a price. If you owe someone \$10 and the debt is forgiven, it costs that person \$10. We need to stop being the bookkeeper of wrongs that have been done against us. Ask God to help you forgive and do what you can to make it right. Then you can bury past hurts in the grave of God's forgetfulness and not hold those hurts against others. Biblical love is self-sacrificial and asks nothing in return:

**In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).**

**[Love] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6).**

**True love is sympathetic love.** When someone falls, agapé doesn't rejoice; it weeps. A gossip rejoices in something bad and can't wait to tell it. When you hear of someone's hurt or failure and you agapé, you're heartbroken over sin. You don't overlook sin because it must be addressed, but you don't rejoice in it. Before you say anything to someone else, consider these three questions: Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?

#### ■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- Do you see these agapé qualities in your life or does some renovation need to happen? Has this study brought to light a sin you need to confess and relinquish?
- Of these ways to love as God loves, which one(s) will be hardest for you? Why?

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We're to love people and use things,  
not love things and use people.

ADRIAN ROGERS

## DAY 5

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# REAL LOVE IS ALWAYS SUPERNATURAL

### ■ PONDER IT

Let's continue our slow walk through 1 Corinthians 13.

**[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7).**

**True love is suffering love.** When you choose to love you also choose to suffer. Agapé bears, believes, hopes, endures *all* things. It is not gullible or blindly believing everything or letting people take advantage. The New English Bible puts it this way: "There is nothing love cannot face. There is no limit to its faith." When you love with agapé, there will be a burden to bear.

When God made you, He took a divine risk. God knew it would cost Him dearly to give man free will. He knew that He would suffer. When God chose to love us, He chose to suffer. When we do not agapé love one another, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).**

Because of God's agapé love for us, we bring Him grief and deep sadness when we sin. Consider these earthly pictures that God has given to us to help us understand how much He loves us.

- Can a father watch a disobedient son and not suffer? When we go the wrong way, the heavenly Father suffers.
- Can the body hurt and the head not feel it? In the Bible, the Church is the body of Christ. Therefore, when the body suffers and does not love, Jesus suffers and the name of Jesus suffers in the world.
- When Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, He said, "Paul, why are you persecuting me?" By persecuting God's people, the body, Paul was persecuting Christ, the head.

- If there is a faithless bride, doesn't the groom suffer? Jesus is the groom and the bride is the Church. When Jesus chose to love the Church, He also chose to suffer when she is unfaithful.

Why would God choose to suffer? Because of His great love for us.

**But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5).**

This kind of love is not natural—it's supernatural. God does it through us. You don't produce this love. You bear this love, as a fruit tree bears fruit. Jesus didn't say you'll produce it, but you will bear it.

**"I am the vine...He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).**

When you come to a place where you know you can't do this on your own, pray: "Lord, I can't love like this in my own strength. Lord, love through me. Make me a channel of Your love." Then His supernatural love will flow from the vine to the branches. But this is the love our world so desperately needs—the first fruit of the Spirit.

#### ■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What was your biggest takeaway from this section on love?
- Jot down an opportunity to practice agapé?

#### ■ BONUS

Listen to Pastor Rogers' message *How to Love and How to Be Loved* for a powerful illustration of why God chooses to suffer because of His love for us.




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Your lawnmower may vex you when it's broken, but your children grieve you when they are broken. You only grieve the things that you love.

ADRIAN ROGERS



## DAY 6

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# BEAR BEAUTIFUL FRUIT

### ■ PRACTICE IT

Our world longs for the fragrant, beautiful Fruit of the Spirit. Agapé love is the way to love as God loves. When you begin to live like Galatians 5:22-23, you will show others the beauty and the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today is the day of salvation. Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life. Call upon Jesus today. Repent from your sins and turn to Jesus. Ask him to forgive you of your sins and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.

If you know Jesus personally and you also have people in your life who are difficult to love, don't ask God to help you love them. Simply pray, "Lord, I can't love them, but You do. Lord, love them through me. Make me a channel of Your love."

### ■ PROCLAIM IT

If you accepted God's gift of salvation for the first time, please share your decision with another Christian you know or with your pastor. We would also like to hear about it, so that we can provide you with free resources to help you grow in your new faith. Please let us know by going to [lwf.org/discover-jesus](http://lwf.org/discover-jesus), scrolling down the page and clicking on *I Believe*.

People you know need to understand how much God loves them. Will you take the time to share with them today? If God has revealed someone in your life who is difficult to love, take the time to talk with your mentor or spiritual advisor about this person. Pray together about what actions and next steps God is asking you to take to show this person agapé love.

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Grace says, "I love you," reaching down.  
Faith says, "I believe you," reaching up.

ADRIAN ROGERS

## ■ PUT IT IN WRITING

Use this page to make a prayer list of the people you love, noting specific prayer requests for each. Don't forget to add the names of those God wants you to do a better job of loving! As you pray for them, God will soften your heart.