

LOVE FERVENTLY

MARCH 3, 2024

WORSHIP

King Jesus, God so Loved,
How Deep the Father's Love
for Us, More Like Jesus

WELCOME

What popular song can you think of in less than a minute, that has the word "love" in it? Take turns sharing what you came up with.

WORD

1 PETER 1:22-23, 4:7-8

²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart... ⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. ⁸ Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Many people in the world think that they know what love is but are completely wrong. Others have no clue what real love is. We can only rediscover what love is through the Author of love---God. The Bible tells us that God is love, it's His nature! So far in this series, we've "interviewed" Jesus, Paul, and James, the half-brother of Jesus. Today it will be the apostle Peter's turn. In 1967, the Beatles released the single "All You Need Is Love", viewed by millions of people all over the world, including in non-English speaking nations. It was a time of the Cold War, conflicts and animosity, and the Beatles wanted all people to hear this song. But the most profound "love song" that we can ever hear, and ever need, is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter wrote two epistles, where we will learn about love and how he discovered this love. His original readers were followers of Jesus, persecuted, marginalized for their faith, and Peter wanted to set their minds right about who they were (**1 Peter 1:1-2**). He also wanted to set their priorities in order, writing that they keep fervent (earnest, zealous, stretched to the maximum potential) love for another (**1 Peter 4:8**). We will not be looking as much to the "how" but go back to the "why" are we to love each other fervently. Peter gives us three reasons in the two epistles he wrote:

NEW IDENTITY

We should fervently love one another because we have a new identity as followers of Jesus. We have been born again, which means that we have been spiritually reborn (**1 Peter 1:22-23**). The change is from the inside out, and as we live out our new (fresh, unused, unprecedented, unheard of) identity in Christ people around us will see our transformation (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). Being born again is a matter of life and death. Jesus tells the Pharisee, Nicodemus that unless he is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, he can't be in heaven (**John 3:3**).

Peter tells the believers who were persecuted then and reminding us today that as new people in Christ, that even in the midst of suffering, do the will of God (**1 Peter 4:1-3**). You never know how your simple act of obedience will impact the lives of others to eventually follow Christ as well. The power to live the Christian life is within us through the Holy Spirit, it comes from God, not self-will. (**2 Peter 1:2-3**). We also have the amazing promises of God that enable us to live out our new identity (**2 Peter 1:4**). When plagues would hit the Roman Empire, the early Christians stood out in the way they showed "unbounded love and loyalty" to their sick, unbelieving neighbors, while the rest of the Romans fled. Do others see fervent love in us, so that others want to know the Jesus too?

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SHORT TIME

Peter wanted to keep reminding the believers of the need to live for Jesus until his time to depart this life; Jesus Himself told Peter about his eventual death (**2 Peter 1:12-15, John 21:18-19**). Peter knew that life on earth is short, and that earth itself will not last forever. This is why it's of greatest importance ("above all") that we should keep fervent love for one another (**1 Peter 4:7-8**). The "Day of the Lord" will surely come like a thief, unannounced and so we should behave in "holy conduct and godliness" as we look forward to a "new heavens and a new earth" (**2 Peter 3:11-13**)! One important way that we can do this is by sharing about God's love, through Jesus life, death and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins.

GENUINE FORGIVENESS

This is the forgiveness that we have received, and others need; love covers over a multitude of sins (**1 Peter 4:8**). To "cover" does not mean to cover up, rather it is to pardon; not take it against the person; keep no record to use it as a weapon; not gossip nor slander so as to destroy another's reputation. What are you willing to do and how far are you willing to go to seek forgiveness, to be reconciled? Peter himself experienced genuine forgiveness from Jesus. The Lord revealed to Peter ahead of time, that he will deny Jesus (**Luke 22:31-34**). Peter did deny his Lord three times and Luke records that at the moment it happened, Jesus looked at Peter and based on the character of Jesus, it was not a look of condemnation or disappointment but a look of love, of compassion, of hope and genuine forgiveness (**Luke 22:55-62**). As unthinkable as what happened must have been in Peter's mind, what was more unthinkable was what happened not long after when he met Jesus again (**John 21:15-17**). In that encounter, Jesus reinstated Peter into the ministry of taking care of His "sheep"; Peter received genuine forgiveness from Jesus. Have you denied and failed Jesus in some way? If we have experienced God's genuine forgiveness, who are we to be receivers and not be givers of it to others? Let us all be recipients and distributors of God's genuine forgiveness. Let us love fervently because of our new identity, because our time is short, and we have received genuine forgiveness from Jesus!

DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

Do I love others FERVENTLY, as a new creation in Christ? If not, what will I do about it?

2. Setting It Right.

How will the fact that time is short impact how I love others—including telling them about Jesus? What will I start or stop doing?

3. Living It Out.

Is there anyone I need to forgive or ask forgiveness from? When and how will I do it?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE
IN ACTION

Ask God to show you who are those He wants you to love fervently this week. Pray for their hearts to be open to Jesus. Take specific actions to show them God's love beginning today and be intentional in sharing the gospel to them!

WEEKLY
PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's help and comfort, salvation for Israel, wisdom for their leaders in government, military and their soldiers as they defend themselves against terrorists' attacks. PRAISE GOD for the release of hostages so far! Continue to pray for the release of the remaining ones.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; conflict in African, East Asian and Middle East countries to stop. Pray for Christians from different countries who have been persecuted, attacked and killed in recent weeks.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

1 PETER 4:8

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