

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Text: 1 John 3:11-18

When Paul says that the first aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is love, it made perfect sense – because love was the theme of the early church. Ref: Galatians 5:6, 13,14

Living out the fruit of the Spirit is not something you can accomplish by your own effort; neither can you accomplish it without any effort at all. We need to do our part in cultivating the Spirit's fruit.

For this reason, as we look at each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, we'll consider how we can cultivate each quality – to take it from p_____ to p_____ to perfection.

Three things that 1st John tells us love is not.

Love is not a feeling.

Love is not an option.

Love is not even a new idea.

As far as God is concerned, love is the central t_____ of the spiritual life.

For the believer, the challenge is not to *know* what love is, the challenge is to be able to say, "I want to *show* what love is ... to everyone I encounter." Ref: 1st John 3:16

1. Treat Others as Your E_____.

We often think that the greatest obstacle to love is hate. But it's not just hate. It's also p_____. And a_____. And c_____. These stand in the way of loving others.

One thing that made the Christian church so unique in the Roman world is that it crossed all cultural boundaries. Ref: Galatians 3:26-28

If you're entertaining the idea that you're just a little bit better — or a whole lot better — than those around you, you are incapable of loving them as Christ loves them.

Love and c_____do not mix.

Our love for one another is *never* a reaching down kind of love. It's a reaching across kind of love — because we're all in the same boat.

Love will say: I can identify with you. And I see the good in you. And I see your potential.

2. Treat Others with C_____.

Loving others means that you can't sit still, you can't rest, you cannot be silent as long as someone is in need — and you have the ability to do something about it.

But love is not a feeling. It's not just words you speak. It's an action you take.

3. Take the first step.

Those who are filled with the fruit of the Spirit will say: I'm willing to take the first step. I'm willing to risk making the first move.

Love is not a feeling, it's an action. Not a reaction, a pro-action. Love takes the first step.

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

Knowledge is good, but it's not a matter of life and death. Only love is. Ref: 1st Corinthians 13:2