



Ekklesia Christian Life Fellowship 2

Scripture

Romans 12:9-12

- **Love** must be sincere.
- Hate what is **evil**; cling to what is **good**.
- Be devoted to **one another** in **brotherly love**.
- Honor **one another** above yourselves.
- Never be lacking in **zeal**, but keep your **spiritual fervor**, serving the **Lord**.
- Be joyful in **hope**, patient in **affliction**, and faithful in **prayer**.

Ekklesia Christian Life Fellowship 3

Scripture

Romans 12:13-16

- Share with **God's people** who are in need.
- Practice **hospitality**.
- Bless **those** who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
- Rejoice with **those** who rejoice; mourn with **those** who mourn.
- Live in harmony with **one another**.
- Do not be **proud**, but be willing to associate with **people** of low position.
- Do not be **conceited**.

Ekklesia Christian Life Fellowship 4

Scripture

Romans 12:17-19

- Do not repay **anyone** evil for evil.
- Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of **everybody**.
- If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with **everyone**.
- Do not take **revenge**, my friends, but leave room for **God's wrath**, for it is written:
 - "It is **mine** to avenge;
 - I will repay," says the **Lord**.

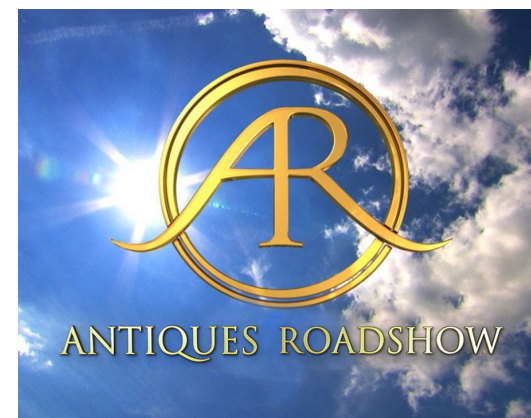
Scripture

Romans 12:20-21

- On the contrary:
 - “If your **enemy** is hungry,
 - feed him;
 - if **he** is thirsty,
 - give him something to drink.
- In doing this, you will heap **burning coals** on his head.”
- Do not be **overcome** by evil, but **overcome** evil with good.

Introduction

- Some of you might be familiar with a TV program called “**Antiques Roadshow**” if you’ve spent time watching public television.
- It started in **England**, and many shows are still filmed there.
- But they also have an **American** version.



Introduction

- The premise of “**Antiques Roadshow**” is simple: a team of antique experts sets up shop in a convention center.
- They invite people to search their
 - attics, safe-deposit boxes, and basement corners for ...
 - their most **treasured family heirloom**,
 - then bring it in to be **appraised**.



Introduction

- The program is composed of brief, one- and two-minute segments.
- Where an expert looks over a person's treasure, searching for a **maker's mark** or **telltale design feature** that identifies it as **genuine**.
- Then, we get to watch the expression on the person's face as the **expert** declares ...
 - the item's value — or
 - if it's just a worthless fake.



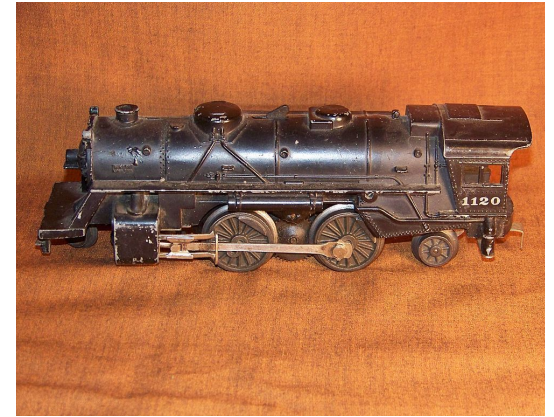
Introduction

- Many of these items have **sentimental value**, which means their owners would treasure and keep them regardless of their financial value.
- But it's still a **special joy** for the owner to learn that great-grandpa's battered old dresser is a genuine **Chippendale**.
- Worth \$4,000.00.



Introduction

- “**Let love be genuine**,” says the apostle Paul.
- As good as it feels to learn that your childhood electric-train **locomotive** is a classic.
- It's far more gratifying ...
 - to know that the person you **love** ...
 - sincerely loves you back.



Introduction

- But how can you tell for certain?
- How do you go about appraising the **quality of love** at the heart of ...
 - a marriage,
 - a friendship, or
 - the bond between parent and child?
- This brief passage from Romans reveals what to look for:
 - the **maker's mark**,
 - by which we know that we have the **real thing**.



Love is Ethical

- Again, “**Let love be genuine**,” Paul says (Romans 12:9).
- But then he says, “**Hate** what is evil; **hold fast** to what is good.”
- The assumption is that **true love** is ethical to its **very core**.
 - It seeks out and holds up all that is **good**.
 - It singles out and spurns all that is **evil**, **selfish**, and **self-centered**.



Love is Ethical

- You may never have thought of your **love relationships** as a **greenhouse** in which ethical behavior is nurtured, but that's exactly how the **Bible** sees them.
- When a **bride** walks down the church aisle to meet her beloved, not many people think of the **two of them** establishing a basic unit of Christian mission.
- But that's exactly what's happening (or what's meant to).



Love is Ethical

- When a **family** gathers around a dinner table
 - to talk with each other and
 - share news of the day,
 - few will identify that gathering as a **school of virtue**.
- But, again, that's how **God** views it.
- Those **love relationships** in which we find ourselves all have a higher purpose in the Christian understanding.



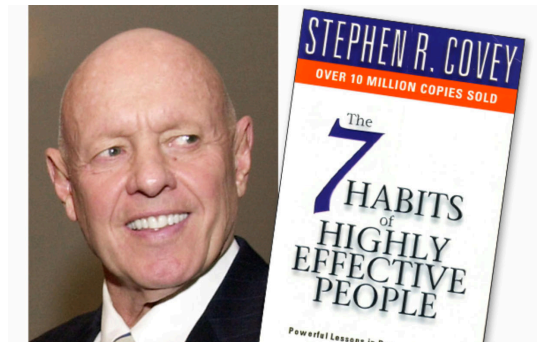
Love is Ethical

- The Greek word Paul uses here for "**hate**" is a very strong one.
- It means something like "utterly despise and shun."
- In a similar way, the word for "**holding fast**" to the good comes from a root that means "to glue together."
- God has given us marriages, families, friendships, and the larger fellowship of Christians for a **purpose**: that, collectively,
 - we may send evil packing out the back door, even as ...
 - we greet good coming in the front.



Mission Statement?

- **Stephen Covey**, the management expert who wrote the best-selling The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, had a **radical idea**.
- He believed every **community of people** — not just businesses and institutions, but even marriages and families — ought to have a **mission statement**.



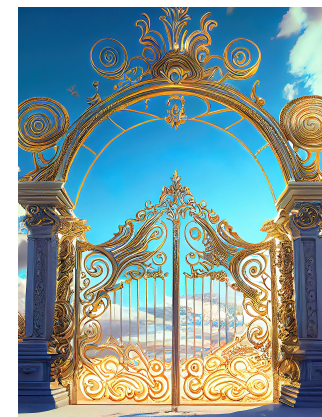
Mission Statement?

- Whether or not the **statement** is ever written down on a piece of paper, he advised that it should be ...
 - the **important thing** is that every group member knows **why** they're **together**, and
 - **what** they've been collectively placed on this Earth **to do**.



Mission & Purpose

- Your marriage, family, and significant relationship are not **incidental** to God.
- They have been **created** for a **purpose**.
- So then, what is that **larger purpose**?
 - *And in him, you, too, are being built **together** to become a dwelling in which **God** lives by his Spirit.* (Ephesians 2:22)
 - *For where **two or three** come together in my name, there **am I** with them.* (Matthew 18:20)
 - *Be **very careful**, then, how you **live** — not as **unwise** but as **wise**, making the most of every opportunity because the **days are evil**.* (Ephesians 5:15-16)



Mission & Purpose

- This is why the Apostle Paul says, “Be **devoted** to **one another** in **brotherly love**” (12:10).
- You’ve probably heard that the Greek language has **three** principal words for “**love**.”
- **Agape** is the **highest form of love**.
 - It’s the utterly **self-giving, sacrificial**.
 - **altruistic** (concern for the well-being of others) sort of **love**,
 - such as **Christ** showed on the cross.

Mission & Purpose

- There’s also **eros**,
 - the **magnetic attraction** of **one person** to another of the **opposite sex**,
 - which accounts for things like a **romantic crush**.
- Then there’s **phileo**, the **love of brother or sister** for **each other**.
- The **word** here in verse 10 is the Greek word *phila (love)-delphia (brother)*.
- So then what the Apostle Paul says, “**Be devoted to one another in brotherly love or brotherly kindness**” (12:10)
- He means we should be very **loving** and **loyal** to **each other**.

Mission & Purpose

- Paul's advice about **love** to the **Christian community** at large is just as **true** within that **special community** of two.
 - "Love **one another** with brotherly and sisterly affection." or
 - Be as bonded to **one another** as a brother or sister.
- NOTE:
 - We may choose a husband or wife, but we don't choose **brothers** or **sisters**.
 - A **marriage** may end in divorce, but it's impossible to divorce **siblings** — though some of us may wish at times we could!


Mission & Purpose

- We're bound to certain other **people** throughout our lives.
 - our blood brothers or sisters,
 - adoptive siblings, or in-laws,
 - stepbrothers or stepsisters,
 - all individual **Christians**, whom he considers brothers and sisters in Christ, and
 - whenever the church gathers, it's like a huge **family dinner table** — the circle of brotherly and sisterly love drawn ever wider.

Marriages in Trouble

- A Christian's **spouse** is included in that **collection of people** as well.
- That insight has powerful implications for **divorce** in our culture, which — we'll surely all agree — happens far more often in **American society** than it needs to.
- Even **secular psychological research** bears this out.
 - Around 55-60% of divorces, according to Penn State sociologist Paul Amato, are what he calls "**low-conflict divorces**."
 - These take place when **one partner** in a marriage simply wakes up one day and realizes they want out.

Marriages in Trouble

- There's no **abuse** or **infidelity** worth mentioning, no glaring **personal betrayal** — just a **soul-chilling weariness** with day-to-day **cares** and **conflicts**, coupled with a lack of desire to do anything about it.
- In other words, the **marriage** has become bogged down in the sheer **dailyness** of life.
- As an **Irish**  **proverb** puts it:
 - "**Marriages** are all happy."
 - It's having **breakfast** together that causes all the **trouble**."

Marriages in Trouble

- Many of these **distressed marriages**, an increasing number of psychologists say, can be saved if only the partners will
 - agree to work together in **therapy**,
 - learning ...
 - practical skills for communication and
 - **emotional support**.
- Yes, **marital therapy** is a **hard road** and may lead to conflict at times, but that should come as no surprise to anyone.

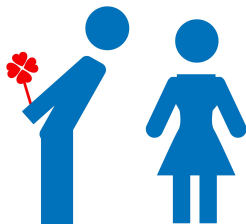
Marriages in Trouble

- The prime indicator of **divorce**, experts have been telling us for some time, is
 - not conflict,
 - but habitual **avoidance of conflict**,
 - which leads to overwhelming despair and **apathy**
 - that slowly saps the **will to do the essential work** of being married.



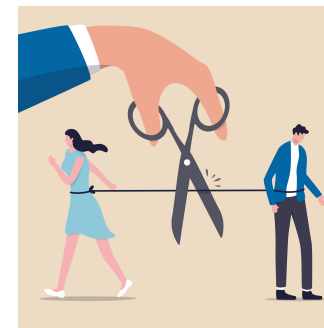
Love in Practice

- Practicing “brotherly or sisterly **love** toward **one another** with **mutual affection**” is
 - a decision,
 - not an **emotional state**.
- The simple, seemingly **paradoxical truth** is that the way to find the **love** we want in a committed relationship is to begin by practicing loving behaviors.
- We may not choose our **feelings**, but **we do** choose our **behaviors**.



Love not in Practice

- **Marriage trouble** comes when one or both **partners** feel the quality of their **relationship** starting to slide and **begin** practicing **destructive behaviors**.
 - They withhold **affection**.
 - They yell and intimidate.
 - They **put**.
 - They leave the **house**.
 - They play the “**blame game**.”



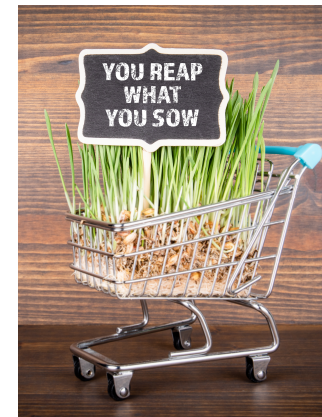
Loving Behaviors

- If even **one partner** is able, intentionally, to put such frustrations aside for a time and demonstrate **loving behaviors**, the **relationship** can be transformed.
 - Instead of **criticizing**, **listen**.
 - Instead of **pouting**, **share your feelings**.
 - Instead of **blaming**, **accept responsibility**.
 - Instead of taking your **spouse for granted**, **practice gratitude**.
- There's **no guarantee**, but it does happen more often than not: if you **practice love**, **you will find it**.



The Whole Point

- Here in lies the **whole point**, we reap what we sow!
- If we **sow** to the **Spirit**, we will **reap** from the **Spirit** the **fruits** of the Spirit.
- In other words, when we **sow** self-giving, sacrificial, **altruistic love** in our **marriages** and **family**, and **brotherly kindness** in our **other relationships**—even our **enemies**,
 - **God** does a **work of grace** in them, and also,
 - **especially** in **us** (30, 60, or 100-fold).
- This is why the Scripture says, **“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”** (Luke 6:38)



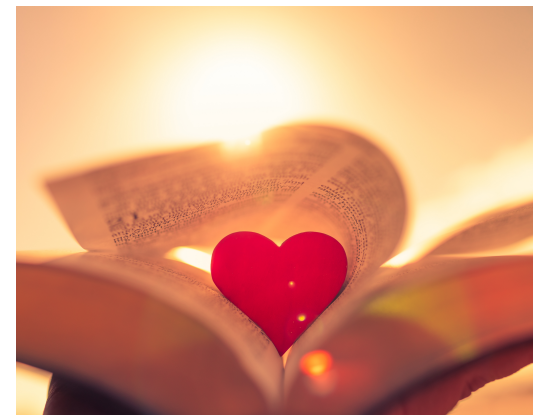
The Whole Point

- I have discovered that if I have the **fruits** of **God's Spirit** in my life, such as **love**, **joy**, **peace**, **patience**, **kindness**, and **goodness** (Galatians 5:22), I'm much **less likely** to get ...
 - involved in **road rage** or participating in **riots**,
 - **medicate** myself with **drugs**, **alcohol**, or other things,
 - **create** **drama** on an **airliner** or at an airport,
 - **beat my wife** or **kick my dog**,
 - or **say** or **do something** I **wished** I hadn't.



Conclusion

- Since **God is love**,
 - Let us **live** a **life of love** so that by **imitating** the **virtues** of the **godhead**,
 - we may be **transformed** by the **Spirit** ...
 - so that we can **run with perseverance**,
 - the **race** marked out for us.
- **Life is hard**, so let us not make it **harder** on ourselves by **hardening** our **hearts** against **God's Holy Spirit**.



Conclusion

- Sow **good seed**, and you will reap **good fruit** in your marriages, in all your **relationships**, and even in **dealing** with your **enemies**.
- Just as **Christ** died to fulfill the will of the Father and later was **resurrected** by God's power,
 - so shall we if we experience **resurrection power** that **transforms** us,
 - when we **honor** the teachings of **God's Son** and remain **loyal** to Him.
- As the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, The **goal** of this command is **love**, which comes from a **pure heart**, a **good conscience**, and a **sincere** (genuine) **faith**. (1 Timothy 1:5)
- You may be surprised, **Sincere faith** is worth a lot! **More than anyone knows!** Ask **God** (the appraiser), and He will tell you.

