



the fruitful been life

WEEK 2

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Day 8

Lovers and Haters!

“Just yesterday, we discussed love. Today, we are discussing it yet again”

On the hit radio stations there is a popular song out now called “Lovers and Friends.” Although the song is not a Christian song as such, the title is quite catchy, and it differentiates well between the two main types of people groups in high school today. To the average high school student, there are those they consider friends, and those they like more than friends. However, when a relationship goes south, whether dating or friendship, one party often becomes known as “haters.” Haters are students that belittle or ridicule another person’s actions, beliefs, etc. Sometimes kids can be called haters in a playful way, and sometimes they can be called haters in a meaningful, realistic way. Whatever the reason, the fact still remains that there are those students that are either lovers...or haters.

Just yesterday, we discussed love. Today, we are discussing it yet again because love was what Jesus’ ministry was all about and what God’s Word is all about, plain and simple. One cannot call themselves a Christian unless their life is characterized by love, Christ-like love. In Galatians 5:22-23, it states, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...” if you are walking in step with the Spirit, these characteristics that the Apostle Paul talks about should be displayed in your life.

Now I could write all day about all of these virtues, but today we are merely focusing on love. Do you exhibit the type of love you should? How do you know? What would your friends say? Would your parents and siblings say you are a loving teenager? What about those on your football or swim team? -B.B.

We live in a world that desperately needs more Christ-like “lovers” and less “haters.” Where do you line up? See the list below for help in determining where you land.

Day 9

A Joy Missing

“I realized something WAS missing in my Christian walk...true love and joy!”

I was 18 years old and a freshman at a Midwestern Christian college. Life was good... until I met Cory. You see, I had accepted Christ into my heart as my Lord and Savior at a young age. In the years following that event, I always made sure I tried to follow Christ as much as possible, even up through high school. Now when I entered college, I truly thought I had it all together, spiritually that is. I knew all the Bible stories and could even quote Scripture to you. However, when I met Cory, I realized something WAS missing in my Christian walk... true love and joy!

Although Cory had only been a Christian for 6 months, she seemingly had more love and joy in her life than I did, and I had been a Christian most of my life. Things were not adding up here. Thus, I remembered a verse in Matthew 7 that said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find..." So, I knelt down by my dorm room bed in Bowman Hall room 206 and began to pray. Finally, I truly felt God touch my life in a fresh and new way, resulting in true love and joy! After this event, I was even able to lead a fellow freshman named Jorge to Christ a few days later!

I love what Jesus says in John 15:9-11.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." I love how connected joy is to love here. We can have joy if we are in love with God. It sounds way simple, and...well...I suppose it is. We simply must love God with all we have, then we will truly be joyous! -B.B.

So here is my barrage of questions for you to ask yourself or have a friend ask you.

1. Are you truly joyous in life, or do you merely experience temporary times of happiness?
2. What makes you most happy in life? Is it a boyfriend or girlfriend, your new mp3 player, or ultimately is it joy that flows out of a love relationship with God?
3. Have you ever met a Cory, someone who shows the joy of Christ so clearly in their life?
4. As a result of the joy you have in your life, who could be your "Jorge"?

5. Take some time to review these verses.
 - a. Nehemiah 8:10
 - b. Psalm 16:11
 - c. Psalm 51:10-12
 - d. Matthew 28:8
 - e. Luke 1:14
 - f. Acts 13:52
 - g. Philippians 2:2

6. Now pray that true, Christ-filled joy would overflow in your heart and others would be affected by this fruit of the Spirit.

Day 10
Peace Onya!

“peace is tough to find”

Peace seems to be at the forefront of everyone's mind today. With the conflict continuing in Iraq, most people seem to wish it would end peacefully and just be over and finished so "our boys could come home." With over half of the marriages in the U.S. ending in divorce, children simply want peace from their parents. Even in friendships, peace is tough to find. Just the other day, I had a 12th grade girl in my office sharing about how all her friends had deserted her that day over a frivolous issue, and there was no peace to be made with them.

Alex is a friend of mine from Chicago. He is finishing his last year of college, and I get to chat with him once every so often in between his midterms and finals. However, when I do call, he always manages to inadvertently share with me his new slang. Alex is always making up new words or phrases that I think are hilarious and I soon begin using. My most recent favorite is "Peace On-ya!" He uses this whenever we are about to hang up after talking with each other. I always say, "Welp, we'll see ya Alex." Then he responds with a jovial, "Peace On-ya." It is slang for what some churches may mean when they say, "Peace be with you."

Romans 14:19 says, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." Paul is very clear here how we are to live our lives. We are to make EVERY effort to live in peace with each other. However, peacemaking is sadly enough our last option sometimes. We just want revenge for the hurtful actions that were done to us, or we are too prideful to make peace when we were the ones in the wrong. The question is, "Do you strive to live in peace and make peace with everyone you know and love?"

Ultimately, whether it is wars, our family, or friends, peace is available to all. Are you living in that peace? Maybe you try just to figure it out in your head, but you just need to experience it. Now I promise you, if you do experience this transcending peace, you too will be telling others, "Peace Onya!" -B.B.

Philippians 4:7 states "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." There is also that mysterious element of peace that we frequently forget. If you were to ask me what is one of the main benefits of becoming a Christian, I would say the peace that is experienced...yes, experienced! You must experience it, as it is almost impossible to explain intellectually. There is nothing like it. Christ simply comes into your life and provides that peace "which transcends all understanding."

Day 11

The Drive

Tardiness has always been my Achilles heel. I try and try to be on time, but it just never seems to happen. Recently it has been catching up with me. After having lunch with a local youth pastor and our youth intern Josh, I went to leave the restaurant parking lot. Of course, I was in a bit of a hurry to get back to work and was anxious for the lady in front of me to go ahead and pull out on the freeway. Well, no cars were coming so I assumed she had pulled out already. Thus, I looked left once more to make sure there was no traffic on its way, and pressed the gas pedal down as I spun my head back forward...only, to my horror did I find the lady still parked in front of me.

1 Samuel 16 talks about young David being anointed as the next king of Israel. Even though he was the youngest of all his brothers and was simply a shepherd boy, he was the one chosen to be king. He definitely would not have gone in the first round of the NBA draft. However, God chose him to lead His people, but not right away. David had to sit the bench, or, as my old coach called it, “ride the pine.” And it was not just for one season. He did not get in to “play” for years, decades even! David had to wait on God’s timing, and thus he had the fruit of the Spirit I call patience.

Ok, so don’t laugh, as you have been there too. Well, after my bumper said hello to hers, she jumped out holding her neck and screaming words you don’t hear in church a ton, or at least I hope not! Now, keep in mind, Josh was in his car behind me...or so I thought. As she was screaming and holding her neck, I look up only to see Josh driving by on the freeway waving and smiling! He had already backed up and exited another way. Josh was getting out of there! Ultimately, nothing was damaged; not even a neck, but I learned a huge lesson that day. I must slow down my life!

Our best example of patience is Jesus. Jesus always chose wisely, was not in a hurry, and never ran from town to town. For some reason, we have it backwards today. My high school kids are even busier than when I was in school. From practices to plays to games to social events, students run from one thing to the next. So this begs the question, "How busy are you?"

Would you consider yourself a busy student? Do you run from class to class? Event to event? Practice to practice? If so, you are probably running short on patience.

Take some time in the box below to randomly write down your top ten daily activities. Then, sit down with your mom, dad, sister, or best friend, and have them help you figure out which items you can cross off the list. Do this not just to clear time, but to make more room for God. Utilize your extra time to truly dive into the Word of God and spend time in prayer to our Creator. -B.B.

Day 12

Got Good?

You've all seen them...the "Got Milk?" ads. They are everywhere featuring many different celebrities and stars. I remember the first time I saw the ad; I was not sure what to think. Most often, I thought, "Why don't they just wipe it off?" But then my thinking would shift, and I would begin to wonder, "Who is the dork that is doing this ad?" Now, this would be the challenge because unless it was an extremely recognizable face, I would not know who it was. So I would resort to trying to read the fine print of the advertisement to find out who it was. Well, as you can see, these ads have stuck in my mind, and certainly yours as well. Thus, instead of "Got Milk?," I want to ask the question, "Got Good?"

Are you good? Most of you might answer a resounding "YES!" to this question. I know that I have never murdered anyone, committed a felony, or punched anyone, so I must be good right? Whenever I share Christ with a stranger, they frequently respond to me by stating that they are a "good" person, insinuating that that is enough to make it to heaven. Well, God would disagree with us. He would say that we aren't good enough on our own, and I think deep down we all know that fact. We all know that we are not basically good. Romans 3:23 states, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

So if we cannot be good on our own, how can we "Got Good?" Galatians 5:22 states, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness..." Thus, our degree of goodness does not come from ourselves, but it must originate with the Spirit. We can be good and do good and even live good, if and only if we allow this quality to overflow out of our relationship with Christ. It is God living in us that enables us to be good and do good.

I know what you are thinking now...it is hard to be good all the time. Not at all! Sure it would be if you were trying it all on your own. But thankfully we have the Holy Spirit to help us exhibit this fruit in our lives. You can do it! And not only that, you will want to do it when the Spirit is working in and through you to model and manifest this quality.

1. A GOOD HEART – Where is your heart in all of this? Is it pure? Have you asked Christ to come into your life and forgive your sins and give you a pure heart? Psalm 51:10 states, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” If your heart is pure and devoted to God, your life will exhibit the quality of goodness.
2. A GOOD WORD – I sometimes ask my friends “what’s the good word?” In essence, I just want to know what is going on in their lives; however I want to hear something positive from them. Proverbs 12:25 (NAS) states, “Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.” Look for the “good” word to speak on a regular basis to your friends and family.
3. A GOOD ACT – It is not enough to feel (heart) and say good things. You must live it out. This is done by being good to the needy (Prov. 14:21,31), to the ungrateful (Luke 6:35), and even to the oppressed (Isaiah 58:10). If you are being good to the needy, ungrateful, and oppressed, you will even see evangelistic fruit in your life. How cool is that! Others will get saved just by you being good.

So, do you “Got Good?” -B.B.

Day 13

Faith like a Child

Have you ever been around children much? I would think that a ton of you either babysit a lot or even have younger brothers and sisters. Well, in case you haven't noticed, little kids will believe anything. I remember when I was small, I blew a huge bubble with my gum and yeah...it popped! Gum was everywhere on my face. Uncertain of what I should do, I turned to my older sister, Lisa. She told me that peanut butter would take the sticky gum residue off my face. Thus, I proceeded to smear peanut butter all over my face, much to the amusement of my sister. I had been had! Looking back now, I learned two things. One, never place complete faith and trust in my sister of course! Two, children really will believe anything.

The music group Jars of Clay pinned the phrase, "faith like a child," in one of their earlier songs. In the song, the band sings about all the things we can do if we would just have faith in Christ like a child. We could move mountains, walk on water, and heal the broken if we would just have faith like a child.

Are you struggling with faith in God? Do you struggle to really believe that He even existed? Do you struggle to believe that God will really show you the right college to go to and the right guy to marry? If you struggle seeing the fruit of faithfulness in your life, I would encourage you to read these verses from the Psalms (57:10; 71:22; 100:5; 117:2). Lastly, I read the lyrics below from the Jars of Clay song "Like a Child" and journal on how you too can have "faith like a child."

They say that I can move the mountains
And send them falling to the sea
They say that I can walk on water
If I would follow and believe
with faith like a child...

They say that love can heal the broken
They say that hope can make you see
They say that faith can find a Savior
If you would follow and believe
with faith like a child. -B.B.

Day 14

Mean Girls and My Extra 20

Ok, seriously, how hard is it to be gentle and self-controlled? If we are really honest with ourselves at least one of these is quite hard for us to live out on a regular basis. Maybe we are gentle until our younger sister leaves the bathroom a mess when she is done and you have to clean it up. Or maybe you are self-controlled until someone comments on how they hate your outfit at school that day and you tell them off. Whatever the case, there are times in our lives when we are less than gentle or self-controlled. So how can we live out these qualities on a daily basis?

The Holy Spirit is the only true help we can receive in order to model these two qualities in our lives. We cannot do it on our own. We need outside help! If it were up to us, we would tell off that person that just cut in line in front of us at Taco Bell, but with the Spirit's help, we instead exhibit self-control and pray for them.

Often times we think of gentleness as being a type of soft Charmin toilet paper as opposed to the hard type that the school uses (there is a difference by the way)! But gentleness is not about toilet paper, but about the way you live and influence others. A gentle guy or girl really goes against the flow of teenage life. For a guy it is cool to be tough and confident, even almost cocky. For a girl, the world would say you are to be mean if that is what it takes to make it to the top and date the hot guy or get the spot on the cheer team. However, Christ showed us a different way to live. He was the epitome of gentleness. He could have been mean and turned the Pharisees into salt, but instead he spoke gentle words that thwarted their frequent attempts to trap him. In today's teenage world, if someone is gentle, it speaks volumes and shows how different you are...and that is appealing.

Personally, I believe that self control is the hardest thing for most of us. Whether it is with eating or writing a paper, I want to go above and beyond in everything. I have been a full-time youth minister now for a couple of years, and the job has been good to me in several ways, the most obvious of which is evidenced by my stomach. I have gained twenty pounds since graduating from seminary. Now, although there are numerous reasons that factor into this, the main reason is that I love to eat, and I love to eat a lot. Thus, combine that with the massive amounts of pizza and fast food that I eat with my kids, and you will see why I have gained weight. It has only been in recent days that I have challenged myself to lose weight, but wow is it hard to do!

So what is my challenge to you? If you are a mean girl, stop! But it will take more than just a decision; it will take true obedience to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will guide you when it comes to being gentle and kind, whether at school, home, or hanging out at your friend's house. And regarding self-control, you have to have outside help. Sure, here again I am talking about the Holy Spirit, but I am also talking about other people. My girlfriend, Shannon, has been the best accountability for me when it comes to losing weight. She asks me on almost a daily basis if I am going to the gym that day. Thus, I can see how important it is for her, so I make it a priority (of course, I also want to look good for her too as she is in shape so I can't let her show me up – ha)! Find someone who can keep you accountable, as that will help you more than almost anything. In conclusion, there would be no mean girls or extra 20 pounds gained if we would follow the Spirit and allow for accountability in our lives. -B.B.

“God, I pray for the teens reading this right now that they would produce the fruit of gentleness and self-control in their lives. Lead them I pray. Amen.”