

Week 1 – Love: The Fruit That Starts It All

The Garden of Transformation Study Series - 📖 *Main Text: Galatians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7–12*

Let's be real: love is a word we toss around every day. "Love that song." "Love my new shoes." But the kind of love Paul talks about in Galatians 5 isn't about warm fuzzies or Instagram captions. It's deeper. It's costly. And it's divine.

When Paul wrote that "*the fruit of the Spirit is love...*", he was pointing to something more than good behavior. He was describing what naturally starts to grow in a person who's walking closely with God. And love? It's the very first sign.

In Greek, the word is *agapē*. Not romance (*eros*), not even the ride-or-die friendship kind (*philia*). *Agapē* love is supernatural. It's the kind that shows up when you *should* be bitter but choose to forgive. When you stop what you're doing to help someone who can't pay you back. When you keep showing up for someone even after they've pushed you away.

That kind of love is exactly what Jesus showed us. Romans 5:8 says, "*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" In other words, He didn't wait for us to clean up our act. That's *agapē*. That's Spirit-born, cross-shaped, never-failing love.

💬 Let's Think About It

The Bible isn't shy about how central love is:

- God *is* love – it's not just something He does (1 John 4:8)
- Jesus said love is the *greatest* commandment (Matthew 22:37–40)
- Paul said it's the only thing that makes our spiritual gifts actually matter (1 Corinthians 13:1–3)

So if we're growing in the Spirit, love isn't optional—it's essential. It's not an accessory, it's the main event.

📖 A Love That Shows Up

Love isn't just a belief. It's lived out loud. Here are some snapshots:

👉 *The Good Samaritan (Luke 10)* – Love crosses cultural lines and bandages wounds.

👉 *Jesus washing feet (John 13)* – Love rolls up its sleeves and gets humble.

👉 *Stephen's forgiveness (Acts 7)* – Love keeps its softness even while stones are flying.

And in today's world?

- A single mom offering a warm meal to a neighbor going through chemo
- A husband caring for his wife through years of dementia
- A church community rallying around someone who's lost everything

This is the kind of love the Spirit is trying to grow in us—not convenient love, but committed love.

⚠️ Why Is It So Hard?

Let's be honest. We all have days when loving people feels like climbing Everest in flip-flops. Why?

- **Pride:** We want to win the argument, not serve the person
- **Fear:** What if they reject me? Hurt me again?
- **Bitterness:** That past pain still lingers
- **Selfishness:** It's easier to focus on me
- **Impatience:** We want quick results, not long-suffering love

But here's the good news: You don't have to fake it. Romans 5:5 says, *"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."* He gives us what we lack.

✨ Try This

- Pick one person you find tough to love. Ask God to show you one way—just one—to serve them this week.
- Do one anonymous act of kindness. No credit. Just love, undiluted.

🔍 Questions Worth Digging Into

Use these to spark conversation or journal your own reflections:

1. What does it look like to love people who *don't* love you back? (Matthew 5:43–48)
2. According to 1 Corinthians 13, how is love described in action—not just words?
3. Where have you seen God's love expressed through someone else in your life?
4. Which is harder for you: forgiving someone or showing up for them consistently? (Colossians 3:13)
5. If people saw your life but never heard your words, would they describe you as someone who loves like Jesus?

🙏 A Simple Prayer

Lord, Your love changed everything for me. I don't want to just admire it—I want to live it. Teach me to love beyond comfort and convenience. Let Your Spirit do in me what I can't do on my own. Let love be my legacy. In Jesus' name, Amen.