

***“Rooted in God’s Love”***

**Grow Series Part 1**

July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

As most of you know, my father-in-law is now living with us permanently. It’s been about three months or so and we are getting into a good groove of our new way of life. It is really interesting seeing the dynamics of our two cultures colliding and living under one roof. One of the funniest things in this whole experience is seeing the look on his face every time Nikki and I say the exact thing and the exact time. I never realized how many times a day we do this. Somebody will say something, and it will spark the exact comment from both our mouths at the same time. When it happens, I just say out loud, “Well that’s 18 years of marriage for you folks.” Nikki and I have spent so much time together and done so many things that we not only finish each other’s sentences, but we say the same thing at the same time.

I share that story to illustrate how natural it is to bond when you invest time with another person. More importantly when you invest time with God. It is no secret that we are to live as Christlike as possible and that we were made in the very image of God. We want to look like God, talk like God, move like God, love like God. In order to do that, we must grow in knowledge and trust of His love.

Today we are starting a new four-week teaching series titled, “Grow.” I want to take four foundational aspects of our walk with the Lord and teach four messages on how we can be rooted and grounded in love. This series is birthed from one portion of Scripture found in Ephesians 3. This is not our main Scripture today, so you are more than welcomed to turn there in your Bibles or just follow along with me on the screen:

***14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. – Ephesians 3:14-19 NASB1995***

The Apostle Paul is telling us that as believers we must be rooted and grounded in God’s love. The Greek word for “rooted” means that you are *firmly* planted, almost immovable. The word for “grounded” is a super cool word in the Greek. It actually means to lay a foundation. I love that Paul is using imagery that most people in the first century would relate to. Gardening, farming, agriculture were things people did in this time and we often see Jesus Himself using parables and analogies with agriculture to illustrate a Biblical truth.

When I read “rooted and ground in love” I automatically think of how the root system of a tree is. If you are like me and have absolutely no knowledge and experience with farming, you probably think a tree’s root system looks like this (show picture of tree with super deep roots).

Most pictures of a tree with its roots are displayed like this. The roots are typically bigger and deeper than the height of the tree itself. I came to find out this past week though that a tree's root system is actually wider than it is deep (show picture of tree with very wide roots). Most trees have a tap root which goes down deep when the tree is first growing, but then the wider and longer roots eventually replace the tap root. Here is another picture illustrating the different kinds of roots and their purpose. You see the tap root, the lateral roots and then you have these roots that are designed to go after water and nutrients.

This is such a perfect picture of growing in God's love. When we are first saved, we are exposed to a whole new world of the spiritual and the love of God. This is the time when we are to go deep with God. Everything about our lives is changing. We are transforming on so many levels. Our friend circles are changing, our belief systems are changing, our habits and behaviors are changing. But there comes a point where we have gone deep enough, and it is time to go wide. To explore the knowledge of God's love and to go out in God's love.

When we go wide, we are building a *foundation* on God's love, and it is then that we can grow tall. Paul tells us here in Ephesians we must be able to comprehend the width, the depth, and the height of God's love. You and I are invited to try and exhaust the knowledge of God's love. We are invited to exaggerate the goodness and love of God.

Love is such a funny word. In our world there are probably a million different definitions of love. Most people define love based on whatever Hollywood says. Some people have been so hurt by others and even the church that they purposely ignore and run from love – human and of God. But I really believe there are two kinds of people in our world. The first type of person is the one that is passionately seeking a greater knowledge of God's love. The other type of person is the one that is lost or confused about God's love. **It is vital that we have a solid and true understanding of God's love, because the way we view God determines how we will worship and receive from God."**

If you have your Bible, go with me to the book of 1 John. I want to teach a few things today from what the Apostle John had to say about the love of God:

***7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day***

***of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. – 1 John 4:7-21 NASB1995***

**POINT #1 – Love is a Person.**

On Father's Day we enjoyed a wonderful video of several testimonies about good dads. In all the testimonies I enjoyed watching the Arteaga's boy David share. He was so animated and so matter of fact. His facial expressions and hand gestures were very preacher like. The reason it was so interesting to me was that I can't see Gerson or Emily like that. Normally our kids sound, and act like us.

Our parents set good and bad examples for us. I think everyone here has been embarrassed when your child said something inappropriate in public and the only one to blame was yourself. For children, their parents are their standard. They first look to their parents to learn how to talk, behave, respond, express emotions. As they get older, they learn from teachers, friends, TV, and other influences. God is our loving Father and He is the standard of love. Everything we will ever need to know about love is found in God. Every aspect of love is measured by the standard of God's character and attributes.

This is why it is so vital to have a good and true understanding of who God is. If you are not fully convinced that God is loving and good, you will express that same nature to others around you. You will have more of a value for judgement, justice, truth, than you will for love and compassion. Before you can love, you must first have the correct understanding of God's love.

**POINT #2 – Love must be Presented. (or given away/expressed)**

In the Greek this passage of Scripture starts out with a powerful phrase. We read it in English as "beloved, let us love one another." But in the Greek the phrase is *agapetoi agapomen*, which means "those who are loved, let us love."

You and I were created because of love. The reason Jesus came to this world and died on a cross was because *God so loved the world that He gave*. Jesus was obedient to the cross to set mankind from the penalty of death which was sin. This sin separated us from the love of God and we were doomed to hell. But Jesus came and brought reconciliation. You and I can go boldly into the presence of God the throne of grace because our sins have been hidden in Christ. Now we can experience the love of God in our lives every moment of the day. The problem comes when Christians experience God's love, study the Scriptures about His love, hear sermons about His love, but never give that Godly love away. It is not expressed to the world around us. Christians are more known for their judgements and disagreements than being an example of

God's love. John makes it very clear here that if we do not love others, we have no knowledge of God. The natural thing in the world for the believer should be to *be loved* and *to love*.

If you struggle loving people, you are going to struggle loving God. The hatred, unforgiveness, and offense you harbor in your heart will only translate over to your relationship with God. The Scriptures say in Psalm 24, "who shall ascend to the hill of God, only those with clean hands and a pure heart."

### **POINT #3 – Love has Proof.**

Almost everyone has read or done the test for *The Five Love Languages*. I disagree because I feel there should be 7 love languages...food and football should defiantly count. If my family gives me food and watches football with me, that's the most love I could feel. One of the love languages is "acts of service." Some people feel so loved whenever their spouse *does* something for them or takes something off their list. Husbands sometimes do this incorrectly. Instead of doing something for their wife out of the love of their heart, they used what they do as proof. They say, "What do you mean I don't love you, I put a roof over your head and food on the table, look at all I do." That's not how it works. Love *does*. And what God did for humanity was proof of His love for us. Verses 13-14 say that we can know God's love by the proof. God sent His Son on our behalf and gave us His Spirit. Those two things are proof of God's love in our lives.

Not only do we need to build a solid foundation on God's love through knowledge, we need to know God's love through experience. When this Scriptures starts out in verses 7-8 it says if anyone *knows* God. The Greek word for "knows" is *ginosko* which means to come to an understanding through *experience*.

If we feel distant from the love of God, we need to do two things. The first is that we need to remind ourselves of God's love through His Scripture and what He has done personally for us. Derek Prince once said, "When you estimate the price God paid for you, you get a faint idea of the measure of love He has for you."

### **POINT #4 – Love has a Process.**

This is one of the most encouraging parts of 1 John 4. We are told that love must be perfected in us, but it also shows us there is a process to the love of God. If there is a process, then I can be encouraged because even if I don't feel like I am truly loving or understanding God's love, I can grow. Verse 12 says, *No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us*. This scripture says that if we love one another God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. The only problem is loving other people!

The Greek word for "abides" is more translated "stay or remain." It is often used in the Bible as remaining. When Jesus asked His disciples to remain with Him while He prayed in the garden, it was this word. It is not so much God's omnipresence abiding in you, it is His manifest presence.

## **POINT #5 – Love must be Protected.**

Verse 18 says there is no fear in love. This means that if we want to walk in God's genuine love, we must be guarded or protect that love from fear. We have to guard our hearts so that fear will not come in.

Jim Cymbala, Pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle, tells the following story: It was Easter Sunday and I was so tired at the end of the day that I just went to the edge of the platform, pulled down my tie and sat down and draped my feet over the edge. It was a wonderful service with many people coming forward. The counselors were talking with these people. As I was sitting there I looked up the middle aisle, and there in about the third row was a man who looked about 50, disheveled, filthy. He looked up at me rather sheepishly, as if saying, "Could I talk to you?" We have homeless people coming in all the time, asking for money or whatever. So as I sat there, I said to myself, though I am ashamed of it, "What a way to end a Sunday. I've had such a good time, preaching and ministering, and here's a fellow probably wanting some money for more wine."

He walked up. When he got within about five feet of me, I smelled a horrible smell like I'd never smelled in my life. It was so awful that when he got close, I would inhale by looking away, and then I'd talk to him, and then look away to inhale, because I couldn't inhale facing him. I asked him, "What's your name?" "David." "How long have you been on the street?" "Six years." "How old are you?" "32." He looked 50 — hair matted; front teeth missing; wino; eyes slightly glazed. "Where did you sleep last night, David?" "Abandoned truck."

I keep in my back pocket a money clip that also holds some credit cards. I fumbled to pick one out thinking; I'll give him some money. I won't even get a volunteer. They are all busy talking with others. Usually we don't give money to people. We take them to get something to eat. I took the money out.

David pushed his finger in front of me. He said, "I don't want your money. I want this Jesus, the One you were talking about, because I'm not going to make it. I'm going to die on the street." I completely forgot about David, and I started to weep for myself. I was going to give a couple of dollars to someone God had sent to me.

See how easy it is? I could make the excuse I was tired. There is no excuse. I was not seeing him the way God sees him. I was not feeling what God feels. But oh, did that change! David just stood there. He didn't know what was happening. I pleaded with God, "God, forgive me! Forgive me! Please forgive me. I am so sorry to represent You this way. I'm so sorry. Here I am with my message and my points, and You send somebody and I am not ready for it. Oh, God!"

Something came over me. Suddenly I started to weep deeper, and David began to weep. He fell against my chest as I was sitting there. He fell against my white shirt and tie, and I put my arms around him, and there we wept on each other. The smell of his person became a beautiful aroma. Here is what I thought the Lord made real to me: If you don't love this smell, I can't use you, because this is why I called you where you are. This is what you are about. You are about this smell.

Christ changed David's life. He started memorizing portions of Scripture that were incredible. We got him a place to live. We hired him in the church to do maintenance, and we got his teeth fixed. He was a handsome man when he came out of the hospital. They detoxed him in six days. He spent that Thanksgiving at my house. He also spent Christmas at my house. When we were exchanging presents, he pulled out a little thing and he said, "This is for you." It was a little white hanky. It was the only thing he could afford.

A year later David got up and talked about his conversion to Christ. The minute he took the mic and began to speak, I said, "The man is a preacher." This past Easter we ordained David. He is an associate minister of a church over in New Jersey...and I was so close to saying, "Here, take this; I'm a busy preacher." We can get so full of ourselves.