

Lesson 32 – The Character of Love

1. What is the first item listed when one has the fruit of the Spirit? **Galatians 5:22**

EGW: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Nothing but divine power can regenerate the human heart and imbue souls with the love of Christ, which will ever manifest itself with love for those for whom He died. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. When a man is converted to God, a new moral taste is supplied, a new motive power is given, and he loves the things that God loves; for his life is bound up by the golden chain of the immutable promises to the life of Jesus. Love, joy, peace, and inexpressible gratitude will pervade the soul, and the language of him who is blessed will be, "Thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:35). {1SM 336.1}

2. Who is the most important one to love above all others? **Matthew 22:37-38, Deuteronomy 6:5**

EGW: Those who would be worshipers of the true God must sacrifice every idol. Jesus said to the lawyer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Matthew 22:37, 38. The first four precepts of the Decalogue allow no separation of affections from God. Nor must anything share our supreme delight in Him. We cannot advance in Christian experience until we put away everything that separates us from God. {CT 329.2}

3. Who else are we to love? **Matthew 22:39**

EGW: The question is asked, Have I not a right to do as I please with my own body?--No; you have no moral right, because you are violating the laws of life and health which God has given you. You are the Lord's property--His by creation and His by redemption. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The law of self-respect for the property of the Lord is here brought to view. And this will lead to respect for the obligations which every human being is under to preserve the living machinery that is so fearfully and wonderfully made. This living machinery is to be understood. Every part of its wonderful mechanism is to be carefully studied. Self-preservation is to be practiced.--Ms 49, 1897, p. 4. ("Obedience to Physical Law," May 19, 1897.) {7MR 324.2}

4. Just how far does that second love supposed to go? **Luke 6:27, 35; Matthew 5:43-44**

EGW: The leaders at Jerusalem had sent out spies to find some pretext for putting Christ to death. He responded by giving them an evidence of His love for humanity, His respect for the law, and His power to deliver from sin and death. Thus He bore witness of them: "They have rewarded Me evil for good, and hatred for My love." Psalm 109:5. He who on the mount gave the precept, "Love your enemies," Himself exemplified the principle, not rendering "evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing." Matthew 5:44; 1 Peter 3:9. {DA 265.3}

5. What relationships may be affected as we express our love towards God? **Matthew 10:37**

EGW: The Saviour bade His disciples not to hope that the world's enmity to the gospel would be overcome, and that after a time its opposition would cease. He said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." This creating of strife is not the effect of the gospel, but the result of opposition to it. Of all persecution the hardest to bear is variance in the home, the estrangement of dearest earthly friends. But Jesus declares, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." {DA 357.3}

6. What are the guidelines for this love? **Matthew 22:40**

EGW: In the councils of heaven it was determined that there must be given to mankind a living exemplification of the law. Having decided to make this great sacrifice, God left nothing obscure, nothing indefinite, in regard to the salvation of the human race. He gave to mankind a standard by which to form character. With an audible voice and in awful grandeur He spoke His law from Mount Sinai. Distinctly He stated what we must do in order to render acceptable obedience to Him and . . . remain loyal to His law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). {HP 38.2}

7. What word substitutes for "love" and shows that kindness is not the same as "love"? **1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

EGW: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not

puffed up." The purest joy springs from the deepest humiliation. The strongest and noblest characters are built on the foundation of patience, love, and submission to God's will. {AA 319.1}

Charity "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." Christ-like love places the most favorable construction on the motives and acts of others. It does not needlessly expose their faults; it does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but seeks rather to bring to mind the good qualities of others. {AA 319.2}

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This love "never faileth." It can never lose its value; it is a heavenly attribute. As a precious treasure, it will be carried by its possessor through the portals of the city of God. {AA 319.3}

8. How do we demonstrate our love to God? **John 14:15, 23, 1 John 5:1-3, Deuteronomy 5:10**

EGW: Those who humbly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, to know and to do God's will, will not be in doubt of their obligations to God. For "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." [John 7:17.] If you would know the mystery of godliness, you must follow the plain word of truth,-- feeling or no feeling, emotion or no emotion. Obedience must be rendered from a sense of principle, and the right must be pursued under all circumstances. This is the character that is elected of God unto salvation. The test of a genuine Christian is given in the word of God. Says Jesus, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." [John 14:15.] "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." [John 14:21, 23, 24.] {CE 117.2}

9. If we are indifferent towards the Word, the Bible, what does it demonstrate towards God? **John 14:24**

EGW: "He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings, and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." Look into the mirror of God's law, and see whether you are conforming to the divine requirements. If you see that your character is defective, do not go away and forget what manner of person you are. Strive earnestly to overcome your faults. As you do this, the joy of heaven will fill your heart. There is strength in the Saviour. He wants His children to banish all selfishness from the heart, that He may enter as an abiding guest, that His righteousness may go before them, and the glory of God be their rearward. {GH, March 1, 1901 par. 19}

10. What action does not show our love towards God? **1 John 3:18**

EGW: He has an abiding principle in the soul, that enables him to overcome temptation.

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." God has power to keep the soul who is in Christ, when that soul is under temptation. "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." That is, every one who is a true believer is sanctified through the truth, in life and character. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth [not professeth to do] righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; . . . because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Now mark where the distinction is made: "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither is he that loveth not his brother." "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." {YI, February 15, 1894 par. 5}

11. What are we not to love? **1 John 2:15**

EGW: The sad thing in our churches today, is that Jesus is misrepresented in the character of those who profess to be his followers. Many claim to believe in and love Jesus, while they do neither. They advocate the law of God, but are transgressors of its precepts. The first four commandments require supreme love to God. Parents, children, wife, husband, houses, lands, or any other earthly treasure, whether of friends or property, are not to be loved selfishly, and thus become an idol to divert the mind, the time, the service, from God. He that loves and serves mammon, cannot love and serve God supremely. When friends and relations are loved with inordinate affection, they are taking the place in the heart where God should be. "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Here idolatry is plainly revealed, as existing in those who claim to worship God. The pure, refined, ennobling love is buried up by the love of carnal things. This the True Witness represents as a fearful loss in experience and character-building -- the loss of the first love. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent." The True Witness sends forth this warning. Mercy and the love of God are the attributes of his throne. While claiming to be the subjects of the kingdom of God, and yet refusing to be converted from their selfish love, their stern, iron will, their own perverse ways, many are constantly bearing a false testimony of Jesus Christ. {HM, December 1, 1894 par. 13}

12. What do people receive being indifferent towards God and wanting to stay in ignorance so they do not have to change their ways? **John 3:19**

EGW: Said our Saviour: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The word of God, believed and obeyed, exerts a transforming power upon the life and character. Its sublime truths, its pure and holy principles, strengthen the intellect, ennoble the affections, enlighten the understanding. How great the loss which they sustain who neglect this store-house of eternal riches. But the word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is why so many are opposed to the truths which it teaches. They love some indulgence which it condemns, and hence hate the light which reveals their sin. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." {ST, March 25, 1886 par. 8}

13. What balance are we to have when expressing love? **Hebrews 1:9, Amos 5:15, Psalms 119:163, Psalms 97:10**

EGW: Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity. What is righteousness? It is the satisfaction that Christ gave the divine law in our behalf. He bore the test on every point on which the sinner must bear it. He was tempted in all points as we are tempted, and though all temptations that it was possible for the synagogue of Satan to bring upon Him were brought upon Him, yet He did not yield in the least degree to the power of the enemy. Righteousness means being good and doing good. He was just and right. As children of God are we developing a character that is Christlike? Are we individually working daily at the trade of being a Christian, and through the rich impartation of the gift of the Spirit of God, are we making straight paths for our feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way? The lame are those who are not firmly established in the truth, who are spiritually halting, having defects of character, and needing a correct example given them. If we make crooked paths they make our errors an excuse for deviating from the path of righteousness. It is not enough to believe sound doctrine; we must put it into practice.--Ms 68, 1894, p. 2. ("We Shall Reap as We Sow," undated.) {7MR 319.2}

14. What balance are we not to try to have? **Luke 16:13**

EGW: "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." The work that is essential to be done by the sinner is here clearly defined. It is a work not agreeable to the inclination of the human heart; but unless it is done the soul is not in a condition to appreciate the purity and perfection of the character of Christ, and in no condition either to understand the offensiveness of sin. The exhortation is given, "Purify your hearts, ye double minded." While professing to be Christians, many have the mold of the world upon them, and their affections are not set upon God.

They are double minded, making an attempt to serve God and mammon at the same time; but the world's Redeemer has declared, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). By trying to serve two masters, they are unstable in all their ways, and cannot be depended upon. To all appearances they are serving God, while at the same time in heart they are yielding to the temptation of Satan and cherishing sin. They may speak words that are smoother than oil, yet their hearts are full of deception and deceit in all their practices. Professing to be righteous, yet they have a heart that is desperately wicked. {7BC 938.2}

15. What challenges may we face in loving God properly? **James 1:12**

EGW: Temptation is not sin, and is no indication that God is displeased with us. The Lord suffers us to be tempted, but he measures every temptation, and apportions it according to our power to resist and overcome evil. It is in time of trial and temptation that we are enabled to measure the degree of our faith and trust in God, and to estimate the stability of our Christian character. If we are easily jostled and overcome, we should be alarmed; for our strength is small. Let us consider the words of comfort that have been left on record for our instruction: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God has apportioned the temptation in proportion to the strength he can supply, and he never permits us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist or to endure. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Through prayer and the word of God we shall be enabled to overcome temptation. {ST, December 18, 1893 par. 12}

16. What challenges may we face in trying to love our neighbors? **Matthew 24:12**

EGW: In these last days, when iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold, God will have a people to glorify his name, and stand as reprovers of unrighteousness. They are to be a "peculiar people," who will be true to the law of God, when the world shall seek to make void its precepts; and when the converting power of God works through his servants, the hosts of darkness will array themselves in bitter and determined opposition. Satan will work with "all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." He will employ every device of deception to seduce the souls of men and if "it were possible," he "shall deceive the very elect." {RH, May 8, 1888 par. 7}

17. What is one of the main objects that draws away many into loving it rather than God? **1 Timothy 6:10, Ecclesiastes 5:10**

EGW: We are in probationary time, placed here to develop character. We are to do good; for Christ went about doing good. He gave his life a ransom to save from ruin a wicked, fallen race. Let no one who has named the name of Christ, entertain the idea that selfishness and worldliness are in harmony with Christian character. Let no one imagine that he can live for self, spend money to please self, and yet have a place with Christ on his throne. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." "For this ye know, that . . . no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." {RH, June 26, 1894 par. 4}

18. What is another object that many place their love upon? **Proverbs 20:13**

EGW: You fail to carry through what you undertake. You have not disciplined yourself to regularity. System is everything. Do but one thing at a time, and do that well, finishing it before you begin a second piece of work. You should have regular hours for rising, for praying, and for eating. Many waste hours of precious time in bed because it gratifies the natural inclination and to do otherwise requires an exertion. One hour wasted in the morning is lost never to be recovered. Says the wise man: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelth; and thy want as an armed man." {5T 181.3}

19. What do people seek after in life but should not? **Proverbs 21:17**

EGW: The prince of darkness has set in operation every device to ruin and destroy man. He has legions of evil workers uniting with him to obliterate the image of God in our youth. I ask those who are acquainted with truth, who know righteousness, What are you doing? Are you using your influence to bring into the ranks of the Lord's army all whom you can possibly reach? Have you yourself enlisted to fight the battles of the Lord? As Christians it is our work to represent Christ. We are to set an example that shall be in striking contrast to the practises of this evil age. He that is selfish will neglect to do the very work he ought to do, and take up a work that God has not given him to do. "He that loveth pleasure ["sport," margin] shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and

oil shall not be rich." "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honor." "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor. He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not." {RH, August 11, 1896 par. 5}

20. What object should we place love upon? **Proverbs 12:1**

EGW: It is not in looking away from him, and in losing sight of him, that we imitate the life of Jesus; but in dwelling upon and talking of him, and seeking to refine the taste and elevate the character; seeking to approach through earnest, persevering effort, through faith and love, the perfect Pattern. The attention being fixed upon Christ, his image, pure and spotless, becomes enshrined in the heart as "the chief among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely." Even unconsciously we imitate that with which we are familiar. By having a knowledge of Christ, his words, his habits, his lessons of instruction, and by borrowing the virtues of the character which we have so closely studied, we become imbued with the spirit of the Master which we have so much admired. {RH, November 28, 1878 par. 3}

21. With love being expressed, what shall be our desire? **1 Corinthians 14:1**

EGW: (no comment)

22. We are born selfish, but once we become born again, how does the love develop? **2 Thessalonians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:12**

EGW: How can we do this great work, how can we represent Christ to the world, if our lives are inconsistent? The divine must be blended with all our work in the cause of our Master. If Christ is not abiding in us, the Satanic will appear in our words or actions. Selfishness should have no place in our intercourse with others. We must be pure in heart, having an eye single to the glory of God. Paul manifests the most tender solicitude for his Thessalonian brethren: "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." Brethren, we fail to give a correct example to others, because we are not sufficiently in earnest ourselves. We may reach higher; we may conform to the divine Model; we may be channels to communicate the living water to thirsting souls; we may so build that neither storm nor tempest can move us from the foundation, for we are united to the Eternal Rock. {RH, December 22, 1885 par. 13}

The spirituality of many is being killed by their selfishness. Many cherish a spirit of self-sufficiency, which leads them to treat harshly the purchase of Christ's blood. Unless such are converted, they

can never see the kingdom of heaven. God says: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, . . . to the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." {ST, February 13, 1901 par. 11}

23. What is to happen to love as we grow in the knowledge of God? **Philippians 1:9**

EGW: True Christians find their happiness in obeying the words of the Saviour. They place no dependence upon worldly maxims. Their whole dependence is placed on the Source of all power. By beholding Christ, they become changed. Of what character, then, will be their speech? The following scripture shows. "And this I pray," Paul writes to the Philippians, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." {SW, June 18, 1903 par. 9}

24. What is the example set showing husbands how to love their wives? **Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 5:2**

EGW: These men and women will one day learn what lust is, and behold the result of its gratification. Passion may be found of as base a quality in the marriage relation as outside of it. The apostle Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Ephesians 5:25, 28, 29. It is not pure love which actuates a man to make his wife an instrument to administer to his lust. It is the animal passions which clamor for indulgence. How few men show their love in the manner specified by the apostle: "Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might [not pollute it, but] sanctify and cleanse it," "that it should be holy and without blemish." This is the quality of love in the married relation which God recognizes as holy. Love is a pure and holy principle. Lustful passion will not admit of restraint, and will not be dictated or controlled by reason. It is blind to consequences. It will not reason from cause to effect. Many women are suffering from great debility, and with settled disease, brought upon them because the laws of their being have not been regarded. Nature's laws have been trampled upon. The brain nerve-power is squandered by men and women because called into unnatural action to gratify base passions; and this hideous monster, base, low passion; assumes the delicate name of love. {SA 171.2}

25. In sharing the truth with others, there various tones, expressions, and more in doing so, but what does the Bible tell us about how we ought to share the truth? **Ephesians 4:15**

EGW: The fourth chapter of Ephesians contains precious instruction for the children of God at this time. We are to make continual advancement in the perfecting of Christian character, that we may be no more "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." {YI, February 11, 1908 par. 7}

26. The world loves to tease, compete, etc. with one another but what does the Bible say? **Romans 13:10, Romans 12:10**

EGW: The great lesson which Jesus taught on these occasions is thus expressed by the apostle Paul: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." The disciples were in a school in which Christ was teacher; and those who were willing to see their own defects, and were anxious to improve in character, had ample opportunity. They were constantly receiving line upon line, precept upon precept, showing them that meekness, humility, and love were essential to growth in grace, and to a fitness for the work upon which they were soon to enter. {ST, January 15, 1885 par. 10}

27. How far may our love take us? **John 15:13, John 12:25**

EGW: If the Majesty of heaven could do so much to evidence his love for man, what ought not men to be willing to do for each other, to help one another up out of the pit of darkness and suffering? Said Christ, "Love one another as I have loved you;" not with a greater love, for "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Our love is frequently selfish; for we confine it to prescribed limits. When we come into close union and fellowship with Jesus Christ, our love and sympathy, and our works of benevolence, will reach down deeper, and will widen and strengthen with exercise. The love and interest of Christ's followers must be as broad as the world; and those who live merely for "me and mine" will fail of heaven. {RH, June 22, 1886 par. 3}

28. What should love affect? **1 Corinthians 16:14**

EGW: Please read the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of 1 Corinthians. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Let us wash our robe of character.

Let us no longer bite and devour one another. Let those who claim to be Christians practise Christ's words. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men. . . . Let all your things be done with charity." {RH, October 17, 1899 par. 12}