



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC 50 Shades of Love

SPEAKER Josh McDowell

THEME The Triumph of the Cross

DATE 17 & 18 March 2018

MESSAGE SUMMARY

50 SHADES OF LOVE

Can you define love? It is difficult to come up with a concrete definition of what love is. Some define it as God or a feeling. If there is no concrete definition of love, we cannot say that God is love for it would mean that He is made of many differing definitions. Love is not a feeling either because God is not a feeling. Others define it using 1 Corinthians 13. 1 Corinthians 13 describes what love does; it is not the definition of love.

In this sermon, Josh McDowell deals with the definition of love, its importance and putting it into action.

AGAPE LOVE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

A. THE DEFINITION OF LOVE

Matthew 22:39 and Ephesians 5:28-29, 33 tell us that we need to love ourselves in order to love others. This is the standard for love. It may seem like heresy that we must love ourselves. After all, 2 Timothy 3:2 indicates otherwise as it tells us that we cannot be lovers of self. People who use this verse as support have not studied it properly. In this verse, the Greek word used for this love is *philautos*. It means to fulfil one's own evil desires. In contrary, the Greek word for love used in Matthew 22 and Ephesians 5 is *agape*. *Agape* focuses on others. Why did Jesus tell us that we have to "agape" ourselves before we "agape" our neighbour? This is because we need to nourish and cherish ourselves (Eph 5:29) first so that we will have the capacity to do likewise for others. "Nourish" means to provide a person with nutrients so that he or she can mature and blossom. Like Jesus in Luke 2:52, when we love ourselves, we will blossom mentally, physically, spiritually and relationally. "Cherish" means to protect a person so that he or she can grow in maturity. When we protect ourselves, we will be able to protect and help others to grow in maturity.

The definition of love therefore is "to protect and provide". God is love because He protects and provides.

B. WHAT WE OWE OUR CHILDREN

There are two things we owe our children – the definition of love and a model of love. One of the greatest tragedies is that people preach that we should love others but no one ever defines what love really is. Due to this problem, we allow the world to define love: love is sex and sex is love.

Social media propogates this definition which has led to many people sinning against their bodies (1 Cor 6:18) e.g. watching pornography, premarital sex and masturbation. We need to clearly define love to our children so that they do not learn the wrong things about love from the world. To add on, we need to be a model of love so that we can train our children to be right and moral. Children learn best through demonstration. Hence, agape must be put into action. Children will then be able to learn to truly love themselves which in turn will help them to truly love others.

CONCLUSION

The definition of love is “to protect and provide”. We need to protect and provide for ourselves first so that we can protect and provide for others. Understanding the definition of love and its importance is vital as we need to teach and nurture our children to stand against the world’s definition of love. They likewise will be able to love others as they mature in God.

QUESTIONS

Name the top 3 "loves" of your life. How do you cherish (PROTECT) and nourish (PROVIDE) them (Eph 5:29)?

Reflect and share the areas and ways that you love yourself and others. What are some challenges you have faced along the way?

Jesus commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 22:39). In view of growing societal and moral issues such as addictions and pornography, how can we be more intentional about loving others, and nurturing the next generation in our respective roles?