

## A Failure to Love (I Corinthians 13:5)

When, as children of God, we seek our own way above all, are all too easily irritated or provoked, act in a manner unbecoming to Christ... we are experiencing a failure to love. It may look like Martha in the kitchen fussing at Mary and Jesus, the elder brother refusing to go into the celebration, Simon Peter cursing and betraying his best friend - or whatever it is we do when life doesn't accommodate our terms - these behaviors and attitudes are born of a failure to love.

We are reminded in I Corinthians 13:5 that love doesn't put "me first". Isn't that the essence of the original sin? The root in a spirit of rebellion? Whatever you call it, it is entirely inconsistent with the nature of Christ. The rebel may say, "To Hell with you, I'm putting myself first." Jesus Christ has said, "To Hell with me, I'm putting you first." If any attitude is inconsistent with God (who is Love), then it is inconsistent with those born of His nature. Daring to believe who God is (Love) and where God is (in us) keeps us focused on the truth that Love is in us. His love which doesn't put itself first. His love which says, "I'll be for others." Getting lost in His love keeps us from "seeking our own" so we are free to love.

Paul also, says that love doesn't act out of irritation (selfishness does that!). It may be no sin to feel irritated or frustrated, but certainly could become sin if we let the irritableness alone tell us what to do next. Among the easiest of unloving actions to justify - "I was just frustrated! I was so tired! I get grouchy when I'm hungry!" - to authorize our thinkers and feelers to tell us how to act is to be led by the flesh (self-preservation) and not by the Spirit (self-expenditure). The key to avoiding failure in this area? Invite the Holy Spirit and His living Word to discern soul from spirit (Heb 4:12). Own what you feel or think, let it become your "escort" into what God says (see Luke 5:5!), swap your irritation for God's invitation to identify with His interests in the situation and by faith lay hold of your spiritual weapons - forgiveness, kindness, speaking truth in love, praying for an adversary.... Then watch love at work as good overcomes evil.

The Love of Christ doesn't behave unfashionably. This thought for Paul covered a wide range of attitudes and actions - tone, countenance, impoliteness, rudeness, indecency. For the Christian to "show up" dressed in these garments would be like attending a social event in all the wrong clothes. Maybe way overdressed, or, much too casually attired - but certainly out of place. It is Paul's way of telling us that unloving gestures don't "suit" us, they don't "fit" us as children of God. We can never dress ourselves in rudeness, meanness, contempt, disrespect and be anything but "unbecoming" to Christ. To be fashionable or becoming to Christ, we may need to filter our "options" through the grid of Philippians 4:8, be able to stamp the name of Christ on our responses (Col 3:17), or choose behaviors that only give grace and meet needs (Eph 4:19). Then the love of Christ could become our all-purpose garment, suitable for any occasion.

How about it? Do we want to fail or succeed at love?



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# GREETINGS

I have certainly been blessed to be able to "work", to make a living for our family, by doing what I love to do. My passion for over three decades has been to hear from God and then freely give away what I believe to be Truth. I thoroughly enjoy seeing "the lights come on" in someone else, whether in a one-to-one conversation, a small group, or in a preaching/teaching session.

Many of you are regular listeners to some of our teachings from CCF and various conferences through our "CD Ministry." Since I am technologically illiterate, many others have made this possible. And since this field is forever changing, we are changing. CD's are going the way of cassette tapes and we're making some changes thusly. You may listen to archived messages, download them, burn your own CD's (among other options) from the website [www.stevepettitmessages.com](http://www.stevepettitmessages.com). Most of you are doing just that.

However, some of you do not have that option yet still want the messages. We will continue to send you CD's in the mail **if you request them**. Please contact us and let us know that is what you want. If we do not hear from you in the next month, we will assume you no longer want the CD's by mail.

We appreciate your participation with us through this aspect of our ministry. Let us know how we may continue to serve you.

*Steve*

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*ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED*



# CALENDAR



## MARCH

1-3	Baton Rouge (225-769-8844)
10,17,24,31	CCF
12	Alachua Study
26	Ocala Study

## APRIL

5-7	Titusville, FL (772-563-0430)
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## MAY

24-26	Dalton, PA (607-625-4612)
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"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself, do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others!"

Philippians 2:3-4

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