

2025-11-16: Love God & Love Others (Virtuous Women Fellowship)

Parable of the 10 Virgins

Matthew 25:

- ¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’
- What does it mean to be known by God?
 - "But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him."

To Love God is the main goal of our Spiritual Life

Love God

- St Basil says people follow God out of fear, obedience or love. I still need to fear and obey God, but need to love Him.
 - “Who can please God? Either we please Him fearing tortures and then we are in the state of a slave; or we fulfill the commandments of God in hope of reward, for our own benefit, and therefore we are like hirelings; or we do good for the sake of good itself, and then we are in the state of a son. For, when a son reaches mature age and reason, fulfills the will of his father not because he fears punishment, and not in order to receive a reward from him, but because he cherishes a special love for him and reveres him as his father, he loves him and is convinced that all the possessions of his father belong to him also. Such a one is able to hear (Gal. 4:7), *Thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God*. Surely he no longer fears God, as we have said, by that initial fear, but he loves Him, as also St. Anthony said, "I no longer fear God, but I love Him."
- “But who are those who love Him? They are, so to speak, such as are like-minded with Him, and anxious to follow in His footsteps” - St Cyril (Commentary on Luke)
- “If the clear proof of love for Him is keeping His commands or His word, the opposite surely also would be true. The proof of refusing to love Him is to pay no attention to His command and to thrust aside what He has ordered as if it came from those who habitually do evil.” - St Cyril (Commentary on John)
- “So the person who chooses to live without love is not in God, instead lying outside of a relationship with God” - St Cyril (Commentary on the Twelve Prophets)

How to Love God

- Purity of Heart
 - "For the sake of the principal goal, which is purity of heart or love" - St John Cassian (Conferences)
- Repentance
 - St Ephraim "for she loved much"
- With all your soul, mind. Strength
 - Emotion/faith + Actions (see HHPS 10 Concepts)
- Discernment (St Peter)
 - St Peter Loved but without discernment. He didn't know his limits.
 - St Antony quote
- Love others
 - "Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22)
 - If I love the Lord with all my heart, then there won't be anything left in my heart to love others with.... because my love for others is THROUGH my love for God.
 - If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

How to Love Others

- ACTIVITY
 - Split into groups and each group take 1-3 of the characteristics of Love and share some examples of it in womanhood, marriage and motherhood
 - Share what the difficulty is
 - Share one thing we can do THIS WEEK to grow in love with this characteristic
- 1 Cor 13
 - Even moving mountains without love is nothing
 - Love suffers long (patient) and is kind
 - Someone who suffers long, for the sake of loving God, he endures insults against him or bad behavior against him.
 - So if I love my kids and my young child is having a meltdown - instead of yelling, I am patient.
 - If I love my husband and he is working on improving in certain areas for himself and for our marriage, then I have to be patient with his growth and give him time to grow
 - If I love my friend and she is venting to me and she keeps repeating the same thing over and over again and it's long, let me be patient and give her the chance to vent
 - Love is Kind
 - Bringing a meal to someone going through illness or stress.
 - Writing a note of encouragement to someone feeling discouraged.
 - Speaking gently even when correcting someone.

- Smiling at a stranger who looks upset or lonely.
- Love does not envy
 - He who loves will rejoice and be glad for the growth of others (spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, emotional)
 - Jonathan loved David to the point that he said to him "You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you" (1 Samuel 23:17)
 - Celebrating another woman's success — pregnancy, promotion, spiritual gift — without comparing.
 - Rejoicing when someone else is praised, even if you feel unnoticed.
 - Not feeling threatened when another servant is loved or talented.
- Love does not Boast
 - Apologizing first, even if you believe you're only partly wrong.
 - Being willing to learn from someone younger or less experienced.
 - Accepting advice without defensiveness.
- Is Not Rude
 - Mean-spirited, insulting of others
 - Not interrupting during conversations.
 - Not speaking harshly or sarcastically to make a point.
 - Respecting boundaries and personal space.
- Love does not seek its own
 - Doesn't act pushy
 - Giving someone else the preferred seat or last piece of food.
 - Supporting your spouse or friend even when it's inconvenient.
 - Serving without expecting anything in return — not even a thank you.
- Love is not provoked
 - Angered
 - Choosing not to take offense at small things.
 - Letting go of overreacting when children make mistakes or messes.
- Love thinks no evil; - in other translations "Does not keep records of wrongs"
 - Doesn't keep score
 - Do I keep score of my husband or my kids? Or my friends? How many times they didn't wash the dishes, or clean their room, or put their shoes away, or didn't listen. What if they didn't listen 7 times or even 7x70 times,
 - Not bringing up past mistakes during arguments.
 - Forgiving without reminding someone of their failures.
 - Erasing the "list" of hurts rather than storing them in memory.
- Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth
 - Does not rejoice when others fall into sin
 - Is joyful when righteousness prevails
 - Not enjoying gossip or bad news about someone you dislike.

- Being happy when a person repents or changes instead of saying, "I told you so."
 - Speaking truth lovingly even when it's hard to say or hear.
 - Love bears all things
 - Handles the burdens of others
 - Defending someone's reputation when others speak negatively.
 - Praying for your family's spiritual and emotional safety.
 - Keeping confidences instead of sharing private matters.
 - Love believes all things
 - Giving someone the benefit of the doubt instead of assuming bad intention.
 - Believing in your children even when they struggle.
 - Trusts in God, no matter what
 - Love hopes all things
 - Keeps looking up, does not despair
 - Encouraging a friend who wants to give up.
 - Believing that God can restore a difficult marriage or rocky friendship or a troubled child.
 - Seeing potential in someone others have given up on.
 - Love endures all things
 - "puts up with everything" and doesn't wear out
 - Staying faithful in prayer for someone for years.
 - A mother who is waiting for her son to come back to the Lord, or to come back to her - she doesn't reach a certain point and stop waiting. Or she says "I've waited long enough" - because she loves him. So she is patient. Even if she is suffering - she waits. She suffers long. Because she loves her son.
 - Continuing to serve even when tired or unappreciated.
 - Holding on through sickness, financial hardship, or spiritual dryness.
 - Love never fails
 - Will never be destroyed
 - Lasts forever
 - Discussion:
 - Which of these is the hardest one to practice
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