

The Goal Is Love Series # 5

What Is The Definition Of Love? Part II

INTRODUCTION

We have been looking at 1 Timothy 1:5 which says that the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. The first week of the series we looked at the word goal-tello, which means a definite or specific point or mark. It is used many times in Scripture as a root word forming other words. Words such as bring, completion, finish, fulfillment, perfection, perform, maturity, goal, paid in full, fruition, death and unity.

The next week we looked at why we are to have the goal of love. We mentioned that it was the highest goal that we could have. We looked at how it is the chief earmark or way that the church is to be identified. We looked at it surpassing value in 1 Cor 13:1-3. We looked at its eternal value in 1 Cor 13:8-13. We looked at how love never fails.

Then, we looked at the characteristics of love. We saw that you could possess love. You could know love. You can grow in your love. You can measure your love. You can measure by the degree that you lay your life down. You can measure by the amount of forgiveness you have received. We looked at how we can abide in love and walk in it. And finally, we looked at how love is something that can be put on. We can possess love, but nobody will no that we have it if we don't put it on. Nobody will be able to measure it if we do not put it on. Nobody will be able to see our earmark if we do not put it on. We need to put it on just like we put a jacket on. We can't walk around in it and abide in it if we don't put it on.

Last week, we looked at six definitions of love. We saw that it was an action. We are not to love in word alone, but in deed and in truth. We saw that love is an attitude of the heart. We can do deeds which give the appearance of love, but they may not be motivated and done in love. When that happens, we do not profit from those actions. Love must be an inward attitude of the heart that is carried out in our actions. We looked at how love is a fruit of the Spirit. We saw that we need to set our mind on things above and walk in the Spirit to see the fruit of love carried out. Next, we looked at how love is a covering for sin. From Genesis through Revelation, the Lamb of God has been covering our sins. Covering sins is not just sweeping them under the carpet, but it helps turn away a sinner from his deeds and thereby covers a multitude of sins. Then, we looked at 1 Cor 13:4-7 at how love is a demonstration of character. It is patient, kind, bears all things, is not provoked, is not arrogant, does not boast, does not take into consideration a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices in truth, hopes all things, and believes all things. It is a demonstration of God's character.

Finally, we looked at how love is the perfect bond of unity. We are all supposed to be part of the process of bringing unity. One thing that I did not mention last week is that the

word for unity in that verse is teleiotes, (G5047) which means completeness or perfection. It comes from the word for goal–tello. In other words, it is the fulfillment of the goal. The end of the process is perfection, maturity, unity.

I. Definition: LOVE IS THE GOOD SOIL THAT BEARS MUCH FRUIT.

Today, we will be looking at a seventh definition which we find in the 3rd chapter of Ephesians, LOVE IS THE GOOD SOIL THAT BEARS MUCH FRUIT. This will conclude this part of the series. Next week we will begin looking at where this love springs from. Let's read our text for today.

(Eph 3:14-19) "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 fulness of God."

A. Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church is that they would be rooted and grounded in love. You don't root things in the air. You root trees in soil, good soil. You ground them in soil. But Paul says that he wants them rooted and grounded in love. Love is the good soil that bears much fruit.

B. The church is often referred to as trees. You don't root and ground houses. You lay a foundation. You don't root and ground animals. You root and ground trees and plants. Did you know that the church is referred to as a tree many times in Scripture. In Isaiah 61:1-3, we are referred to as oaks of righteousness.

(Isa 61:1-3) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners; {2} To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, {3} To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

In Psalms 92:12-15 we are referred to as palm trees and cedars. We will flourish like a palm and grow as tall as a cedar in the house of the Lord.

(Psa 92:12-15) "The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. {13} Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God. {14} They will still yield fruit in old age; They

shall be full of sap and very green, {15} To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

In Psalms 52:8 we are referred to as a green olive tree in the house of God. This is referring to the life and vitality and fruitfulness of the Christians.

(Psa 52:8) "But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever."

In Psalms 1:3 and Jeremiah 17:7-8, we are referred to as trees firmly planted besides streams of water. This is talking about how there is a constant source of water when we are meditating in God's word. We are to be full of life and always bearing fruit, in season and out of season.

(Psa 1:3) "And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers."

(Jer 17:7-8) ""Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. {8} "For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit."

In Isaiah 55:12, we are referred to as trees that will clap their hands. It is a picture of the church that is expressive in their worship unto the Lord. We are to be celebrative and joyful in our praise to the Lord.

(Isa 55:12) ""For you will go out with joy, And be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

In Psalms 80, the nation of Israel is referred to as a vine. The Lord removed the vine from Egypt and planted them in Israel. It says that the Lord cleared the ground before it and it took deep root and filled the land.

(Psa 80:8-9) "Thou didst remove a vine from Egypt; Thou didst drive out the nations, and didst plant it. {9} Thou didst clear the ground before it, And it took deep root and filled the land."

In the book of Romans, Paul addresses the Gentiles as wild olive branches and tells them not to be arrogant about their salvation. The Gentiles have been grafted in, but the Jews are the natural branches. You graft a branch from a tree that is bearing fruit into the natural tree, so that the fruit of the tree will be much better. We, as Gentiles, have been grafted in to the tree of Israel. We are not to be arrogant, but thankful that we have been added to the tree.

(Rom 11:17-21) "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, {18} do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. {19} You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." {20} Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; {21} for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you."

C. A tree has a tap root that goes downward and lateral and feeder roots that spread laterally. So, in this prayer of Paul's, he is desirous of seeing this church plant rooted and grounded in love. Why does Paul pray for them to be rooted and grounded in love? Because he knows that love will be the perfect environment for their tap root to go deep into the ground. The tap root which grows downward is our connection with the Lord. He knows that when we are deeply rooted in the Lord, we can grow up to the full stature of the Lord. We can only grow as high as our roots will support.

Paul knows that love will be the perfect soil that allows our lateral and feeder roots to spread out laterally. Lateral growth refers to our relationships with one another. A tree's size is also limited by the lateral roots it puts out. When you fertilize a tree, you put the fertilizer at the drip line of the tree. Why? Because a tree spreads its branches out to the amount it spreads its roots outwardly. Both the tap root and the lateral roots are important and critical in determining the size of the tree.

II. TYPES OF SOILS

Let's take a closer look at soil and see what we can learn from it. There are basically four ingredients or components in soil: mineral matter, organic

Four Components Of Soil:

1. Mineral Matter: pieces of rock, 45%
2. Organic Matter: plant and animal remains, 5%
3. Water, 25%
4. Air, 25%

matter, water and air. The Mineral matter can be broken down into the following two classifications: Fine Earth Separates and Coarse Particles.

I. Fine Earth Separates	II Coarse Particles (AKA Rock Fragments)
1. Sand: 0.05 - 2 mm	1. Pebbles (gravel): 2 - 75 mm
2. Silt: 0.002 - .05 mm	2. Cobbles: 75 - 250 mm
3. Clay: < 0.002 mm	3. Stones: 250 - 600 mm
	4. Boulders: > 600 mm

As we take a look at Scripture, let's go to Matthew 13 where we find the parable of the sower and the seeds. It is really about the different types of soils and what kind of results we can expect from each type.

1. The Soil By The Road (Hard Soil). Matt 13:1-9, 18-23.

(Mat 13:1-9) "On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting by the sea. {2} And great multitudes gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude was standing on the beach. {3} And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; {4} and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. {5} "And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. {6} "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. {7} "And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. {8} "And others fell on the good soil, and yielded^a a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. {9} "He who has ears, let him hear."

(Mat 13:18-23) ""Hear then the parable of the sower. {19} "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. {20} "And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; {21} yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. {22} "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. {23} "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.""

Let's take a look at the first type of soil first. The seed was sown beside the road. The road side soil stands for soil that has been well trodden upon or hard ground. The seed was not able to penetrate into the ground and was eaten up by the birds of the air. Remember that soil has four basic components, mineral matter, organic matter, water and air. When soil gets trodden down over and over, it gets compacted. Certain types of soil are more susceptible to becoming hardened. Clay soils becomes far more compacted than sandy soils. When soil gets compacted, the air and the water are removed. When air and water are removed, the soil is not suitable for plant life. Roots cannot grow and survive in hardened soil.

A. The soil of my heart can be hardened by unforgiveness, pride and arrogance, and by the deceitfulness of sin. The soil of love is not hardened. It is ideal soil. It has not been hardened by unforgiveness, because love does not take into account a wrong suffered. The soil of love is not hardened by pride and arrogance, because love is not arrogant and does not boast. The soil of love is not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, because love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in truth. The daily traffic on the soil of love does not harden it.

B. Hard Soil Can be Broken Up By: If you find that your soil has become hardened, let's take a look at what can be done to recondition your soil.

1. Living a lifestyle of repentance. Repentance keeps the soil of your heart broken up. When David repents in Psalms 51, he concludes by saying that the Lord does not despise a broken and contrite heart. He had a broken and contrite heart because he was truly repentant of his sin. He confessed, acknowledged and turned away from his sin.

(Psa 51:17) "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

In the book of Hebrews we find that there are six foundational teachings. The first of these is the repentance from dead works. Repentance is not something that we do one time when we come to Christ. Repentance is a lifestyle that we must practice daily. Why? Because we sin daily. If anyone says that he does not sin, he is a liar and the truth is not in him. We must continually confess and turn away from our sins. Otherwise our hearts become hardened by it.

(Heb 6:1) "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,"

(Heb 3:13) "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Before Jesus came on the scene, John the Baptist appeared to prepare the way of the Lord. How did he prepare the way of the Lord? He preached repentance. Repentance is like a farmer's plow that breaks up the hardened soil. Jeremiah gives the men of Judah and Jerusalem a word in Jeremiah 4:3 that they are to break up their fallow ground. You do this with a plow. The plow of the kingdom is called repentance. Repentance breaks up and softens the heart.

(Jer 4:3) "For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, "Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns."

(Mat 3:1-8) "Now in those days John the Baptist came[^], preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, {2} "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." {3} For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, " THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'" {4} Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. {5} Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; {6} and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. {7} But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who

warned you to flee from the wrath to come? {8} "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;"

2. Humbling Yourself Before The Lord. To humble means to depress or make smaller. What is it that the Lord requires of us. It is to do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. Remember that love is patient and kind. Love is not arrogant, but humble. God commands us over and over again to humble ourselves. Humbling ourselves keeps the ground broken up. God will do it or we can choose to humble ourselves.

(Micah 6:8) "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

(1 Pet 5:6-7) "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, {7} casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you."

In nature, soil is kept loose and broken up by things we normally do not like to have around. It is kept loose and broken by insects.

"Insects such as ants, beetles, centipedes, springtails, spiders, sowbugs, mites and millipedes aerate and mix the soil as they feed on organic matter and other living things. Earthworms travel through the soil, aerating it while feeding and leaving behind a trail of their very fertile castings. The web of life is so balanced and interdependent that it is very hard for any disease organism or insect pest to become a problem."

What are the things that bug you? Is it possible that God has allowed some irritations in your life to keep the soil of your heart soft and broken up. He did that with the Apostle Paul. He gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. Paul, after three requests, accepted this as being from the Lord and used it as a positive influence in his life and ministry. Be willing to be broken up so that others can benefit from your nutrients, your gifts, your ministry, your talents and abilities.

(2 Cor 12:7) "And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself!"

3. Seeking Understanding. In Matthew 13, when we look at the context of the parable, Jesus is talking about understanding. A lack of understanding is the main reason that the soil was hard.

(Mat 13:19) ""When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."

The Lord wants us to have good understanding in many areas. Let's look at the context of this arable first.

a. Understand God's Word. We must try to understand God's word. When we read, we need to stop if we don't understand what we are reading. We need to look up words that we don't know. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us in the truth. The Holy Spirit will give us so many insights into His word if we will just ask and allow Him to teach us. We need to humble ourselves and ask our parents for understanding. When the Bible tells children to obey their parents in Ephesians 6:1, the word is hupoakouo, which means to hear with understanding under their parents. Hupo means under and akouo means to listen with understanding. Akouo is the same word that is used in Matthew 13 by Jesus when talking about understanding.

(Eph 6:1) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

In reality, all of us need to become like children. Jesus said that if we do not become like children, we cannot enter into heaven. What are the characteristics of children that are so essential. They are teachable. They are constantly asking questions and learning. A humble heart is a teachable heart.

G5219. hupakouo, hoop-ak-oo'-o; from G5259 and G191; to hear under (as a subordinate), i.e. to listen attentively; by impl. to heed or conform to a command or authority:--hearken, be obedient to, obey.

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(Mat 18:3) "and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Ask your husband for understanding. If he doesn't know, let him ask the pastor. Do some research. Look in a commentary. The main thing is that we gain understanding, so that the seed of God's word can penetrate our hearts and bear fruit. Understanding will turn hard soil into good soil.

Let's take a look at a situation in Scripture. In Acts 8:25-40, we find that account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch is traveling along the road. He is reading from the prophet Isaiah. The seed is falling along the road. He is not understanding what he is reading. The Holy Spirit sends Philip to join the eunuch in his chariot. Philip asks him if he understands what he is reading. He answers, how can I unless someone explains it to me. Philip begins preaching Jesus to him. Note that the eunuch is now good soil that bears fruit. He sees water and asks what would prevent him from being baptized. He is immediately baptized, which is the first thing a person should do after putting their trust in Christ. He brings forth the fruit of repentance. It was understanding that allowed this to happen.

(Acts 8:25-40) "And so, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. {26} But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) {27} And he arose and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship. {28} And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. {29} And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." {30} And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" {31} And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. {32} Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO

HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. {33} "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO SHALL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH." {34} And the eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?" {35} And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. {36} And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" {37} <And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."> {38} And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him. {39} And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. {40} But Philip found himself at Azotus; and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea."

Finally, in order to understand His commandments, we must be committed to doing His commands. Sometimes, we need to just obey. God will give us the understanding about why we do things as we obey. It is a life of faith and obedience. Psalms 111:10 says that a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.

(Psa 111:10) "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever."

b. Understand and Know God's Love. Our text today is Ephesians 3:14-19. Paul is talking about being rooted and planted in God's love. He follows that up with a request that they comprehend and know the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love, which surpasses knowledge, so that they may be filled up to all the fulness of God. We must understand His love. When we understand His love, we can be filled up with the fulness of God.

(Eph 3:14-19) "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 (ginosko—to know and understand) the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

It is God's love that softened my heart. I saw so much hypocrisy in the church when I was growing up. My heart became so hardened and cold that I became an atheist. I hated and persecuted Christians. What changed my heart? When I went

away to college at TCU, a young man going to Southwestern Baptist Seminary used to come and witness to the students in our dorm. I could see the genuine love of God in his countenance. There was something different about him. It was the love of Christ that softened my heart over time. We must get to understand and know His love. How do you do that? Think about His love. Think about His goodness. Meditate on the things God has done to demonstrate His love to you and to me.

c. Understand One Another. When we seek to understand one another, our hearts remain soft and pliable. When we have misunderstandings and do not work through them, our hearts become hardened. Notice in Matthew 19 when the Pharisees tested Jesus about divorce, he said that it was because of hardness of heart that Moses permitted them to divorce their wives. If the soil of our hearts was soft and pliable, we would be able to work through all the misunderstandings and problems. To work through problems forces us to be patient, forgiving, humble and unselfish. In other words, we must demonstrate the character of love. We must put on love and walk in it in order to resolve our misunderstandings.

(Mat 19:3-9) "And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" {4} And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, {5} and said, 'FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? {6} "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." {7} They said^ to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" {8} He said^ to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. {9} "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.""

When we have good understanding of one another, the Scriptures say that it produces favor. It requires work and good communication to produce good understanding. It requires commitment and character to produce understanding. It requires humility.

(Prov 13:15) "Good understanding produces favor, But the way of the treacherous is hard."

How important is understanding of one another? In 1 Peter 3:7, we find just how important it is for us to live with one another in understanding. It says that husbands need to live with their wives in an understanding manner, lest their prayers be hindered. The Greek word for hindered is "ekkopto," which means to cut down. Our prayers will be chopped off or cut off if we do not live together

with understanding. Do you want to waste your prayers? Do you want to avail much with your prayers. Live with your spouse in an understanding manner. This is written to husbands, who I believe have the greater responsibility in this matter. Women are usually far more communicative than men. It takes two to communicate, but men bear the brunt of the responsibility.

(1 Pet 3:7) "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

2. The Rocky Soil. The second soil mentioned in Matthew 13 is the rocky soil. The rocky soil is soil that has big rocks. All soil has rocks. Remember that 45% of soil is made up of mineral matter. The mineral matter is divided into two classifications and there are seven different classifications within those two. The rocky soil in this passage is talking about larger stones or bed rock which prevents the roots from going down deep. When the roots can not go deep, the plant is not protected from drought.

At our old house on Oak Hollow Drive, the builders had dumped some concrete and other stuff under the soil. Two chunks of concrete were only a few inches under the top soil. Every summer, the area around those rocks would turn yellow, while the rest of the yard would stay green. The roots of the grass could not go down deep where there was still some moist soil. I eventually dug up the grass to see what the problem was and removed the chunks of concrete.

When I was putting in our pecan trees, we hit bedrock. I had to dig it out with a pick axe and put in good soil. Big rocks must be removed and replaced with good soil. Rocks do not allow water to pass through. Rocks do not allow air to pass through. Rocks do not allow the roots to penetrate.

What are the rocks in your life that keep your tap root from going deeper with the Lord?

G1581. ekkopto, ek-kop'-to; from G1537 and G2875; to excise; fig. to

What is that thing that the Lord has continued to speak to you about that you have been unwilling to do? The Lord may have spoken to you about your finances or your tithing and this

has been an obstacle in your life that prevents you from going on. The rich young ruler went away very sad, because the Lord spoke to him about a rock in the soil of his heart. The young man did not want to dig up and remove that rock. But the Lord says that we cannot serve God and mammon. It may be a fear of man. You have not been willing to let

go of this fear of man. You keep holding on to it instead of humbling yourself before the Lord.

(Luke 18:22-23) "And when Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." {23} But when he had heard these things, he became very sad; for he was extremely rich."

(Luke 16:13-14) ""No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." {14} Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him."

Another rock that could keep your tap root from going down deeper is laziness or slothfulness. The snooze button gets lots of work, but your Bible is dusty. The little compromises here and there show up in all areas of your life. The Bible is full, especially the book of Proverbs, of instructions for the slothful man. We need to learn from the ant who doesn't need a chief, officer or ruler. We need to dig out and remove this rock so that our roots can go deep into the good soil. Love does not seek its own, nor its own sleep.

What are the rocks in your life that keep your lateral roots from spreading wider and becoming more relationally knit with your brothers and sisters? Is it pride? Is it unforgiveness? Is it bitterness? Roots of bitterness are the same thing as rocks. They prevent the roots of the new plant from spreading. They rob the new plant of the nutrients of the soil. Bitterness drains you of all your resources. You feel tired. You feel weak. You feel emotionally unstable.

In the book of Hebrews, the writer tells us to see to it that three things do not take place.

(Heb 12:14-17) "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. {15} See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; {16} that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. {17} For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears."

He says that 1) we are not to let anyone come short of the grace of God 2) we are not to let any root of bitterness spring up causing trouble and by it many be defiled 3) we are not to let any immoral or godless person among us. Roots of bitterness will destroy not only the person, but will defile many others as well. We must make sure that there are no roots of bitterness.

When someone comes to our church, I ask them some questions about where they came

from. I want to find out if there were any unresolved conflicts that need to be cleared up. We don't need any roots of bitterness coming in and defiling others. To have the good soil of love, we need to make sure that we are pursuing peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. I make sure that any unresolved conflicts get worked out. I become part of the peace process.

- **Repentance removes the rocks from our lives.** Sometimes we have to dig to get them out. We need to deal with the rocks that God is exposing and bringing to the surface.

3. The Thorny Soil. The thorny soil allowed the plant to grow, but the weeds grew up and choked out the plant. The thorns that this parable speaks about are the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. This strikes at the poor and the rich.

Matthew 13:22 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

The poor are worried about how they are going to pay their bills. They are worried about where the rent money is coming from. They are worried about the car being re-possessed. They are worried about getting further and further behind.

The rich are not worried about where their next meal is coming from. They are caught up in the deceitfulness of riches. They are trying to lay up treasures here on earth. They are trying to build a bigger barn to store up their income. They are trying to put away a nest egg so that they can become financially independent. How many of you know that God does not want us financially independent. He wants us to know that He is our Provider. He is Jehovah Jireh. God wants to bless and prosper His people, but not that we can remove our trust in Him. He wants to bless us that all the ends of the earth may know Him. It is about Him and His kingdom. We are to seek Him first and His righteousness and all those things will be added to us.

(Mat 6:19-33) ""Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. {20} "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; {21} for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. {22} "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. {23} "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! {24} "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. {25} "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? {26} "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do

they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? {27} "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? {28} "And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, {29} yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. {30} "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? {31} "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' {32} "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. {33} "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

(Luke 12:16-31) "And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. {17} "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' {18} "And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. {19} 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" {20} "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' {21} "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." {22} And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. {23} "For life is more than food, and the body than clothing. {24} "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! {25} "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? {26} "If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters? {27} "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. {28} "But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith! {29} "And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying. {30} "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. {31} "But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you."

In Proverbs 30, Agur had a good perspective on money. He asked the Lord not to give Him too little lest he be hungry and steal and profane the name of God. He also asked the Lord not to give Him too much lest he be full and deny Thee and say "Who is the Lord?"

(Prov 30:7-9) "Two things I asked of Thee, Do not refuse me before I die: {8} Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, {9} Lest I be full and deny Thee and say, "Who is

the LORD?" Or lest I be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God."

- **We must learn to be content in every circumstance. We need to do all things without grumbling or complaining.**

The Apostle Paul said the same thing. He had learned to be content whether he had little or had much. He realized that his life did not consist of possessions. His trust was in the Lord and an abundance of wealth or in tight times did not change the fact that God was His provision and that God would meet his every need.

(Phil 4:11-12) "Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. {12} I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need."

(Luke 12:15) "And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.""

(Phil 2:14) "Do all things without grumbling or disputing;"

Well, how does this relate to loving the Lord? How is this related to God's soil? John spells it out very clearly. If we have the love of the world or the things in the world, then the love of the Father is not in us. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

(1 John 2:15-16) "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

We cannot be caught up in keeping up with the Jones. We cannot pursue bigger cars, bigger houses, and more things. We need to live a simplified life. Each American's share of the national debt is \$20, 828.59 as of March 24, 2000 at 07:22:09 PM. The average American's personal debt is actually higher than that. We are a country who is living on credit to get the things we want but don't have the money to buy. What we don't realize is that the pursuit of the American Dream is depleting our soil of all the nutrients that it needs. It is void of the love of God and cannot produce much fruit.

4. The Good Soil. Most soil does not start out as good soil. In the beginning, it started as good soil. But conditions have changed on the earth. We are not in the garden of Eden. The earth and climate have changed since the flood. In most places, we must work at building good soil. We must condition the soil. God desires us to have the good soil, the soil of love and we must work at it.

(Mat 13:23) ""And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.""

God is wanting to change that. You can change the natural soil conditions. There are several soil conditioners that are available. You can mix in regular top soil with your regular soil. Listen to what Earthgro advertises about their top soil: **Earthgro Rich, Dark Top Soil** – This product is regionally formulated from high quality organic and inorganic materials derived from one or more of the following: peat, forest products, compost, manure, ash, sand or native top soil. Used as directed, it provides the best possible environment for development of sturdy, vigorous plants, both under ground and above ground.

When you break up the hard ground with repentance, humility and understanding, the soil becomes easier to work with. When you remove the rocks of sin and offenses in our lives, it makes it easier for our roots to grow vertically towards God and horizontally with our brothers. When you remove the weeds of worry and worldliness, you eliminate the things that will choke out the plant.

You can mix in top soil or you can add peat moss to your soil. Peat moss (Sphagnum Peat Moss) is a natural, organic soil conditioner that regulates moisture and air around plant roots for ideal growing conditions. It is a moss and is grown in Canada and in the norther United States. It grows and regenerates every year.

Instead of packaging these products in the Earthgro name, I have put both of these fertilizers under the **Heavengro Products** label. My packaging label reads very similarly to their label. **“Used as commanded, they provide the best possible environment for development of sturdy vigorous plants, both under ground and above ground.”**

Heavengro Product # 1 is DTS (Dying To Self). Now you are ready to add some of God’s top soil to your natural soil. The peat moss and organic matters that add to the soil come from decomposed animal and plant remains. In other words, they are dead remains. This may sound morbid, but when you take a whole group of Christians who have put to death their flesh and have died to self, you get a whole lot of good soil. When we die to self, we are raised up with new life. Our old self cannot contain the life of God. Our new man, a resurrected man, can retain the air and water that the plant needs. Our new man is the perfect soil conditioner. It is broken up and full of nutrients.

(Luke 9:23) "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

(Gal 2:20) ""I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

(Phil 3:13-14) "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, {14} I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

When you remove the rocks and roots, break up the hard ground and then mix in some good top soil with peat moss, you have some ideal soil for growing plants. You may not have all the nutrients that you need.

Nutrients can be added by organic fertilizers like manure or by regular fertilizers. Different plants require different types of nutrients. The basic three ingredients in any fertilizer are Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K). At different seasons, the plants need different amounts of these nutrients. The potassium is good for root growth during the winter. The nitrogen is good for rapid growth above the ground.

Heavengro # 2 Is Fertilizer. Now we need to add some fertilizer. There are several types of fertilizers in the kingdom. One of these is encouragement. We are told to encourage one another day after day. We need a steady release of the nutrients in our soil. The church needs lots of encouragement to grow. Marriages need a lot of encouragement to grow. Children need lots of encouragement in order to flourish. One of the purposes of fellowship is to encourage one another.

(Heb 3:13) "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

(Heb 10:24-25) "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

Heavengro Product # 3 is Prophecy. The other type of fertilizer is prophecy. There is a great similarity to the first fertilizer of encouragement. Prophecy Fertilizer's three main ingredients are found in 1 Corinthians 14:3. They are edification, exhortation and consolation. The end result is the same, the plant gets built up.

(1 Cor 14:3) "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation."

Only one other thing is required to be properly rooted and planted in God's love. The fourth component of soil is water. Water is critical to a tree's survival, especially in the early stages. According to the nursery where I ordered most of my fruit trees, the leading cause of plants not surviving is lack of water. They recommend that newly planted trees get 24 gallons of water per week. That is a lot of water.

Heavengro Product # 4 is the Holy Spirit. We need God to rain upon us with His Spirit.

His Spirit softens the furrows. His Spirit softens the soil of our heart. His Spirit gently soaks us with His presence. His Spirit produces the fruit of love in our lives. His Spirit eliminates the dry conditions and keeps us moist at all times.

The water a plant needs can also be found in the word of God. In Psalms 1:3 we are told that a man who meditates in God's word is like a tree planted near streams of water. When we meditate on God's word night and day, we get all the water that we need. Many times, our dryness is not because water is not available; it is because we are too busy, too self sufficient, or too lazy and undisciplined to go get it.

(Psa 65:9-10) "Thou dost visit the earth, and cause it to overflow; Thou dost greatly enrich it; The stream of God is full of water; Thou dost prepare their grain, for thus Thou dost prepare the earth. {10} Thou dost water its furrows abundantly; Thou dost settle its ridges; Thou dost soften it with showers; Thou dost bless its growth."

(Hosea 6:3) ""So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth.""

CONCLUSION

The Lord is wanting us to be planted in good soil. He is wanting us to examine the soil in our lives. He is wanting to recondition some soil tonight. He is wanting to break up some hard hearts tonight. If the Lord has spoken to you tonight about your heart being hard, then humble yourself and repent before the Lord. Let me encourage you to humble yourself before the person that you have become hardened towards. Let me encourage you to consider fasting and bringing forth the fruit of repentance. Do business with the Lord.

The Lord is wanting to remove rocks tonight. If you have an offense with your brother, make it right. If you have a sin habit that is hindering your roots from going deeper, repent of it tonight. Remove it so that you can grow.

The Lord is also wanting to remove roots of bitterness out of your life. If there is unforgiveness and bitterness, the Lord wants you to ask forgiveness for harboring that bitterness. You know that you have bitterness because you need to vent your pent up feelings towards the person. That is how others get defiled, through your venting. But God wants to remove the bitter roots so that His plant can be rooted and grounded in love. If you need help in cutting this root out, please come and see me. I will be glad to counsel and pray with you or schedule you for an appointment for more extended ministry.

Some of you realize that it has been a long time since you were fertilized and encouraged. You need regular encouragement. You need to get plugged in to a local church where you

will be fed and encouraged on a regular basis. You need other Christians to lift you up. You have tried to do it on your own, but you have been dry. You need to have the regular encouragement of others. You need to fellowship with the Lord so that His Spirit can water you.

Let's pray.

The Goal Is Love Series # 5

What Is The Definition Of Love? Part II Eph 3:14-19

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- The Goal Of Love
- Why The Goal Of Love
- Forgiveness, The Hallmark Of Love
- Characteristics Of Love
- Definition Of Love, Part I

Definition # 7: Love is the _____ that bears much fruit. Eph 3:14-19

A. Paul’s prayer is that we be _____ and _____ in love. Eph 3:14-19

B. The church is often referred to as _____. Isa 61:1-3, Psa 92:12-15, Psa 52:8, Psa 1:3, Jer 17:7-8, Isa 55:12, Psa 80:8-9, Rom 11:17-21

C. A tree has a _____ root that goes downward and _____ roots that spread horizontally.

1. The Soil By The Road (Hard Soil). Matt 13:1-9, 18-23.

A. The Hardening Of The Soil. The soil of my heart can be hardened by: _____, _____ and arrogance, and by the deceitfulness of _____.

B. Hard Soil Can Be Broken Up By:

1. Living a lifestyle of _____. Psa 51:17, Heb 6:1, Heb 3:13, Jer 4:3, Mat 3:1-8

2. _____ Yourself Before The Lord. Micah 6:8, 1 Pet 5:6-7, 2 Cor 12:7

3. Seeking _____. Mat 13:19

a. Understand God’s _____. Eph 6:1, Eccl 4:13, Mat 18:3, Acts 8:25-40, Psa 111:10

b. Understand and Know God’s _____. Ephesians 3:14-19

c. Understand _____. Mat 19:3-9, Prov 13:15, 1 Pet 3:7

2. The Rocky Soil. Luke 18:22-23, Luke 16:13-14, Heb 12:14-17

- Repentance removes the rocks from our lives.

3. The Thorny Soil. Matthew 13:22, Mat 6:19-33, Luke 12:16-31, Prov 30:7-9, Phil 4:11-12, 1 John 2:15-16, Phil 2:14

- We must learn to be _____ in every circumstance.

4. The Good Soil

Heavengro Product # 1 is _____. Luke 9:23, Gal 2:20, Phil 3:13-14

Heavengro Product # 2 is _____. Heb 3:13, Heb 10:24-25

Heavengro Product # 3 is _____. 1 Cor 14:3

Heavengro Product # 4 is _____. Psa 1:3, Psa 65:9-10, Hos 6:3

The main reason most plants don’t survive is lack of _____.

Applications for my life:

Four Components Of Soil:

1. Mineral Matter: pieces of rock, 45%
2. Organic Matter: plant and animal remains, 5%
3. Water, 25%
4. Air, 25%