

Teaching Faith and Discipleship

Discipleship as the Imitation of Christ
Teaching the Word, Encouraging Faith
Sons of God Expressing Dominion Creativity

I. Discipleship as the Imitation of Christ

At Northgate Community Church we define discipleship in its most elemental form as **THE IMITATION OF CHRIST**. This speaks of the fact of Christian discipleship and involves the teacher role in our midst.

*“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” “You became **IMITATORS OF US AND OF THE LORD**” (Eph. 5:1, 2; 1 Thess. 1:6, Compare with Matt. 11:11, 12, 25-3).*

Discipleship is the central command of the Great Commission as spoken by Christ: Go and make disciples of all nations! The essence of discipleship is making Jesus Christ the Lord of my heart and life, seeking to obey his commands faithfully and completely, and presenting witness to an ever-increasing circle of people about the clear biblical terms of the Kingdom of God. It is our desire to see the Gospel of Jesus Christ carried to the whole world, beginning at our own Jerusalem.

We believe in both a moral personal life and an ordered family life as priority in our discipleship to Christ. The development of basic Christian character is modeled after that of Christ, whose whole life was lived to obey the Father and whose lifestyle was filled with grace and truth. We seek to unlearn worldly patterns and to restructure life according to biblical patterns and teaching. We desire to raise up effective, involved, loving husbands; wives who are diligent and who honor their husbands; and children who are obedient to their parents and who are pursuing the things of God.

II. SON: To Function in Dominion Creativity

The goal of discipleship is to grow from being a child of God to being a son of God. As a community of discipleship, we seek to pursue what it means to be sons and daughters of God. We call this the covenant principle of SON that we define as Dominion Creativity.

As disciples in God's House (*oikos*), we desire to know what it means to be the manifest "sons" (*huios*) of God, with each and every one by intent becoming a "son over the household" (*huios oikos*) as seen in Heb 3:1-6.

*Heb 3:1-6 – "1Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as **Moses also was faithful in all His house**. 3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. 5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, 6 but **Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are** if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end."*

Dominion Creativity may be defined as, "All of life finds on-going purpose in having a future to invest in, representing the ability to pass on our faith and heritage to our children and our children's children."

The history of our church has been that we emphasize a core belief that God has called us all to be conscious "disciples" of Christ Jesus. We believe the only kind of Christian life that amounts to much is one in which we embrace the disciplines of the heart and live as those who internalize and express the beatitudes and mission of Jesus (Mt 5:3-16).

As a community of disciples, we honor the role of those who function as "teachers" and who are committed to "teaching" disciples to obey all things Christ commanded the original disciples or apostles.

Matt 28:19-20 – "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." NKJV

A discipleship community is a community in which the predominant tone is not one of a mere gathering of attendees, but a community of committed disciples, each creatively exercising dominion in life, family, marriage and the Kingdom of God.

III. Relational Discipleship

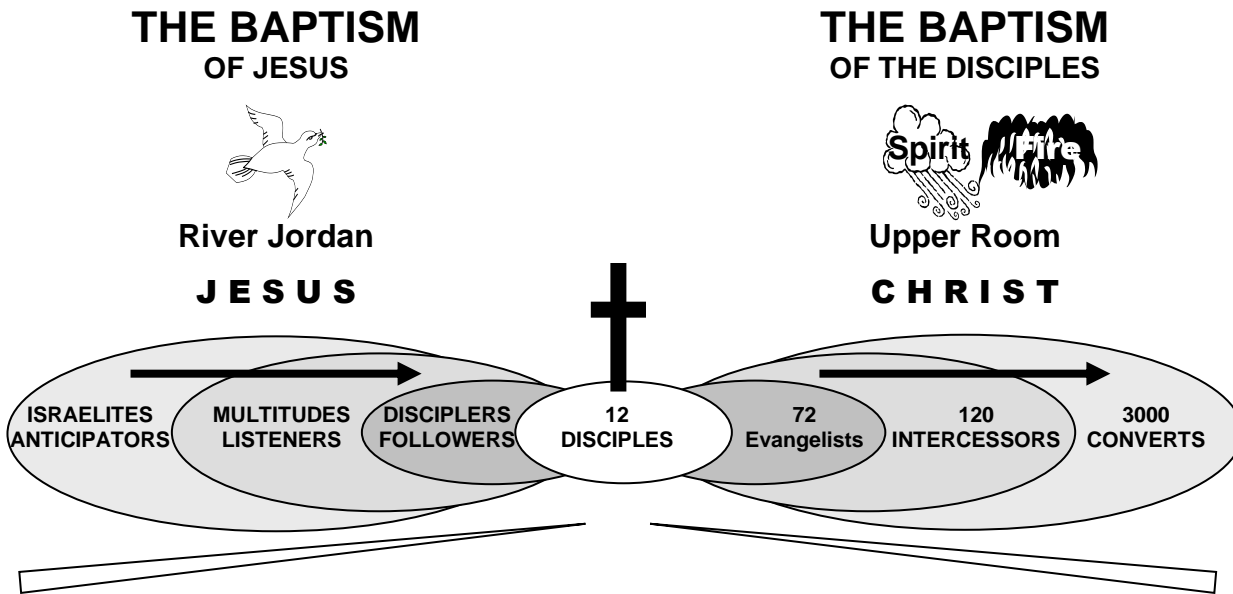
What does it mean to enter into discipleship to Jesus Christ? Isaiah the prophet spoke of discipleship.

Isaiah 8:16, 20 - "Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples . . . To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this work, they have no light of dawn."

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus Christ; an “**apprentice**” who learns by following another. Those who believed in Jesus and obeyed His teaching were called “**disciples.**” True discipleship is discovered in genuine devotion to Christ. To be devoted means set apart, wholly given over, and dedicated for a particular use.

Discipleship Is Ministry!
Ministry Is Discipleship!

Discipleship is essentially the backbone of all ministries of the church. Jesus said, “**Go make disciples!**” Discipleship is a responsibility that belongs to all of us, to the entire church, to all its members.



IV. Discipleship Is Central to Church Ministry

What does it mean to cultivate true disciples? Jesus' mission statement in Matthew 28:19-20 is our starting point. All of us are obligated to be a part of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Discipleship was the central plank of Jesus' strategy to reach people and train his followers to grow to **maturity in Christlikeness**.

*Matt 28:19-20 - "All authority (Greek, exousia) in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, **go and make disciples** (Greek: matheteusate) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching (Greek: didaskontes) them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age. Amen."*

A. The Meaning of "Authority." The word "authority" is the Greek *exousia*. It is a combination of two root ideas: *ek*, meaning "origin, motion out of, from my existence,"¹ plus *ousia*, which means, entity, essence, substance, nature.² Among other things, **exousia** means privilege, token of control, delegated influence; and at its basic meaning, the right to operate out of Christ's indwelling being and/or to operate from one's inner being. Therefore, *exousia* is **authority that flows out of one's essence or being, and which is fully genuine and true to one's self**. It is authority that arises out of the genuineness of the inner heart and life that is in right relationship with God. The Latin parallel word is "jurisdiction," from "*jus*" law, and "*dico*" to say, that is, to declare the law, from which came the idea that authority is the "right to act, rightful power, dominion, rule over all things." From this we may conclude, we have authority to implement what Jesus has asked us to do.

B. Operating Out of One's Being – The Disciplines of the Heart. God is the "I AM that I AM" (Ex 3:14) who spoke to Moses. Jesus was the "I AM," the incarnation of God, the one whose life was a reflection of God's life exactly (Heb 1:1-3). Each and every believer who reflects a life that "partakes of God's divine nature" (2 Pet 1:3-4) and lives in the power of "Christ in us the hope of glory," will experience what it means to be a full human "being," as in, "I am a child of God, growing in sonship."

Jesus in Matthew 5:1-10 spoke of eight beatitudes of the heart, characteristics of a godly disciple of Christ. The beatitudes as taught by Jesus reflect faith and maturity.

Blessed are...

1	The Poor in Spirit, v.3	Humility	Spiritual Inadequacy
2	Those Who Mourn, v.5	Brokenness	Spiritual Contrition
3	The Meek, v.5	Submission	Spiritual Strength
4	Those Who Hunger & Thirst, v.6	Emptiness	Spiritual Appetite

¹ Biblesoft, NT: [NT:1537](#) **ek**, a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence action or motion proceeds), from, out (of place, time, or cause; literal or figurative; direct or remote), plus, **eimi**, the first person singular present indicative; a prolonged form of a primary verb; I exist, I Am.

² Biblesoft, NT:3776_ **ousia**; gen. *ousias*, substance, being, which is the pres. part. fem. of *eimi*, to be.

5	The Merciful, v.7	Forgiveness	Spiritual Compassion
6	The Pure in Heart, v.8	Holiness	Spiritual Singleness
7	The Peacemakers, v.9	Harmony	Spiritual Oneness
8	The Persecuted, v.10	Testimony	Spiritual Righteousness
9	The Salt of the Earth, v.13	Affecting	Spiritual Courage
10	The Light in the World, v.14	Influence	Spiritual Illuminators

C. The Meaning of “Make Disciples.” The word for “make disciples” is from *mathetes* meaning “a learner”; note the root word “math” indicating “thought accompanied by endeavor” (Vines Expository Dictionary, p. 171). Note: Math is the discipline of numbers, the exact discipline of numbers.

Acts 9:36 – “At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.” Tabitha was a female disciple in Joppa, the word for disciple being *mathetria*.

John 11:16 – Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” Here a “fellow disciple” was called a *summathetes*.

Matthew 27:57 – “Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.” Here the intransitive, passive voice simply refers to a disciple as a person.

Matthew 28:19 – “Make disciples” is a transitive, active voice. Matt 13:52 talks about those who have been “instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven,” and Acts 14:21 about the need to “strengthen the disciples.”

John 8:30-32 – “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’” Here a “disciple” is not only a pupil, but one who abides in the truth and embraces freedom.

V. Jesus’ Pattern of Discipleship Defined

A. “Follow Me” Defined. Jesus invited people to follow him. “Follow me” in Mark 2:14 comes from the Greek *akoloutheo* and means:

1. To walk the same road **COMPANIONSHIP**
2. To follow one who precedes **CONFORMATION**
3. To follow as a life habit **COMMITMENT, CONSECRATION**

Some of Jesus’ words were: “Come and see,” “come, follow Me,” “come, I will make you fishers of men,” “come, take my yoke and learn of me,” “come, be with me,” “come, be a disciple,” and “he named them apostles.”

B. Essential Aspects of Making Disciples. The following elements are the basics of developing disciples in small group ministry.

1. To be equipped, one needs an equipper. Teaching that is edification and equipping involves an “inner heart connection” between the equipper (discipler) and the equipped (disciple).

2. Discipleship involves more than a mere external transfer of information, doctrine and skills under capable direction, although it does involve some of that, as seen in the fact that Paul the Apostle gave injunctions and encouragement.

3. Discipleship involves an environment of relationship (birthing, mothering, fathering, and brothering) in order that all may be growing and developing in an atmosphere of family and spiritual truth.

C. Seven Radical Commitments of a Biblical Disciple

Jesus would allow no tolerance for weak, undisciplined double-mindedness in those who claimed to follow him. He gave seven radical commitments of a biblical disciple.

1. Kingdom Priority (GOD): a disciple has **supreme love** for God and His glory, putting Christ ahead of self, family, friends, possessions (Lk 14:23-33).

2. Bearing Fruit (MAN): a disciple is **completely committed** to the goal of fruitfulness as a disciple, the result of abiding in Christ (Jh 15:7).

3. Holding Truth (LAW): a disciple with **unswerving allegiance** to Christ’s teachings on spirituality, making them a guide for his path (Jh 8:31).

4. Counting the Cost (VOW): a disciple **radically pursues** Christ within the context of team and community (Lk 14:28-33; Mk 3:13-19; Lk 18:12).

5. Denying Self (SON): a disciple **manifests sonship** by following Christ, taking up the cross, and denying self (Mt 16:24; Rom 8:19).

6. Servant Love (WAY): a disciple demonstrates a **fervent love** for all who belong to Jesus Christ, loving them as Christ loves. John 13:34-35.

7. Reproducing Life (END): a maturing disciple becomes a **disciple maker**, developing a life-long pledge to obey Christ’s commission (Mt 28:19).

VI. Discipleship Is a Four-Generation Process

Ministry is to be passed on from one person to another person; from one generation to another generation; from one sheep to another sheep. Following Christ is a process of growth. Discipleship is a process of helping people to grow.

A. Abraham's Four-Generation Model

Abraham and his descendents illustrate a trans-generational transfer of faith and heritage. They were so famous that Yahweh God became known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Joseph had twelve sons who produced the twelve tribes of Israel. Note Abraham's four generations.

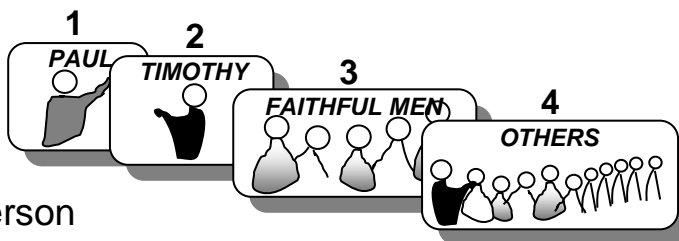
First Generation: Abraham
Second Generation: Isaac
Third Generation: Jacob, renamed Israel
Fourth Generation: Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob

B. The Apostle Paul Taught a Four-Generation Discipleship Process

2 Tim 2:1-2 - "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses (marturoi, from martyr, "witness" Acts 1:6), entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

FOUR GENERATIONS:

First Generation: Paul
Second Generation: Timothy
Third Generation: Reliable Person
Fourth Generation: Others



C. Jesus Modeled a Four-Generation Discipleship Process. The Son of God practiced a four-generational transfer of discipleship:

John 17:1-23 - "**Father**... glorify your **Son**, that your Son may glorify you. You granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him... I have brought you glory by completing the work you gave me to do. I have revealed you to **those** whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They know with certainty that I came from you and they believed that you sent me. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for **those** who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."

Jesus' Four Generations:

First Generation:	God the Father
Second Generation:	Jesus Christ the Son
Third Generation:	Twelve Disciples
Fourth Generation:	Others Who Believe through their Words

GOD

"Father, glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. You granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:1).

JESUS

"I have brought you glory by completing the work you gave me to do" (vs 4).
"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word" (vs 6).

DISCIPLES

"Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They know with certainty that I came from you and they believed that you sent me" (v-8).

OTHERS

"My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all others may be one. Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me" (vs 20-23).

D. Notice the Pattern of Peter and John

The apostles close to Jesus also taught a four-stage process of spiritual growth. This pattern of generations of faith is reinforced by observing the language used by Peter and by John the beloved disciple.

1. First Stage of New Creation Life: INFANTS

1 Pet 2:1 -- "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

1 Cor 3:1 -- "I could not address you as spiritual (pneumatika), but as worldly (sarx) mere infants (nepious) in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready."

2. Second Stage of New Creation Life: CHILDREN

1 John 2:12,13b -- "I write to you dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father."

3. Third Stage of New Creation Life: YOUNG MEN

1 John 2:13b,14b -- "I write to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

4. Fourth Stage of New Creation Life: FATHER

1 John 2:13a,14a -- "I write to you fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you fathers because you have known him who is from the beginning."

VII. Welcoming People into the Local Church

Discipleship occurs best in the context of relationships. Small group flock gatherings allow for the horizontal fellowship, for believers to comingle in an environment of growth.

First Stage: ARRIVING NEWCOMERS. A new believer (immature in spiritual matters) is "infant" to the things of Christ and the Kingdom. And new church members are being introduced to the church.

Second Stage: PARTICIPATING BELIEVERS. A growing, participating believer is able to be part of the ministry, contacting and reaching out to touch others and help them come into the relationships of the church.

Third Stage: DEVELOPING DISCIPLES. A committed, developing disciple is able to help in reaching out and ministering to others. They are involved in discipling others, seeking to lead them to Christlikeness.

Fourth Stage: COMMITTED SERVANTS. These individuals are characterized by commitment and evidence mature Christ-likeness; they become involved in leadership and as lay pastors in home groups, plus.

VIII. Discipleship: The Disciplines of the Heart

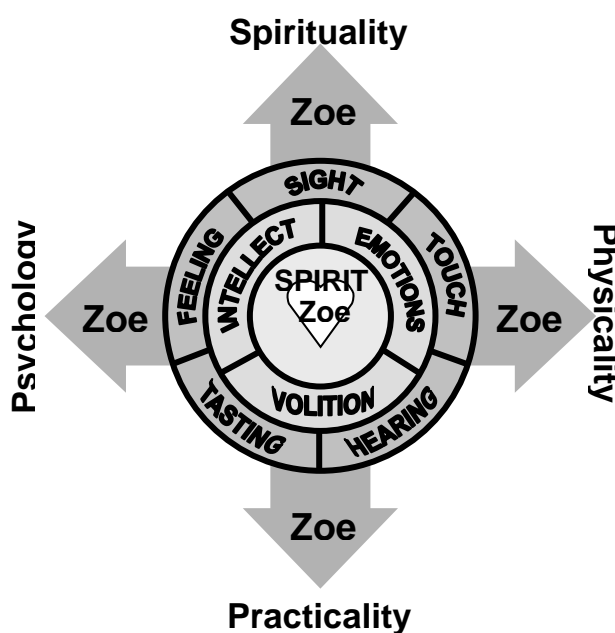
I Peter 1:5-11 is a list of various disciplines of the heart that are involved in growth in Christlikeness. "Faith" (Greek: *pistis*) is a word that summarizes the key and primary attitude of a disciple of Christ Jesus. Faith is the presence of mind to agree with the mind of Christ. Faith opens the door to the idea of salvation and is the trigger of each and every aspect of salvation. Faith has to do with the fact that our life as believers must have a "grace-focus," not a "law-legalism-focus." Faith has the quality of unquestionable certainty, assurance, and confidence (I John 3:21-22). Faith focuses on the promises of God (II Peter 1:4). Grace is the sum total of God's essence; His graciousness in nature; His divine mercy towards our sin; His way of relating to mankind. Faith is initiated by repentance and sustained by a life-style of repentance, the forever changing (Gk: *metanoia, metanoeo*).

Step One: Goodness - KJ: *virtue*: Inner Excellence

Goodness was a value well-respected and deemed as desirable in ancient culture. This word means excellence, to operate in the realm of efficient excellence, to do all things with excellent goodness. When God created the world, he stated after His acts of creation, "It was good." Goodness, virtue, and excellence are part of God's nature (Phil. 4:8). We enjoy God's goodness when we live out of His ZOE, zestful life, what Jesus called the "abundant life" (Jh 10:10), or "Life in the Spirit."

Step Two: Knowledge - Gk: *ginosis*: Personal Wisdom

Knowledge has to do with facts, what to do in given Jesus said, "Take my yoke, and and you will find rest for your 11:28). "It is good for a young the yoke in his youth" (Lam. Ecclesiastes 5:14, 15 speak of truth that without the yoke and is as loose as the winds. "Study yourself approved unto God" (II One of the prophets declared, are being destroyed for lack of



practical situations. *learn of me, soul" (Mt. man to bear 3:24). the practical discipline, life to show Tim. 3:15). "My people knowledge."*

Step Three: Self-control - Gk: *egkratieia*: Moral Freedom

Moral freedom, stable character and self-control (KJV: temperance) have the idea of temperance, or of the control of one's self, where reason contends with passion and

prevails. It is the discipline and power to become what we ought to be. It is the ability to take a grip on one's self. We need realism in biblical ethics. We do not need "Pollyanna" views where everything always works out in the end – "and they lived happily forever after." We need masculinity and femininity with morality, control of bodily appetites, servant-hood focus, and defining purpose in life accompanied by disciplined prayer and fasting. The world culture desires freedom to sin; kingdom culture desires freedom from sin.

Step Four: Perseverance - Gk: *hupomome*: Perseverance

The Greek word *hupomome* means to bear under the load. It has the idea of steadfastness; steadfastness in times of trouble and crisis. It speaks to the need for endurance. Recognizing and offsetting sin patterns moves one forward in ever-increasing light (Proverbs 4:18, 19). This is called the living "*faith-rest*" life as in Hebrews 4. This person will express a calm mental attitude in his or her approach to life. Running the race of life (Hebrews 12:1, 2), this one has learned to do it without sweat, so to speak, and to rest in God. The Old Testament commanded the priests to wear linen clothes so they would not sweat in the presence of God, but would be totally relaxed and in a state of non-perspiration. Steadfast endurance is an active persistence, looking toward a goal.

Step Five: Godliness - Gk: *eusebeia*: Serene Responses

Literally, *eusebeia* means "*to be devout.*" This refers to practicing godly responses. Godliness is to become like God. It is handling irritations effectively, learning to cope with every situation without frustration. I Tim 6:3 speaks of doctrine according to godliness. Titus 1:3 speaks of truth which is in accord to godliness. I Tim 3:16 speaks of the mystery of godliness, which is embodied in Christ Jesus. Prov 14:30 suggests that a relaxed attitude lengthens a person's life.

Step Six: Brotherhood - *philadelphia*: Affectionate Friendship

This step of growth focuses on love of the brethren. Brotherly love is "*love*" (*phileo*) plus "*brother*" (*adelphos*). On the one hand this means achieving meaningful friendships on four levels, from the lesser to the greater: 1) mere acquaintance → 2) casual friends → 3) close friendship → 4) intimate friendship.

On the other hand, this means avoiding destructive relationships (I John 3:10-24), all the way from the most negative to the positive ability to act like a Christian. 1) murder (most destructive) → 2) hatred (destructive) → 3) indifference (somewhat destructive) → 4) Christian love (non-destructive).

Step Seven: Love - Greek: *agape*: Self-Denying Love

Basically, love is an expression of one's spirit, and spirituality is the capacity to love -- to experience God's love and to express God's love to others. These are the two great commands that Moses and Jesus taught. The result of this style of life will be the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.

