



LESSON THREE

SPIRIT OF LOVE : LOVING NEIGHBOUR

Where the Spirit is moving, love for God, always, always, always overflows in love for neighbour. According to Jesus, our neighbour isn't just the person who is like us, the person who likes us or the person we like. Our neighbour is anyone and everyone – like us or different from us, friend or stranger – even enemy.

As Peter learned in his encounter with Cornelius, the Spirit wants to break down walls of prejudice and hostility so that we stop judging **us** as clean and **them** as unclean, opening the way for strangers and enemies to become neighbours, friends, family.

Read Acts 10:1-48

Were you ever taught that same is safe and different is dangerous?

Driven by that belief, our ancestors spread out across the world, each tribe staking out its own territory, each guarding its borders from an invasion by others, each trying to expand its territory whenever possible, each driving others farther and farther away. No wonder our history is written in blood, wars, conquests, invasions, revolutions and terrorism.

Eventually, because the earth is a sphere, our dispersing tribes had to come full circle and encounter each other again. That is our challenge today. We must find a new approach, make a new road, pioneer a new way of living as neighbours in one community, as brothers and sisters in one family of creation.

Paul says – in Christ alone we are one body and our differences are gifts, not threats, to one another. The Holy Spirit has given each one of us differing gifts.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

You see we don't all have to wear the same paint and feathers, speak the same language, cook with the same spices, and celebrate the same religious holidays, we just need a new kind of personal and social fuel. Not fear but love. Not prejudice but openness. Not supremacy but service. Not inferiority but equality. Not resentment, but reconciliation. Not isolation but connection. Not the spirit of hostility but the Holy Spirit of hospitality.

Faith communities at their best are Spirit-schools of love, engaging everyone, from little children to great-grandparents, in lifelong learning.

In the School of the Spirit, everyone majors in love.

But love remains a generality, it's just a word. That's why the New Testament is serious about translating love into practical, specific, concrete and down-to-Earth action.

Because each of us has something to give and much to receive, the term **one another** keeps popping up on page after page of the New Testament

These "one-another" tell us what the prime directive – **love on another** – looks like in action.

And we can all love on another through our belief in the truth of Jesus' sacrifice for us which results in the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling our hearts.

For all of us who want to be part of the movement of God's Spirit in our world, there is no more important and essential pursuit than love. That's why we walk this road. That's why we seek to improve our fluency and grace in **one-anothering**, especially with people who seem very different from us.

Engage: What on thought or idea from today's lesson intrigued, provoked, disturbed or challenged you?

Recall a time when someone affirmed one of your unique gifts or abilities and when you appreciated the unique gifts or abilities of someone else.

Activate: Take a few minutes with each person around you to identify and affirm some gifts or virtues you see in them.

Meditate: In silence, simply hold the term "one another" before God. Open yourself to the depths of meaning in this beautiful term.