

Topic 13: Love *The Hallmark of a Follower of Jesus*

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35

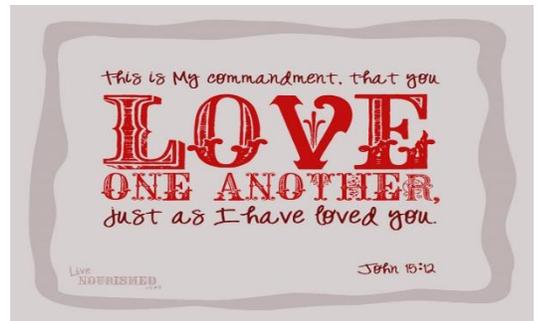
The Disciple of Jesus needs to know certain things about the Bible, God (the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost), and the Church

What's the best way to show people you follow Jesus?

Love in the Bible

Christ called his disciples to love one another – Love is our calling card. Loving others, even our enemies, is the best case we could *ever* make for the truth of the gospel.

In Mark 1, Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will *make you become* fishers of men." Christ is saying, "Let me change you." Discipleship is more than learning certain truths and participating in various "Christian" activities. Discipleship means becoming like Jesus. It means striving to see his character begin to form in our own lives. That character begins and ends with love.



The primary Old Testament Hebrew words translated "love" are *ahab* and *chesed*.

Ahab, typically means "to desire, delight in, or breathe after" someone or something (as in longing for something). When describing male-female, husband-wife relationships the word may have sexual connotations. However, it is also used to describe:

- Parent-child relationships (Genesis 22:2)
- In-law relationships (Ruth 4:15)
- A servant's love for his master (Exodus 21:5)
- The affection between intimate friends (2 Samuel 1:26)

Looking at the Text

Love originates in God because he is love.

From 1 John

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love – ... not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. (1 John 4:7-11, nlt)

The spiritual life can be boiled down to one word: love.

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31)

Loving God and loving people are a package deal.

If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers." (1 John 4:20-21, nlt)

Love is more an action than an emotion.

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

God's love is sacrificial and unconditional.

Read John 3:16 if you are not able to quote it from memory.

- Read Romans 8:31-39.
- List all the things that the apostle Paul says can separate a child of God from God's love.
- What actions disqualify us from receiving his affection?
- What does this tell us about the way we are to love others?

God's love extends even to "enemies."

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48)

Read Jesus' famous Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. As you do, remember that the Jews and Samaritans in Jesus' day couldn't stand each other – for historical, racial, and cultural reasons. Where in your own experience have you seen this kind of "risky, unexpected" love?

God's love is amazingly beautiful!

Read 1 Corinthians 13. Why would Paul suggest that spiritual abilities, theological knowledge, or religious actions can actually get in the way of genuine love?

Love makes room for those who are different.

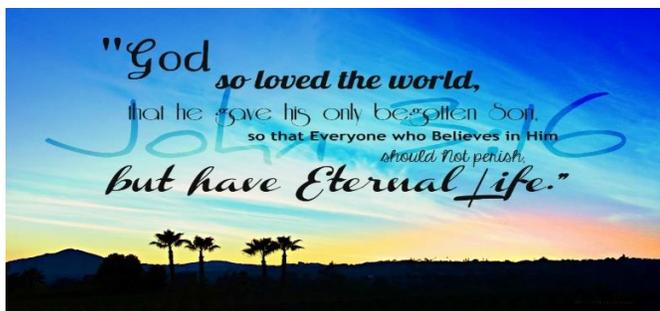
Read Romans 14. In this chapter, Paul talks about a common problem of the church. Many followers of Jesus have different convictions about some behaviors not expressly forbidden by God. For first-century believers in Rome, it was the issue of eating meat that had been part of pagan rituals. For modern believers it might be an issue like drinking a beer or a glass of wine. How does love make a difference when Christians have different scruples or standards on issues like these?

Our love can become displaced.

Ponder this verse: "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" (1 John 2:15, nasb). What does it mean to "love the world"? Why is this a problem? How can a person tell if he or she is in love with "the world"?

We can't love rightly apart from God's enabling Spirit.

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul talks in depressing detail about all the selfish and wrong ways we act when left to ourselves. Then he writes the phrase, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love" (Galatians 5:22). Here he offers a supernatural possibility – letting God's Spirit reign and rule in us, bringing forth a harvest of love.



***We love because
he first loved us.***