

## LOVE ONE ANOTHER: PART 2

We'll begin this morning by making a necessary correction to last week's message. At the very conclusion of last week's message we read the passage from 1 Corinthians 13 which contained Paul's description of love and then we asked the question: "*what is love? How do you demonstrate love?*" So we'll begin this morning by reading that passage again and repeating our commentary on the passage. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

*4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud  
5 or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged.  
6 It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.  
7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

1 Corinthians 13 is, of course, the classic description of *agape* love, of the pure love that God has for us and which we are to show to others as Christ commanded.<sup>1</sup> You will notice that what is described in these verses is actions and behavior. There is no mention of that warm, glowing feeling that we often tend to equate with love. True biblical and godly love is not a feeling, it is a behavior. That's where we often get hung up when Christ commands us to love our enemies. We don't have to necessarily take them in our arms and embrace them, but we are being commanded to be patient and kind with them, and not to keep a ledger of their offenses.

One or two of our members were quick to point out what Betty and I have recognized was a very poor choice of words in interpreting this passage. Saying that love is not a feeling but an action is certainly **not what we intended**. The correct thing to say would have been "*Love is not only a feeling but also an attitude and an action.*" In one of the many drafts we made of the message for last week, Betty added the following statements which I decided were not necessary in the final draft. Had I allowed them to remain in, I don't think what we said later would have been as misleading. So I'm going to read them for you now and I hope they'll help in clarifying our interpretation of the meaning of love:

*"1) We in this day and age are inclined to label a call to obedience as a call to legalism and place it opposite love,*

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<sup>1</sup> Harper's Bible Dictionary: **agape**, the principal Greek word used for 'love' in the NT. Of the three words for love in the Hellenistic world, it was the least common. The other two words were *eros*, the love between a man and a woman, especially sexual love, and *philos*, which meant friendship, although their meanings could vary according to the context in which they appeared. *Agape*, because it was used so seldom and was so unspecific in meaning, could be used in the NT to designate the unmerited love God shows to humankind in sending his son as suffering redeemer. **When used of human love, it means selfless and self-giving love.** *Agape*—God's love, the kind described in 1 Cor 13, **thinks of what is best for the Recipient**; unconditional love

*making two poles of love versus legalism. But Paul is saying they are not opposites. He is saying that they actually are manifestations of each other.*

*2) Without obedience there's no power, no blessing, and no joy. And certainly there is no love. Obedience without love is hollow. Obedience without love is indeed what we call legalism. It is what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13 as 'a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.'*"

Now I know God frequently operates in a manner we least expect and perhaps He allowed this oversight to occur for a good reason. Perhaps He knew that Jane and AJ would catch it and make the necessary comments to alert us of the need for clarifying remarks and a little deeper understanding of what love is and how we can express it.

It therefore seems most appropriate to us to begin this week's message with a definition of love and definitions of the various kinds of love. Then we'll go on to explain how we are using the term in our message. We've borrowed some definitions from some excellent sources.

**The Miriam-Webster Online Dictionary** defines love as a:

"strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties, such as the maternal love for a child (2) : attraction based on sexual desire : affection and tenderness felt by lovers (3) : affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests, such as love for one's old schoolmates. (4) : unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another, such as the fatherly concern of God for humankind, or brotherly concern for others, or even a person's adoration of God."

**Then in the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, edited by Merrill Tenney, we find the following (pp. 493-494):**

**"Love:** presented in Scripture as the very nature of God (1 John 4:8, 16) and the greatest of the Christian virtues. It receives definition in Scripture only by a listing of its attributes (1 Cor 13:4-7). . . . ."

"The Bible makes the unique revelation that God in His very nature and essence is love, Christianity being the only religion thus to present the Supreme Being. God not only loves, He is love. In this supreme attribute all the other attributes are harmonized. . . . ."

**"All human love, whether Godward or manward, has its source in God. Love in its true reality and power is seen only in the light of Calvary (1 John 4:7-10). LOVE IS CREATED IN THE BELIEVER BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. ROM**

5:5:

*For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.*

Galatians 5:22:

*22 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.*

Still quoting from the Zondervan Dictionary”

“It is the Holy Spirit’s job to help us love both God and man (2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 4:20-21). Love finds its expression in service to our fellow-men (Gal 5:13) and is the chief test of Christian discipleship (John 13:35; Luke 14:26; 1 John 3:14). Love is vitally related to faith; faith is basic (Heb. 11:6; John 6:29), but a faith that does not manifest itself in love both toward God and man is dead and worthless (James 2:17-26; Gal. 5:6, 13). James 2:17 says: “So you see, it isn’t enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn’t show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.”

“The Christian must love God supremely and his neighbor as himself (Matt. 22:37-39). He must love his enemy as well as his brother (Matt. 5:43-49; Rom. 12:19-20; 1 John 3:14). Our love must be “*without hypocrisy*” (Rom. 12:9, ASV) and be “*in deed and truth*” (1 John 3:18). Love is the bond uniting all the Christian virtues (Col. 3:14).”

**And finally Fausset’s Bible Dictionary [p. 439: (grammar updated)]:**

**“Love is the fulfilling of the law”** (Rom 13:8, 10), the prominent perfection of God (1 John 4: 8, 16), manifested to us (1 John 4:10) when we did not love Him (John 3:16). Passing our powers of knowledge (Eph. 3:19), everlasting (Jer. 31:3), free and gratuitous (Hos. 14:4), enduring to the end (John 13:1).

**C.S. Lewis** wrote a book, *The Four Loves*, that describes his understanding of the variations in quality of the various kinds of love. Probably a book well worth reading.

We believe we would all agree that if we say we have any or all of these feelings of love in our heart and don’t act on them, not only is something seriously wrong in our spiritual walk, but it is very possible that we’re not actually saved. Because if we’re truly saved, the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in our heart and we cannot keep from activating

such love if we're submitting our lives to Him.

We would also suggest that after looking at all of these definitions of love, there is no way that anyone can adequately put the love of God into words. There's a hymn by F. Lehman, the words to which go something like this:

*"If I were a scribe (a writer) and the whole sky was my parchment (paper), there still wouldn't be enough room to write about the ways God loves us."*

You may remember also the passage in Ephesians 3:14-21, which says:

*14 When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,  
15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.  
16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit.  
17 And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love.  
18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is.  
19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.  
20 Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.  
21 May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.*

Also 1 John 2:1-11(NRSV):

*1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;  
2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.  
3 Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments.  
4 Whoever says, "I have come to know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist;  
5 but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him:  
6 whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked.  
7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard.*

*8 Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.*

*9 Whoever says, "I am in the light," while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness.*

*10 Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.*

*11 But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.*

Do you see the wonder of it all? We can't with our finite humanness understand the love of God or even describe the love of God, but we can experience all of it and possess it if we're obedient to His every command.

If you were to study the Bible from cover to cover and even memorized every verse, having total recall of every Word of God, and just sat in your easy chair in your living room reciting all that head knowledge, your knowledge would be worthless. Without allowing it to change your life, knowledge is useless. You must put that knowledge to use by letting it change your life and then putting it into action. It seems to me that's the way God's love is. You will experience it and be able to give it to others if you allow it to change your life, and you do that by submitting every thought and action to the Holy Spirit. When you do that you're on auto-pilot. You're doing the work but **you're allowing the Holy Spirit to work the controls**.

I find it incredibly interesting that Christianity is really the only religion that sets forth the Supreme Being (God) as love. The gods of other religions are angry gods and are in constant need of appeasement. God is love. Let's look together at 1 John 4:12-16:

*12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been brought to full expression through us.*

*13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.*

*14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*

*15 All who proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.*

*16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.*

God is love. God is light; God is Spirit. Spirit and light are expressions of God's essential nature. Love is the expression of His personality corresponding to His nature. It is the nature of God to love. Just how to define or describe the love of God may be difficult if not impossible.

It appears from certain scriptures such as 1 John 3:16 and John 3:16 that the love of God is of such a nature as to be constantly interested in the physical and spiritual welfare of His creatures which leads Him to make sacrifices beyond human conception to reveal that love.

It is **Jesus Christ, God's Only-Begotten Son, who is the Special Object of God's love according to Matthew 3:17.** Jesus Christ shares the love of the Father in a unique sense, just as He is His Son in a unique sense. And we can readily understand how that He who did the will of God perfectly should thus become the special object of the Father's love.

**Believers in His Son, Jesus Christ, are therefore also special objects of God's love. John 16:27:**

*"The Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God."*

Do we really believe these words? We are not on the outskirts of God's love, but in its very midst. There stands Christ right in the very midst of that circle of the Father's love; then He draws us to that same spot where we also stand bathed in the same loving-kindness of the Father in which He, Christ, has basked.

**God's love also includes the world of sinners and ungodly men.** Romans 5:8: *"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life,"* was a startling truth to Nicodemus in his narrow understanding. God loved not the Jew only, but also the Gentile; not just a part of the world of humankind, but every man and woman in it, without regard for his/her moral character. The love of God is broader than the measure of the human mind. God desires the salvation of all people. Timothy wrote about it in 1 Tim. 2:4:

*4 God wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.*

**NOW WE'RE GOING TO SEE HOW THE LOVE OF GOD REVEALS ITSELF.** The love of God reveals itself by **making infinite sacrifice for the salvation of humankind.** 1 John 4:9, 10:

*9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.*

*10 This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

**The love of God also reveals itself in bestowing full and complete pardon on the penitent (person who feels sorrow for sins or offenses) individual.** Isaiah 38:17:

*17 Yes, it was good for me to suffer this anguish, for you have rescued me from death and have forgiven all my sins (past, present, and future)<sup>2</sup>.*

Literally, this verse could be translated: “*Thou hast loved my soul back from the pit of destruction.*”

God had taken the bitterness out of his life and given him the gracious forgiveness of his sins, by putting them far away from Him. Then in Ephesians 2:1-5 (Message) Paul writes:

*It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. **You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live.** You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ.*

Verses 1–3 show people rushing headlong to inevitable ruin. When all help for the human race fails, then God steps in, and by His mercy, which springs from “*His great love,*” redeems fallen humanity, and gives them not only pardon, but a position in His heavenly kingdom by the side of Jesus Christ. All of this was to satisfy “*His great love.*” Love led Him to do it because God must love in such a way to express the essence of His nature.

**Lastly, the love of God reveals itself in remembering His children in all the varying circumstances of life.** Isaiah. 63:7-9:

*7 I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done. I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel, which he has granted according to his mercy and love.*

*8 He said, “They are my very own people. Surely they will not be false again.” And he became their Savior.*

*9 In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years.*

Here the prophet is looking back over the history of the Jewish people. He thinks of all the oppressions of Israel, and recalls how God's interests have been bound up with theirs. He was not their adversary; He was their sympathetic, loving friend. He suffered with them. Isaiah 49:13-16:

*13 Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their sorrow.*

*14 Yet Jerusalem says, “The Lord has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us.”*

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<sup>2</sup> Parentheses added.

15 *“Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!*

16 *See, I have written your name on my hand.*

It was the custom in those days to trace upon the palms of the hands the outlines of any object of affection which would often be the name of a man’s god. The object of God’s affection was Israel. So God could not act without being reminded of Israel. God is always mindful of His own.

Hopefully we now all have not only a much better sense of what the love of God is like, but how essential it is for us to allow this incredible love to flow through us and out to a world that so desperately needs it.

Now that we’ve thoroughly examined what love is we can begin to look at the different ways you can demonstrate love. How do you demonstrate love? In thousands of ways. Let’s look at a few.

One of the ways that we described love before we ended last week was that it includes teaching others about the truth of God. We can see this in Ephesians 4:15,16:

15 *But **speaking the truth in love**, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

16 *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, **promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.***

**Love involves teaching others what needs to be taught**, what they need to know to go to Heaven.

Secondly, **love involves ministering to the needs of others**, giving them personal help.

Thirdly, **love is serving one another in a way that causes them to grow** because of your careful behavior. In other words, setting an example. Love sets a positive example of spiritual life so that people can grow from it. Love is a behavioral act that stimulates someone else’s growth rather than retarding it. It is the kind of life that leads others toward God and not toward sin.

**Love also covers the sins of others.** 1 Peter 4:8 (Amplified Bible):

8 *ABOVE ALL THINGS HAVE INTENSE AND UNFAILING LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER, FOR LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS; FORGIVES AND DISREGARDS THE OFFENSES OF OTHERS.*

True godly love forgives others, just as God has forgiven us.



Love then is something that teaches people the truth. If you love someone you speak the truth. If you love someone you give them the Word of God. Love speaks the truth and ministers to the needs of others. Love serves others with a behavior that leads them toward God and not toward sin. Love doesn't hold the faults of others against them. Love doesn't hold grudges. Love also forgives.

Ephesians 4:32-5:2:

*32 Instead, **be kind to each other**, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

*1 Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children.*

*2 **Live a life filled with love for others**, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.*

Your sacrifice of loving when the going gets rough or when the person you're trying to love is an enemy or a difficult person will also be like a sweet perfume to God. As Christ loved us and gave His life for us, you are to love others and put them before yourself. As Christ loved us and forgave us, you are to love others and forgive them as well.

Another thing about love is that **love endures**. Love doesn't give up and walk away at the first disappointment. Love hangs in there through thick and thin. Love is also patient. It is accepting one's faults and mistakes and the things about them that are not so appealing.

Ephesians 4:2:

*2 Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

Love also sacrifices for others as John tells us in John 15:12,13:

*12 **I command you** to love each other in the same way that I love you.*

*13 And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends.*

Each of the specific commandments mentioned in Romans 13:9, is a reflection of love:

*9 For the commandments against adultery and murder and stealing and coveting—and any other commandment—are all summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

↪ If you love someone you won't steal from them.

↪ If you love someone you will not murder them.

↪ If you love your spouse you will respect your marriage vows. Adultery is not only an

- unloving act toward the spouse; it is also a lack of respect for the partner in the affair.
- ↳ Lack of respect is being unloving. Verse 10 of Romans 13 sums it up nicely: “*Love does no wrong to anyone.*”

Love isn't only a matter of how you feel emotionally. We owe these things to people. Doing these things we've just discussed is the magnet that attracts the world to Christ. It is love that sends doctors to set up clinics in the jungle so people can be healed physically and spiritually. It is love for people who have never heard the Word of God that leads people to spend twenty-five to thirty years translating the Bible into a native tongue so God's love can be communicated. Before a person is a believer in Jesus as Lord and Savior, he/she does not have the ability to do these things. But once you have that relationship, Romans 5:5 tells us just how we can love like that:

*5 And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.*

How can we love like that?

**BECAUSE THE LOVE OF GOD HAS BEEN PLACED WITHIN US IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

We have a new resource in order to love the way we ought to love. A love beyond description is given to us. The abundance of God's love is always there so you may love in the manner we've discussed today. **But you must be willing to submit to the Holy Spirit now living within you.** You must turn over the control factor of your life to the Holy Spirit. You can carry your bitterness, anxiety, hatred, animosity, revenge and vengeance on your own, or you can yield them to the Spirit of God who will then take over the spirit of your life, at which time bitterness is replaced by love, vengeance is replaced by affection. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9, Paul writes:

*9 But I don't need to write to you about the Christian love that should be shown among God's people. For God himself has taught you to love one another.*

The Spirit of God has placed the ability to love this way in a believer's heart. This gift of love is the first fruit provided by the Holy Spirit according to Galatians 5:22, which we read earlier.

Then if we look to 1 Peter 1:22, NKJV we see a tremendous truth :

*22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*

Now you're not going to be able to exercise the debt of love until you've dealt with the sin in your life, not until you see your bitterness as sin, your vengeance as sin, your envy and gossip as sin, your hostility as sin. You need to let the Holy Spirit purify your heart from your sin in order to love as Jesus loves.

Remember what we read earlier in 1 Peter 4:7,8:?

*7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers.*

*8 Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.*

There is an urgency to loving because **the end of all things is at hand**. It's time for us to live the way we ought to live and attract people as they ought to be attracted. You might think that this statement was written almost two thousand years ago and all things haven't ended yet, so what's the rush? But we suggest you think about what happens when a person dies. All things certainly come to an end for that person then, don't they? And any one of us could die at any moment. Whether it's Jesus' return or our death, it's all the same as far as our eternity will be concerned. Now let us look at Colossians 3:14:

*14 **And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony.***

This tells us that **love is a conscious choice**. You choose to love. **Train yourselves to love**. In those moments when you feel like angrily asserting your rights, when you feel you've been deprived, when you've been interrupted, when you've been treated rudely and unkind words have been said, you must train yourselves to make a conscious choice to love. And do it no matter what the cost may be to your own ego. You choose to love. You choose to make peace. You choose to forgive. And you learn to do these things by allowing the Holy Spirit full reign in your heart and mind. Let's look again at Romans 5:5: "*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*"

Another important discipline for learning to love is to **spend your time with believers**. You're going to have a hard time trying to live this way if you're sitting alone in your living room watching television. Hebrews 10:24,25:

*24 And let us consider how to provoke one another **to love** and good deeds,*

*25 **not neglecting to meet together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

There is a stimulation to love that occurs in the dynamic of Christian fellowship and the accountability it brings to bear in our lives. If there's going to be love in the fellowship we have to be **concerned with others and not just ourselves**. Also consider the results of living a life of love.

**IF YOU LOVE OTHERS, YOU ARE GOING TO BE LOVED YOURSELF.**

So, yes, love is all you need—when you correctly define love. It starts with God, who is Himself Love. I John 4:16-17, NIV

*16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.*

*17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.*

When we have a right relationship with the God who is love, His love comes to reside in us and then we share that love with those around us. There are also some side effects of living a life of love. If you love others, you are going to be loved yourself. You are also going to fare well on the judgment day. We ask that you go through this week trying to apply all these principles regarding love to your lives, and come back and tell us about how your life has changed.