

# THE GREATEST IS LOVE

The bible clearly emphasises that the most important aspect of our faith as believers is LOVE; that we have a genuine love for God and for others



**Jesus Himself said,** “‘And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” **(Mark 12:30)**

“And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” **(Mark 12:31)**

- It is our love for God and for others that will help us to shine in this world as Christians and help us to make a great difference in our world for eternity.
- **We best represent God when we learn to unconditionally love others.**



**The Apostle John wrote, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”**

**(1 John 4:11) “...for God is love.” (1 John 4:8)**

**Jesus Himself said,**

**“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)**

- It is also God's love in our heart that will cause us to lay down our lives for the Kingdom Cause.
- Jesus willing went to the cross to lay down His life as a ransom for our sins so that we can be forgiven and have an eternal relationship with Him when we commit our lives to Him.

**Jesus Himself said,**

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.” **(John 15:12-13)**



- In a world which is becoming less and less loving and more materialistically and technologically focused, our unconditional love and concern for others will make a great impact on the lives of others and help them to come to Christ.
- People are now craving genuine love in the world as we see the world becoming more and more impersonal.
- As Christians we can make a great difference in our world as we love others with Christ's love



- In particular the way that we relate to other believers will be a great example to those in the world of what Kingdom Living is.



**Jesus Himself also said,**

**“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)**

- The Apostle Peter clearly emphasised the importance of loving others in the times that we are now living in when he wrote,

“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”  
**(1 Peter 4:7-9)**



- There is a big difference between God's agape love and human love which is so often conditional.
- It is also completely different to the love that is portrayed in Hollywood.
- True Christian love also involves commitment and sacrificially giving of oneself.
- The Apostle Paul gave a great definition of what real agape Christian love is like in Chapter thirteen of 1 Corinthians.



## The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” **(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)**

- As parents it is crucial that we model what it is to love others **UNCONDITIONALLY** with Christ's love to our children.





**The Apostle Paul continually emphasised the importance of having a genuine love for others in his epistles. In the book of Colossians he wrote,**

**“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”**

**(Colossians 3:12-14)**



The Apostle Peter also emphasised the importance of genuinely loving others in his first epistle when he wrote,

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8-9)



- **Having God's love in our lives and churches is a great key to revival within the Body of Christ.**  
As we seek God's face and gain His heart of compassion for the lost and hurting, our lives will make a great difference in this world for eternity.
- It is in God's presence that our hearts are filled afresh with His love and compassion for others. How important it is in the days that we are now living in, that our primary focus is to pray for and to seek God's presence in all of our meetings and to love and encourage other believers in their walk with the Lord.



God can use us to bring  
*His love,  
compassion,  
and grace*  
into the world.

- As believers God's love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us



**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

**“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:5)**

- It is our love for God that empowers us to love others UNCONDITIONALLY and that enables us to bring the goodness of God into our world
- The world is crying out for genuine love

- It is our consistent and genuine love for other people that will make the greatest impact on their lives.



- In many ways we are all under the microscope as believers as those in the world look to see if there is anything different in our lives as Christians.



- It is our consistent love for others that will make us truly stand out in the times that we are now living in.



- People do not care about how much we know, but they do want to know how much we care about them



- So given that we have the ability as believers to love others UNCONDITIONALLY with the agape love of Christ due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our life, what can firstly stop us from doing so?



# 1) Allowing offences into our heart through not quickly forgiving those who have hurt us

- Being unforgiving towards others will affect our heart attitudes and prevent us from loving others unconditionally.
- Especially when under pressure and in the heat of the moment, what is in the heart will surface in the words that we speak because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45) Our words have the potential to either wound or to bring encouragement and healing to others.



**Jesus Himself said in relation to the times that we are now living in,**

**“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. (Matthew 24:10-11)**





## 2)Allowing critical and judgmental attitudes to develop in our heart

- We cannot be constantly critical and judgemental towards others and truly love them at the same time.
- We all have made mistakes in life and we all need grace from others.



**This is why Jesus said, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Matthew 7:1-2)**

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”  
**(Matthew 7:3-5)**



- Maintaining both an offence free heart and a heart free of critical and judgemental attitudes is crucial if we are to consistently love people with the love of Christ. For this reason it is crucial that we always maintain a soft heart.



**In the book of Proverbs we read,**

**“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)**

### 3) Allowing our focus in life to become more centred on material things than on nurturing and cultivating our relationships with God and others

- The more that we get caught up with the things of this world the less our love will be for both God and for others
- Jesus made it clear that we cannot allow the things of this world to take our focus off Him. When the things of this world become too great a priority in our life, it will greatly affect our love for others.



**Jesus made this very clear when He said,**

**“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)**



**“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)**

#### 4) Allowing selfish ambition to develop in our life.

We must continually examine our heart to ensure that all that we do in life is done from a pure motivation.

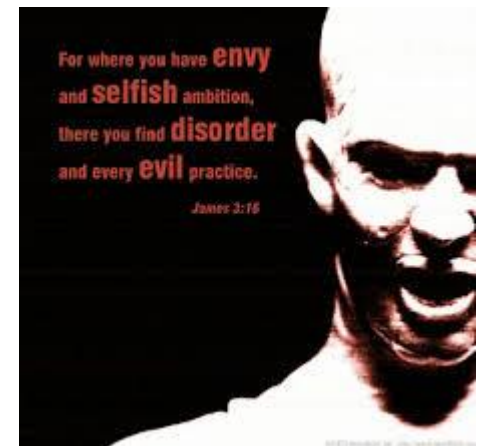
As Christians we have been called to serve others with our gifts (1 Corinthians 14:12) (1 Corinthians 12:7)



- If the enemy can get us to focus on ourselves too much there is potential for problems to develop in our relationships. It is impossible to love others unconditionally when we allow selfish ambition to develop in our lives.

**In the book of James we read,**

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” **(James 3:13-16)**



- **As Christians it is so important that we continually choose to live for and to serve others as we follow in Jesus footsteps of sacrificially living for others.**



**Jesus Himself said,** “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” **(Matthew 20:25-28)**



## 5) Allowing envy and Jealousy to take root in our hearts

- Being envious and jealous of others will also prevent us from freely loving others.
- We can see a great example of this in the life of King Saul when he became jealous and envious of David after initially being very supportive of him.
- We see this in the book of 1 Samuel.

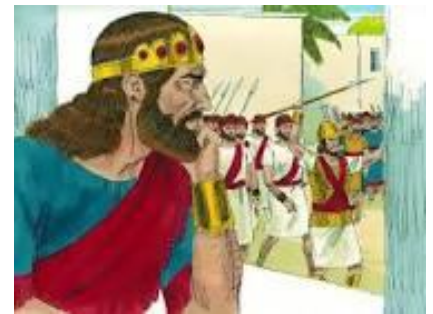


“So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments.

So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands,

And David his ten thousands.” **(1 Samuel 18:5-7)**



“Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand.” **(1 Samuel 18:8-10)**



“And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.” **(1Samuel 18:11)**



- **We must continually refuse to entertain any envious and jealous thoughts that the enemy would try and put into our mind so that we can continue to love others unconditionally.**
- **We need to always rejoice with those who rejoice, especially when we ourselves are going through trials**

**6) Having wrong friendships in life. Who we spend time with will greatly shape our lives and influence the way that we relate to others**



**In the book of Proverbs we read,**

**“Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.”**

**(Proverbs 22:24-25)**

- We become very much like the company that we keep. We must not spend too much time with people who are always critical and judgemental of others and prone to gossiping about others.

**In the book of Proverbs we read,**

**“A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.” (Proverbs 16:28)**



## 7) Having a fear of being rejected by others

- Having a fear of man or a fear of being rejected by others will prevent us from opening up and loving others unconditionally.



- Having a fear of being rejected by others will cause us to put walls up around our heart and prevent us from being open and transparent in our relationships with others

- We must not allow our past betrayals and disappointments to stop us from reaching out to others in love. Jesus is our example for loving others unconditionally. Though He was rejected by others, Jesus continually loved people unconditionally.



**In the gospel of Matthew we read,**

**“And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.” (Matthew 8:34)**



- None of us have experienced personal rejection to the degree that Jesus did in His life here on earth, with even a whole city rejecting Him. Like Jesus we need to simply choose to love people and to not allow a fear of being rejected to stop us from reaching out to others with the love of Christ



- A great key to overcoming a fear of being rejected by others is to be filled with all the fullness of God's love by spending quality time with the Lord.

**In the book of Acts we read,**  
“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” **(Acts 4:13)**



**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”  
**(2 Timothy 1:7) and**

## 8) Becoming too busy in life so that we no longer spend quality time with the Lord being replenished with His love.



- It is in continually abiding in Christ's love that we have the ability to love others UNCONDITIONALLY



- The more time that we spend with the Lord the more we have the ability to love others unconditionally and the more we grow in Christlike character.



**Jesus Himself said,**

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” **(John 15:4-5)**

- Spending intimate time in the presence of the Lord helps us to love others better and to grow in the fruit of the Spirit.

**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

**“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)**



- On the other hand if we fail to spend quality time with the Lord we will invariably become less loving and gracious to those that we relate to.



- It is in abiding in the presence of God and being continually filled with the Holy Spirit that we have the ability to love even those who are opposing us in life unconditionally.

- In Chapter 10 of the gospel of Luke we see Jesus emphasising the importance of spending quality time in His presence.

“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.” **(Luke 10:38-39)**



“But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” **(Luke 10:40-42)**



- **We must never get too busy so that we do not spend quality time with the Lord**



**I will now just quickly finish with some keys that can help us to love others better**



**1) We need to allow the Word of God to change us.**

- As we regularly meditate on the Word of God and apply it to our life we become more Christlike in the way that we relate to others. We need to study, think about, memorize, believe and live the Word of God so that it becomes part of who we are

**The Apostle Paul wrote, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2)**

**The LORD said to Joshua just prior to him leading the Children of Israel into the Promised Land,**

**“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:8)**



- **Continually meditating on the Word of God helps us to relate to others in a right and loving manner. The bible is full of Scriptures that can help us to love others in a right way.**

**The following Scripture written by the Apostle Paul is one such example. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus,**

**“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us...”**

**(Ephesians 4:31-32, 5:1-2)**



## 2) We need to cultivate a lifestyle of genuine and sincere worship.



- In doing this we will consistently have God's love and compassion for others and in particular for the lost and hurting



**King David wrote,**

**“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)**

- Worshipping God in Spirit and truth helps us to connect with His heart of compassion for people so that we can love people in a genuine and sincere way. Jesus was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes in need of salvation.



**In the gospel of Matthew we read,**  
“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” **(Matthew 9:36)**

- **Having a lifestyle of worship helps to keep our heart continually soft towards both God and others, so that we can consistently love others unconditionally with the love of Christ**

**Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of true worship when He said,**

**“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23-24)**



### 3) We must always be quick to forgive others.

- Praying for God's help to forgive others is a great key to giving us the ability to always forgive others
- The more we see people the way that Jesus sees them, the easier it is for us to forgive those who hurt us.



**Jesus clearly emphasised the importance of forgiving others when He said, “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26)**



#### 4) We need to always LOOK for the best in others.



- It is always important that we continually look for the best in others rather than always examining the faults in others.
- None of us are perfect and we all need grace from others in life.
- This is why Jesus in His teachings emphasised the importance of working on one's own faults first before we start critiquing the lives of others.





**The Apostle Paul also emphasised the importance of not judging others when he wrote,**



“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ... So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or cause to fall in our brother’s way.”  
**(Romans 14:10, 12-13)**



- We will always have a far more loving atmosphere in our homes and churches if we always look for the best in others and appreciate the differences in those around us.

**The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” (Philippians 2:3)**



## 5) We need to always QUICKLY take all negative and critical thoughts captive and replace them with Christ centred thoughts.

- Having a lifestyle of meditating on the Word of God helps us to quickly replace all wrong thoughts with God's Kingdom way of thinking
- We need to quickly take all wrong and critical thoughts captive before they take us captive.
- What we think upon will greatly affect our heart attitudes towards others.



- We must not allow wrong thoughts to remain in our mind but be quick to replace them with Christ centred thoughts.



**Make Every Thought Obey Jesus**

"We **take every thought captive** so that it is obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5 GWV



- The real battle is always for the mind.
- We must win this battle by continually filling our minds with wholesome and Kingdom based thoughts and by refusing to entertain negative and critical thoughts towards others.

**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

**“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)**



## 6) We need to purposely look for opportunities to encourage people and to speak gracious and uplifting words into their lives and situations

- Compliments help people to feel valued
- As Christians we should be distinctively different to those in the world.
- As Christ's disciples filled with His love we can make a great difference in our world as we actively love and encourage others.
- Words of encouragement give strength to others and makes people feel loved and accepted.
- Jesus continually spoke words of life to others.





**Jesus Himself said,**

**“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63)**

**In the gospel of Luke we also read in relation to Jesus,**



**“So all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son” (Luke 4:22)**



**In the Proverbs we read,**

**“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and  
a word spoken in due season, how good it is!”**

**(Proverbs 15:23)**

**“A man has joy in an apt  
answer, And how delightful  
is a timely word!”  
–Proverbs 15:23**

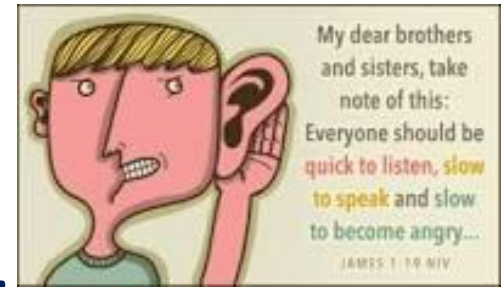


- **WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT HELP PEOPLE  
TO FEEL LOVED AND APPRECIATED**



7) We must refuse to speak words in haste when we feel that we are being put down by others or when experiencing relational difficulties.

- This will help us not to say things in the heat of the moment that we later regret. We must refuse to speak words that pull down and belittle others.



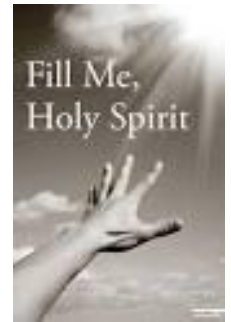
**In the book of James we read, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;” (James 1:19)**

- If we do not exercise self-control in the heat of the moment we can speak out words that we later regret having spoken.
- Our words have both the potential to build others up or to wound others.
- We need to always be slow to speak and careful in the use of our words when relating to others.
- Words spoken in haste and anger have the potential to greatly harm our relationships with others. For this reason we need to be careful to only speak words that promote life and love in our relationships with others.



## 8) We need to learn to continually walk in the Spirit and to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit

- Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit is a great key to consistently loving others.
- The Holy Spirit helps us to be emotionally healthy and loving towards others. (Just as a car engine needs oil to run smoothly so too our emotions need the oil of the Holy Spirit to operate properly)



**This is why the Apostle Paul wrote,**

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;  
that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may  
be able to comprehend with all the saints what is  
the width and length and depth and height - to  
know the love of Christ which passes knowledge;  
**that you may be filled with all the fullness of  
God.**” (Ephesians 3:17-19)



- Learning to walk in the Spirit is also a great key to consistently loving others. We must continually make this choice and refuse to allow our flesh to rise up when we do not get our own way in life.

**The Apostle Paul wrote,** “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” **(Galatians 5:13-16)**



- Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit and learning to walk in the Spirit helps us to consistently love others and to always see the best in others.



**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” **(Galatians 5:22-23)**



## 9) Knowing the love language of others is also crucial to making people feel loved.

- If we love people using their primary love language they will feel more appreciated and loved as we meet their felt needs. People FEEL loved in different ways. Gary Chapman identified five primary love languages;

i. Physical Touch

ii Acts of Service

iii. Words of Affirmation

iv) Gift Giving, and

v. Quality Time

- Knowing the love language of others helps us to love people better, **AND**



## 10) Praying for God to help us to love those who have hurt us, or who are hard to get on with.

Praying for God to help us to see people the way that He sees them, is a great key to helping us to consistently love others, even those who reject us

- Jesus Himself had a great love for all people, even those who reviled and rejected Him
- Jesus also instructed us to even love our enemies

- As Christians we have been given the ministry of reconciliation

- Given these facts, God will help us to love difficult people if we ask for His help in prayer





**Jesus Himself made it clear to what extent we are to love all people when He said, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:44-45)**

**Given that it is God’s will for us to love all people, IF we sincerely ask for His help to love others that are hard to get on with, we can be assured that He will give us the ability to do so**



**The Apostle John wrote,**

**“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him,  
that if we ask anything according to His will, He  
hears us. And if we know that He hears us,  
whatever we ask, we know that we have the  
petitions that we have asked of Him.  
(1 John 5:14-15)**



**God will always give us the ability to love other  
people if we simply ask for His help in prayer**

## SO IN CONCLUSION:

- All that we do in life and ministry needs to be motivated by love. How we need to simply just apply in our own life the two commandments that Jesus spoke of about loving God and loving your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:29-31)
- In many ways the best way that we can love others is by helping them to come to Christ to receive the gift of eternal life. Jesus Himself said that He came to “seek and to save that which was lost.” **(Luke 19:10)**



**I will finish with the words of the Apostle Paul,  
“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three;  
but the greatest is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)**

