

THE GREATEST IS LOVE



The Apostle Paul wrote,
“And now abide faith, hope, love, these
three; but the greatest of these is love.”
(1 Corinthians 13:13)

- It is so important that all that we do in life and ministry is undergirded by genuine love
- People do not care how much we know but they do want to know how much we care
- Without having a genuine love for others all that we do in life will have little impact on the world around us



- Our love for others will also be a key factor in determining the rewards that we receive for our life here on earth when the Lord returns

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)



Jesus Himself said, “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.” (Matthew 16:27)



- It is also our love for people that will cause us to fully break open our lives for the Cause of Christ and to *sacrificially live for others*



- It is only our love for Jesus Christ and our love for others that will cause our lives to make a great difference in the world that we live in

- The bible makes it clear that it is our love for others that is the greatest evidence of us having a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ



The Apostle John wrote,

**“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”
(1 John 4:16)**

- **Jesus Christ during His time here on earth was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes in great need of true hope**

We see this in the gospel of Matthew, “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 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 9:35-36)



- **There is a big difference between human love and God's agape love**



The Apostle Paul wrote what true agape love really looks like, “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)

- Jesus Himself also made it clear that it was through genuinely loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord that we would have the greatest impact on the unsaved world

Jesus Himself 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)**

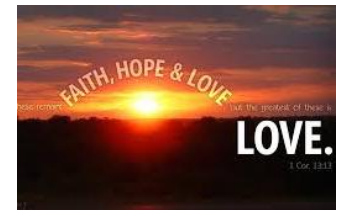


- The bible makes it clear that the moment we become a Christian God's love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit

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)**



- So as believers we have the ability to love others unconditionally

- However, the simple fact is that the moment we become a believer we enter into a very real spiritual contest



Jesus Himself said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” **(John 15:18-19)**

In His explanation of the Parable of the Sower Jesus said,

“These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.”
(Mark 4:16-17)



- Jesus Himself also warned that the love of many would grow cold in the times that we are now living in. What He predicted we are now seeing



Jesus Himself said, “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)**

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold, But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” **(Matthew 24:12-13)**

- So how can we continually maintain our love for others as we go through life's trials and disappointments and rejection for our faith

1) We must always be quick to forgive others

Jesus Himself 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)

- We must always *choose* to be quick to forgive those who hurt us



- The simple fact is that we ourselves have hurt others as well. None of us are perfect
- Continually forgiving others helps us to have loving and healthy relationships with others
- We cannot shut our heart to others and also have our heart open to God at the same time
- **Continually forgiving those who hurt us helps us to love others unconditionally**

- **Jesus Himself clearly emphasised the importance of always forgiving others**

We see this in the gospel of Matthew;

“Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

(Matthew 18:21-22)



- We must simply choose to move on from our past hurts and betrayals if we are to continually love others unconditionally



- We must always be quick to forgive those who hurt us and *refuse to dwell on these experiences*. We must learn to both forgive and forget. **We must simply refuse to rehearse our hurts**

The Apostle Paul wrote, "... But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead," (Philippians 3:13)

2) We need to maintain an ONGOING intimate and abiding relationship with the LORD



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)**

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



- The more time that we spend in the presence of the Lord the more we will grow in Christlike character and in our love for others
- Continually spending time in God's presence helps us to get His love and compassion for people
- The more time that we spend with the Lord the more love we will have for others

- Spending quality time alone with the Lord with an open bible is a great key to growing in our love for others
- Meditating on the word of God during our quiet times helps to see Christ being formed in our lives as the word of God begins to bring transformation to our lives



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” **(Colossians 3:16)**



The Psalmist wrote, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” **(Psalm 119:11)**

- Spending quality time alone with the Lord with an open bible and without the distraction of the smart phone helps us to maintain our love for others



- It is so important to have a place where we meet with God without distractions and that we make quality time to spend with the Lord. The simple fact is that life can get busy at times. We must simply make time to spend with the Lord DAILY

Jesus Himself said, “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)



- **There is a great correlation between our love for God and our love for people**
- **The more we love God the more we will have His compassion in our heart and a desire to live for Him and to love and serve others**

- Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of our love for Him being greater than any other human relationship. That He is always first in our lives



- When this is the case, we will both have great security and stability in our lives and a greater ability to actually love our neighbours as ourselves

3) We must continually maintain a right 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)



- It is so important that we do not allow the ways of the world to affect our heart attitudes, or allow hurts and offences to close our heart towards others



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)

- **Especially in the Western world the pleasures of life and materialism are a constant distraction for so many people and can draw people away from a whole hearted devotion to Christ which is a great key to loving others**

- One great key to always maintaining a right heart and to consistently maintaining a great love for all people, is that we are always quick to take ALL wrong and critical thoughts captive before they take us captive and replace them with Christ centred thoughts



- The simple fact is that the Devil will continually try and magnify the faults in others, especially those who we are meant to be connected with

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)



- We must continually win the battle for the mind if we are to consistently maintain a heart of compassion towards all people

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

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)** “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,” **(Ephesians 5:18)**



The Apostle Paul warned of the consequences of not walking in the Spirit when he 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.” (Galatians 5:13)**



“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!” (Galatians 5:14-15)

- Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit helps us to grow in the fruit of the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit



The Apostle Paul wrote,

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

“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)**

5) We need to be selective in who we allow into our inner circle of friends



- We become very much like the company that we keep. We need to avoid spending too much time with those who gossip about others. A whisperer separates the best friends
- It is so important that we have friends of godly character in our inner circle of friends
- A great key to learning to love others unconditionally is to have people in your life who model what it is to love others

- On the other hand, we must be careful to not allow into our inner circle of friends' people who are constantly critical and judgemental towards others and who have problems with anger



In the book of Proverbs we read,

“The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.” (Proverbs 12:26)

**In the book of Proverbs, we also 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)**



Make
no friendship
with a man
given to
ANGER,
nor go with a
WRATHFUL man,
lest you learn his ways

6) We need to remain in fellowship with other believers



In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” **(Hebrews 10:23-25) AND**

7) WE MUST SIMPLY CHOOSE TO LOVE ALL PEOPLE AT ALL TIMES As we do the feelings will follow

“ Kindness is choosing
love over hate,
light over darkness,
compassion over
judgment. ”

– RAKtivist

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another;” **(Romans 12:9-10)** “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. **(Romans 12:17-18)**

The Apostle Peter 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.” Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” **(1 Peter 4:7-9)**



- So, in conclusion may I encourage us all today to make our love for Christ and our love for others the greatest priority in our lives 
- In doing this we will truly shine in the world around us and our lives will make a great eternal difference in the lives of many
- It is our love for God and for others that will cause us to sacrificially give of ourselves and that will give us His heart to reach out to the lost with the good news of the gospel

- I will now conclude with just one final great key to seeing the love of Christ consistently flowing through our lives
- That is, choosing to live a crucified life where it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me
- That we daily choose to lay down our life for Christ and for others. Problems surface when self become too great a focus



- Without this daily commitment to laying down our lives for the Cause of Christ, it is so easy for the things of this world and our own fleshly nature to get us to focus too much on ourselves rather than breaking open our lives for others and the Cause of Christ



This is why Jesus said,

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.” (Luke 9:23-24)

- It is in breaking open our lives for the Kingdom Cause and for others, that God’s love is free to flow through our lives as believers to touch the lives of others**

Jesus Christ Himself also 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)



- It is our unconditional love for others that will truly make us stand out as believers in the world that we are now living in

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

