

# **THE IMPERATIVE OF LOVE**

## **(The greatest is love)**

**I will begin with three key introductory thoughts:**

- i) We are now living in a world which is becoming more and more love deficient. The bible predicted that this would be the case in the times that we are now living in**

**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. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” **(Matthew 24:10-13)**

**The Apostle Paul wrote in relation to the times that we are now living in, the last of the last days**

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” **(2 Timothy 3:1-5)**

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” **(2 Timothy 3:13)**

**ii) As Christians God's love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. As Christians we have the ability to love others unconditionally**

**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) AND**

**iii) That as Christians we are meant to be salt and light in our world and Christ's ambassadors here on earth.**

That through our lives people will see the love of God as we become His hands and feet here on earth by practically demonstrating and reflecting His love here on earth.

I believe that it is the great love of Christians for one another and for others that is a great key to seeing revival in our churches and nations

One well known preacher in his sermon on love said, “Don't tell me that you love me, show me that you love me.”

**Jesus Himself said,**

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” **(Matthew 5:14-16)**

**The Apostle Paul wrote,** “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

**AS CHRISTIANS WE CAN MAKE A GREAT DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD IN THE TIMES THAT WE ARE NOW LIVING IN, BY ACTIVELY LOVING AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS AND BY SHARING THE HOPE THAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST WITH OTHERS**

**I will now look at sharing a few biblical thoughts and truths in relation to the important Christian virtue of love. In 1 John 4:8 we read, “... for God is love.”**

- i) Love is one of the three tests in the epistle of 1 John that prove the genuineness of a believer’s faith**

**The Apostle John wrote,**

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8) “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (1 John 4:20-21)

**We cannot have our heart shut to others and open to God at the same time**

**ii) All that we do in life and ministry must always be undergirded by LOVE**

Without have a genuine love for others our Christian witness will have little effect on the lives of those who do not yet know Christ

**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” **(Romans 2:4)**

It is our genuine love and concern for the lost that will open up opportunities for us to share the gospel with others and to lead people to Christ

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

It is our genuine love for people that will also cause us to do things with a right motivation

**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)**

**iii) As Christians we have the ability to love others with God's agape love so that we can truly shine and stand out in the world that we are now living in**

God's love is so different to the world's view of love

The bible gives us much guidance as to what God's love is like and how we should relate to others as Christians

**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)**

"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 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 4:29-32, 5:1-2)**

**If we could all learn to live in this way there would be no arguments and wars in the world**

**This is why the Apostle Paul also wrote,** "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)**

**iv) The importance of having love in our homes.** This is particularly important due to the current restrictions that are now causing many people to have to spend much more time at home

It is such a great blessing when our homes are our havens, a place of refuge from the troubles of the world around us

For this reason the enemy, the Devil, will continually try and sow strife and discord in families, particularly within Christian homes to try and get our focus off the eternal things and what really matters in life

LOVE and respect are two ingredients for happy homes

A happy Christian home will be characterized by a;

- Love for God where Christ is truly the head of the home, and
- A mutual love for one another

**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. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”  
**(Mark 12:30-31)**

**The Apostle Paul gave some great keys for having a happy home when he wrote,** “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” **(Colossians 3:18-21)**

**v) PEOPLE MUST ALWAYS TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER POSSESSIONS AND OUR STRUCTURED ROUTINES**

We must always be flexible enough to change our routines when people have need of encouragement and help

**In the book of 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)**

As Christians we should always value and respect people who have been made in the image of God. It is in doing this that we can clearly stand out in a world that is becoming more and more impersonal

So often we now see in the world that people love money and use people, but as Christians we should always LOVE PEOPLE and use money

**vi) The bible makes it clear that loving others is very important to God**

To truly please God we must always seek to have a genuine love for others

God’s heart is that we would all treat others right and with dignity

The bible also makes it clear the mercy triumphs over judgement

**Jesus Himself said,** “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 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. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.” **(John 15:11-14)**

“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)**

**The Apostle Paul 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)**

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,” **(Ephesians 2:4)**

**Jesus also 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.” “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 7:1-5)**

**vii) A great key to continually loving others unconditionally is dying to self and learning to walk in the Spirit**

Problems always develop when self becomes too great a priority in our life

**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)**

**Learning to esteem others better than our self and walking in humility towards others is a great key to consistently walking in love towards others**

**In the book of James we also read,** “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” **(James 3:17-18)**

**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)**

**We must learn to continually walk in the Spirit and to say no to the demands of our fallen human fleshly nature**

**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“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 5:14-16)

**viii) A fear of being rejected by others is one major reason why many people struggle to open up their heart and genuinely love others**

As Christians we can be free from fear because God’s perfect love casts out all fear. We must simply always be filled with all the fullness of God. As we continually abide in God’s love we will have the ability to love others unconditionally

**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)

**ix) Our greatest witness to the world as Christians is our genuine and sincere love for one another**

This is why we read in Proverbs 6:19 that one of the things that the LORD hates is “... one who sows discord among brethren.”

**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)

**It is our genuine love for one another that will help to create opportunities for us to share the gospel with those who do not yet know Christ**

It is ALSO so important that we have a genuine love for ALL people. People respond to genuine love and acceptance.

Like Jesus we need to have a genuine compassion for the lost and hurting. Compassion only comes from God and from spending quality TIME with Him.

**It is our genuine love for other people that will help them to open up their hearts to Jesus Christ.**

**It is also God's compassion that will compel us to wholeheartedly live for Him and to break open our lives for the Cause of Christ**

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

“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)

“Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

**It is God's compassion that will compel us to become one of the labourers in His harvest, AND FINALLY**

- x) **With the imminent rapture of all true believers what matters most is that we have a great love and concern for all others, especially those in the body of Christ**

Given the late hour that we are now living in, it is crucial that we are constantly looking for the best in others and helping to encourage all other believers to continue in their walk with the Lord. This is especially important given Jesus Christ's warning about what would happen in the times that we are now living in

**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." (Matthew 24:10)**

**We must simply refuse to allow the Devil to get us offended towards others, especially other Christians. We all need one another in the body of Christ**

**The greatest is love. Let us therefore in the times that we are now living in be looking for opportunities to LOVE and ENCOURAGE those around us**

**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)**

**The Apostle Paul 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)**

**I will now finish very quickly with 6 keys that can help us to consistently love others so that we can truly shine in the world around us in the times that we are now living in**

### **1. Spending quality time alone in the presence of God**

This is a great key to getting God's compassion for people

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

**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 need to be continually saturated with God's love, especially given the lawless times that we are now living in. Having a *lifestyle of worship* helps us to be continually filled with God's love

In the gospel of Luke we see the importance of drawing aside and spending **QUALITY TIME** in God's 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. 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 10:38-42**)

**2. Continually renewing our mind with God's word.** This is a great key to developing Kingdom thinking and to becoming more Christlike in the way that we relate to 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)**

**The LORD said to Joshua before he was about to lead 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)**

**The bible is full of wisdom on how to relate to others well. Learning to relate to others well is a great key to experiencing success in life and in our walk with the Lord**

**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)**

We must not allow wrong attitudes and desires to steal our passion for the things of God and to cause us to become indifferent towards people who are struggling in life

**We must not allow the cares of this world to invade our heart and to choke the word in our heart**

**Jesus Himself said in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower,**

“Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” **(Mark 4:18-19)**

**Jesus also 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)**

**In the gospel of Mark we again see Jesus referring to the heart of man when He said,**

“What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” **(Mark 7:20-23)**

**So given the lawless and perilous times that we are now living in, it is crucial that we guard our heart and prevent wrong attitudes and desires from entering into our heart. This is a great key to continually having a great love for God and for others**

#### **4. Being always quick to forgive others that have hurt us**

We must refuse to allow offenses to enter our heart

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

“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 continually forgive others at ALL times. None of us are perfect**

#### **5. Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit**

**The Apostle Paul wrote,**

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

“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)

**AND**

#### **6. Simply choosing to love others at all times. The feelings will always follow. We need to always look for the best in others and pray that God will give us His great love and compassion for ALL people**

**Jesus Himself said,**

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8)

## **SO IN CONCLUSION:**

**I will now look at one final encouraging passage of Scripture that describes God's everlasting love for us as believers**

**The Apostle Paul wrote,** "What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

"For Your sake we are killed all day long;  
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." **(Romans 8:31-39)**

**I will now finish with a poem most likely written by John A Passaro called "Life is like a train ride"**

**"At birth, we board the train and meet our parents, and we believe they will always travel by our side.**

**As time goes by, other people will board the train; and they will be significant i.e our siblings, friends, children, and even the love of your life.**

**However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on this journey alone.**

**Others will step down over time and leave a permanent vacuum.**

**Some, however, will go so unnoticed that we don't realise they vacated their seats.**

**This train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells.**

**Success consists of having a good relationship with all passengers requiring that we give the best of ourselves.**

**The mystery to everyone is: We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down.**

**So, we must live in the best way, love, forgive, and offer the best of who we are.**

**It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.**

**I wish you all a joyful journey.**

**WE HAVE ONE GIFT OF LIFE TO LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE FROM THE WAY THAT WE LIVE OUR LIFE HERE ON EARTH**