

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 1:13)

The bible clearly emphasises the importance of having a genuine love for others and that the way that we treat and relate to others is of great importance to God

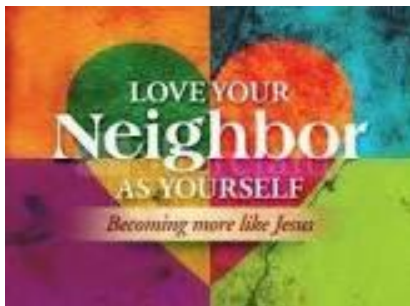
I will begin by looking at just 5 of many Scriptures in the bible that clearly emphasise the importance of having a genuine love for others



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)**



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!”
(Galatians 5:14-15)**



Galatians 5:14-15. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.



The Apostle Paul also wrote,

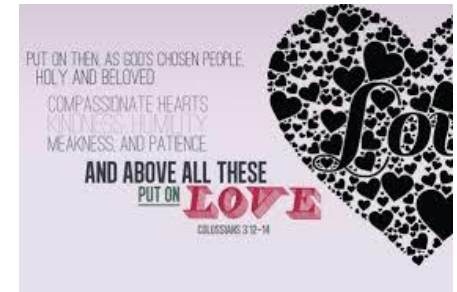
“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another;
(Romans 12:9-10)



In the book of James we read,

“If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” you do well;” **(James 2:8) AND**

In the letter to the Colossians 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)



- As Christians we have the ability to love others including our enemies, because God's love has been poured out in our heart 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)

- It is our unconditional love for others that will cause us to stand out most as Christians in our world and *open up doors of opportunity to share our faith with others*



- There is a saying that people do not care how much we know, but they do want to know how much we care for them
- Francis of Assisi wrote, “It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching.”
- Another unknown author wrote, “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”
- In a world that is becoming more and more materialistic and impersonal, as Christians we can make a great difference in our world by loving others with the unconditional love of Christ



In this teaching I will be looking at four things;

- i. Why having a genuine love for others at all times is so important
- ii. What can stop us from having a genuine love for others
- iii. In what ways can we practically demonstrate the love of Christ to others, and
- iv. How can we continually maintain a great love for ALL people in our own life



i) Why having a genuine love for others at all times is so important

- It is a key to building healthy relationships in our life

People respond to genuine love



In the book of Proverbs we read,

“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” **(Proverbs 18:24)**

- **It a key to maintaining healthy Christian Community in all of our church meetings**

People thrive in an atmosphere of love and acceptance



The Apostle Paul wrote,

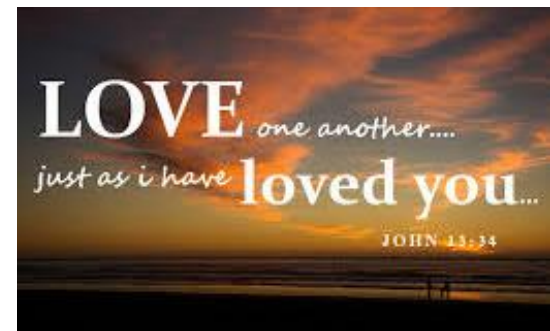
“that their hearts may be encouraged, **being knit together in love**, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.” **(Colossians 2:2)**

- It is a great key to helping others to come to Christ



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)**



- We reflect the character of Christ in our lives when we walk in love towards others. God is love and has a great love for all people



Jesus said,

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

- **It is a great key to maintaining emotional health**

Having loving and genuine friendships with others is a big part of enjoying the life and life more abundantly that Jesus spoke of in John 10:10

The Apostle John wrote,

“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” (3 John 1)



- Our rewards in heaven will be greatly determined by the degree to which we do things with a motivation of love

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Do all things without complaining and disputing.” (Philippians 2:14)



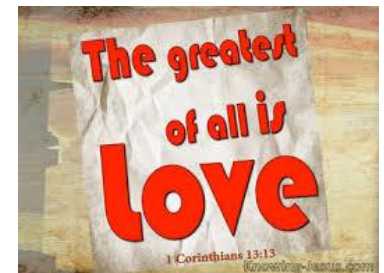
The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“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)**

Without love



clanging cymbals



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)



AND



- It is a great key to seeing unity in our homes, work places and church fellowship meetings (Unity is a great key to seeing God's blessings and favour in our lives)



In the book of Psalms we read, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing –Life forevermore.” (Psalm 133:1-3)

ii) What can stop us from having a genuine love for others

- Allowing offences to enter into our heart when people hurt us. We must always be quick to forgive 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)**



- **Not spending quality time with the LORD**

If we do not make time on a regular basis to spend quality time with the Lord, we are more likely to react in the flesh and become less loving



We can see this clearly in the following passage of Scripture in the gospel of Luke;

“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)



- **Having unrealistic expectations of others. None of us are perfect**

We have all been uniquely created by God

We have all had different experiences growing up

We need to learn to appreciate the uniqueness of all people and to recognise the good traits in others rather than continually looking for the faults in others



- **Having a critical and judgmental spirit (operating out of our fallen nature)**



Continually looking for the faults in others will prevent us from loving others unconditionally and invariably destroy our relationships with people

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.” **(Romans 2:1-2)**

- **Pride and self righteousness. Forgetting where we came from**



We all once were very lost before we came to Christ



We all are works in progress. None of us have attained perfection. We all need God's grace

We all need to continually extend grace to others, just as we need others to extend grace to us. People need to feel loved and accepted

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” **(Philippians 2:5-8)**

Jesus is our example of humility and love. He humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross because of His great love for us, before gloriously arising from the dead



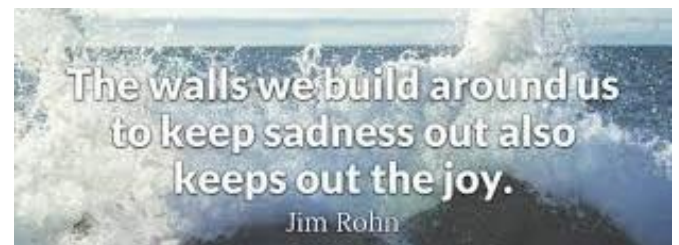
- **Allowing hurts from the past to stop us from being vulnerable and open in our relationships with others (Erecting walls around our heart)**

We must always *keep 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)

And



- **Having a fear of being rejected by others**

Fear of being rejected by others will prevent us from fully opening up our hearts to others

God's perfect love can remove this fear from our lives



The Apostle John wrote,

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

(1 John 4:18)

iii) In what ways can we practically demonstrate the love of Christ to others

- By being kind and considerate to others. Loving others the way that we would want to be loved

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.” **(1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)**



The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“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)



- By looking for opportunities to practically help and serve others in need

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)**



- **By sharing our faith and the love of Christ with others. The gospel is good news and offers a hope to all people**



The Apostle Paul wrote,

**“...And how shall they hear without a preacher?
And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As
it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those
who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad
tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:14-15)**

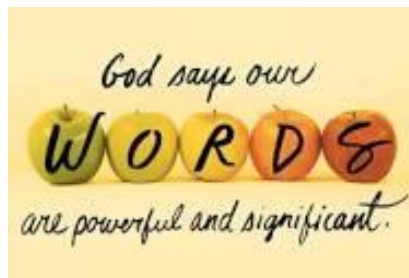
In many ways the best way that we can ever love a person is to help them to connect with Jesus Christ.
To help them to receive the gift of eternal life

- By looking for opportunities to encourage others that may be going through challenges

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)



**Compliment
people.**

**Magnify their
strengths,**



It is always important that we only use our words to build up and encourage others

- **To spend quality time with people**



For children the best way that we can love them as parents is to spend quality time with them

Sometimes we just need to be there for people with a listening ear to make them feel loved. As we listen to people often they become aware of what they need to do in life as they speak to us

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out.” (Proverbs 20:5)



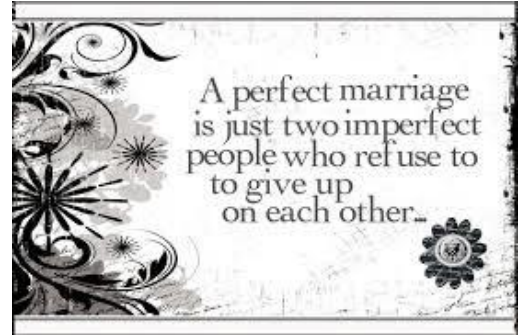
- By being loyal and committed in our significant relationships. That we do not give up easily on people

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) AND



- On some occasions we need to exercise tough love to help stop people that we care for from making poor choices in life, that would cause them much pain and suffering in their future

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” (Proverbs 27:6)

AND



iv) How can we continually maintain a great love for ALL people in our own life

- We must refuse to be critical and judgmental of others. We must continually choose to not operate out of our fallen nature

If we are always judging people
we will have no time to love others



The Apostle Paul wrote, “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 14:13)

Jesus Himself 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)**



- We must always be quick to immediately forgive all people that hurt us.
As we do the feelings will follow

Forgive others
as quickly as
you expect
God to forgive you.

We must give no foothold to the Devil to afflict us through unforgiveness. We must be always quick to reconcile differences with others

Unresolved hurt will prevent us from wholeheartedly loving others and will *negatively* affect our relationships both with God and with others



Jesus clearly emphasised the importance of always forgiving 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 need to learn to walk in the Spirit. That we continually *choose not to react in the flesh* but to stay in the Spirit at all times

The Apostle Paul wrote,



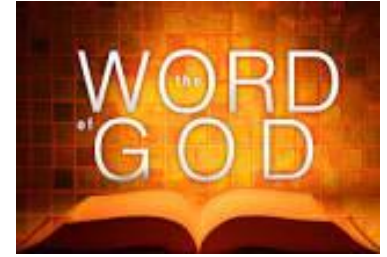
“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”
(Galatians 5:16-17)

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” **(Galatians 5:19-21)**

“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)**



- We need to continually RENEW our mind with the Word of God so that we maintain Kingdom thinking



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)

Continually meditating on the word of God helps us to maintain right thinking in a world that is getting more impersonal and less loving

- We need to continually look for the best in others



The Apostle Peter wrote,

"Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." (1 Peter 2:17)

We need to look for and **acknowledge** the good traits in others. As we consistently do this we will see the hearts of others opening up. Everyone responds to kind words and encouragement

*Choose to
see the
Good in people.*

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 need to maintain a disciplined thought life**

(We must always quickly take captive all wrong thoughts and replace them with Christ centred thoughts. We must refuse to entertain negative thoughts about others, because if we do, it will invariably affect our heart attitudes towards them)



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 choose our friends wisely. We become very much like the company that we keep**

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)

And



- **Most importantly we need to always maintain our first love for Jesus Christ.**

When Christ is continually our first love, we will always have His love and compassion for people and be prepared to live sacrificially for others

King David wrote,

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

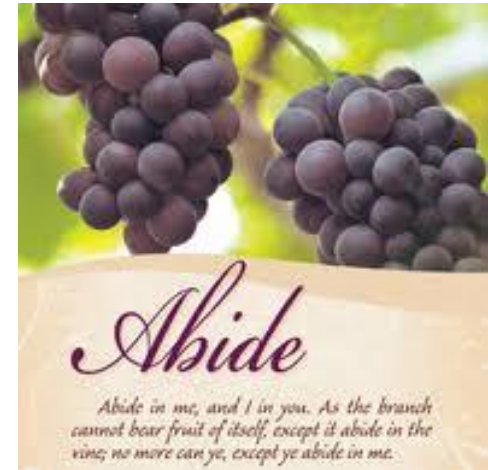


***The more we love Christ, the more we will love
the people that we connect with in life***

It is only in maintaining an ongoing intimate relationship with the LORD that we will bear much fruit and grow in our unconditional love of others.

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)**



So in conclusion:

May I encourage you to continually endeavour to love all people at all times



In doing this you will truly make a difference in our world for eternity. The world is looking for genuine love. It is Christ's love in our lives that will help others to have an encounter with Him

**The Apostle Paul wrote, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."
(Romans 12:18)**

So may I encourage you to make loving others a key focus in your Christian walk

In doing this you will;



- Shine brightly in this world for Jesus
- You will begin to develop healthy relationships
- You will bring much encouragement and strength to the lives of others
- You will make an eternal difference in the lives of many as you love people into God's Kingdom
- As you sow love into the lives of others you will also reap love in your homes and friendships, and
- You will experience great peace and emotional health. *This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, "...but the greatest of these is love."* **(1 Corinthians 13:13)**