

# LESSON 3: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Among the commands God has given His family, none are repeated more frequently than the command to love one another. Love for the family of God, as defined by God, is crucial to every other responsibility God gives concerning your brothers and sisters. If Biblically defined love is present, it will be the catalyst for all other aspects of the relationship to be accomplished.

### JOHN 13:34-35

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Love is a defining characteristic of God's people – love for God, for your neighbor, and even for your enemy (Matthew 22:36-40; 5:43-48; Luke 10:25-37). It is easy for Christians to be defined by many attributes (e.g. their profession of faith, church attendance, purity, self-control, etc.). While all these are important, Jesus identifies love for one another as the “badge” by which everyone will know those who follow Jesus (John 15:12, 17)! For, as Jesus loved His disciples (John 13:1; 15:9), His disciples should be known for how they love one another. Therefore, if you do not love your brothers and sisters in Christ, you are not a true disciple of Jesus!

### 1 JOHN 3:8-18

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The one who has been born again to be a child of God allows God's seed (His word) to work in him/her. This will have many implications in your life, including love for your brothers and sisters. You simply cannot be God's son/daughter and have His seed working in you and *not* love your brothers and sisters in Christ! Instead, a failure to love God's children shows that you are a child of Satan rather than God. For, it makes you like Cain, who did not love his brother and killed him (Genesis 4:1-12). In fact, God warns that if you hate your brother/sister you are as guilty as a murderer in His sight and cannot possibly expect to have eternal life

(Matthew 5:21-26). For, God expects His children who have come to know His love (shown through Jesus laying His life down for us even when we were still sinners, John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11) to possess an active and sacrificial love for the good of our brothers and sisters! This love requires actively doing what is good, not just empty words!

### 1 JOHN 4:7-12, 19-21

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God is love. No one can, therefore, accurately claim to know God and yet not love! If you profess to know the God who sacrificially sent His Son to die for you and then do not love your brothers and sisters in Christ, you do not truly know Him. Do not deceive and lie to yourself and others to think you can know God and not love those who are His children! In fact, John says that failing to love your brothers and sisters in Christ disqualifies you from being able to love God. For, you can see your brothers and sisters but cannot see God. Such a sacrificial demonstration of love requires it first to be seen in how you interact with those around you.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7

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It does not matter how spiritual you are or how much you do in practicing your religion (even if you give your body over entirely to God and die in service to Him) if you do not have love! However, no one gets to define love by their concepts of it. Instead, God's definition is the one you must use. You must carefully reflect on each attribute in this list and evaluate whether the way you treat your brothers and sisters (generally and individually) fits with this list. If not, it does not matter how good of a person you think you are, how good of a reputation you have, how many church services and Bible studies you attend, how devout you are in worship, how many people you lead to Christ, what roles of service you may provide in the church, or anything else, you will not go to Heaven! Notice carefully that there are actions involved in love – not just a feeling or profession of love. Furthermore, the characteristics listed indicate that loving your brothers and sisters will not always be easy and must be worked at diligently.

## 1 PETER 1:22-25

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God's word is like seed. When it is heard, believed, and obeyed, the result is purification from sin through Jesus Christ (John 8:31-32; Romans 6:16-18). However, the goal of the gospel is not just for you to experience this purification, but also for you to love. Christian love transcends mere physical familial bonds and forges deep relationships with those who also have obeyed God's word. Notice, though, how the love is described. First, it is sincere (without hypocrisy). It must be genuine care for the well-being of each Christian brother and sister that will be demonstrated through sacrificial actions. Second, it must come from a pure heart. It is not turned on for show or something that comes from the fringes of your life but is constantly flowing from the center of your being. Third, it is to be fervent and constant. It is stretched out in its intensity and not something that is only a minor focus or part of your life.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 3:12-13; 4:9-12

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Christians are taught by God to love (e.g. through His perfect example and His instructions). However, love should not be viewed as a quality to check off in your life. Rather, you should always be letting the seed of God's word work in your life to produce even more love toward your brothers and sisters (and everyone). So, even when you think you are showing love for your brothers and sisters, you must keep growing in love so love can overflow from your life (2 Peter 1:3-11)! Challenge yourself regularly to find even more ways to demonstrate the love you have for your brothers and sisters.

## CONCLUSION

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Since God is love, His children must show sincere love toward each other if they want to please Him. This love is critical to accomplishing every other aspect of the relationship God has designed in His family. Therefore, you must carefully evaluate the actions of your life to see whether the love of God flows freely and strongly from the core of your being!

## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

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How does love for one another identify those who are disciples of Christ?

How does the love you show demonstrate the seed that works in your life and who your father is?

What must the love God requires to look like?

Why is it impossible to truly know God if you do not love your brothers and sisters?

What is the reality of your religion and faith if it does not include love?

How does God define love?

How can Christian love be genuine, from a pure heart, and constant?

How can Christian love grow?

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