

LOVING LIKE JESUS

Those who desire to be Jesus's disciples must endeavor to learn Jesus's teachings and ways and imitate Him by walking as He walked (1 John 2:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:1). One aspect of Jesus's life that must be imitated is the way Jesus loved. Therefore, we must consider the Scriptures that give us insight into the way Jesus loved God and others so we can learn how to walk in His footsteps in the way that we love.

JOHN 14:27-31

Jesus knew His suffering and death on the cross were about to happen (Luke 18:31-33; John 14:1-4). But, Jesus saw this as a way for the world to know the love He had for the Father. His love could be seen in that He would do as the Father had commanded Him, fulfilling the eternal plan of God regarding salvation (Ephesians 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Acts 2:22-24). In this, we learn that true love for God is not just warm affection felt for God. Instead, it is about actively doing what the Father prefers to what you prefer, sacrificially giving yourself in His service. Therefore, loving the Father like Jesus means you also must sacrificially give yourself in obedience to God above living according to your desires and preferences (1 John 5:3-4).

JOHN 11:1-11, 32-37

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were Jesus's friends whom Jesus loved. Lazarus's sisters (v. 3) and the Jews who were consoling them (v. 36) saw Jesus as having a warm, friendly affection (love) toward Lazarus ("phileo" love in the Greek). This had been apparent through the way He had conducted Himself toward Lazarus in the past and the love for Lazarus and the sisters that was evident in his death. For, Jesus was moved with empathy toward the sisters and the death Lazarus had experienced (which was a consequence of sin's presence in the world) and wept. Certainly, Jesus's followers are also expected to show friendly and compassionate love to the point of being able to empathize with one another (Romans 12:10, 15).

However, Jesus's love for them went even deeper than this. Jesus is also said to have loved Lazarus and his sisters (v. 5) with sacrificial love ("agape" love in the Greek). This can be seen at least in part by Jesus's willingness to go to them in Judea, despite being warned about the Jews wanting to stone Him (v. 8-11). Similarly, loving others like Jesus loved means being willing to put yourself at risk for others to do what is in their best interests above yourself (Philippians 2:1-4).

JOHN 13:1

Jesus knew that His time had come when He would soon be arrested, mocked, beaten, and crucified, before He would be exalted (John 12:23-26). Despite this time having arrived (as He would be betrayed and arrested shortly after the Passover meal), Jesus's love (self-giving and sacrificial love) for His disciples did not stop so He could focus on Himself. Instead, Jesus kept loving them to the end, with nothing lacking! He was still focused on them. In fact, He demonstrated this through serving them, teaching them, encouraging them, and praying for them through this time (John 13-17), and even loving them after they would abandon Him (John 20-21)! For us, loving like Jesus also means that we should love people through the difficult times and not just at the times we may find it easy and convenient to show love for others.

MARK 10:17-22

When Jesus encountered a rich young ruler who desired eternal life, Jesus challenged Him through the command to sell what he had and follow Jesus. He did this because Jesus loved the man (selflessly and sacrificially). His love was seen in that He did not just tell the man whatever was easiest for him to hear. Instead, Jesus told him the truth He needed to hear, even when it would be challenging for Him! This may have even cost Jesus someone who would claim allegiance toward Him – and maybe even financially assist Him. Yet, Jesus did this because He cared about the man's soul above all (even more than the man's feelings). Similarly, loving others like Jesus requires us to love their spiritual wellbeing above everything else – including our relationships with them and their perceptions of us (Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 14:26).

JOHN 15:12-13

The love Jesus commanded from His followers was the same kind of love He demonstrated while He was on earth. This was a love that selflessly sacrificed His preferences and desires to do whatever was in the best interests of others. Jesus even carried this out to the point of laying down His life (Romans 5:6-11)! Despite this world being full of condemned sinners, Jesus left Heaven and lived on the earth so that He could teach and set the perfect example before sacrificially giving His own life on the cross. He did this so that we might not perish in our sins but could, instead, have eternal life in Heaven (John 3:16)! No one has demonstrated greater love for us than this! For, this does not just impact our temporary lives on earth, but it impacts our souls for all eternity by rescuing us from the eternal fires of Hell and providing us the opportunity to spend eternity with God in Heaven. So, the love Jesus wants people to imitate does not stop with empty words or even periodic acts of kindness. Instead, Jesus expects people to be selfless in their devotion to do what is in the best interest of others, especially on a spiritual level (1 John 3:16-18; Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-3).

EPHESIANS 5:1-2, 25-33

God expects His people to show the same kind of love that Jesus has demonstrated! His love for His people (the church) is demonstrated alongside the teachings about husbands and wives. Notice Jesus's love being sacrificial in nature to give Himself for the church, even though it meant a terrible death on the cross. Yet, He did it to make people holy and cleansed from sin so we could avoid the consequences of a fiery eternity in Hell. In this, you can see Jesus's love that is fully focused on both doing the Father's will and on doing what was necessary for those lost in sin. Therefore, since this is Jesus's love for us, we must love Him and the Father with selfless devotion and sacrificial service (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)! Furthermore, loving like Jesus requires husbands to love their wives sacrificially and selflessly!

CONCLUSION

Imitating Jesus requires that you love like Jesus loved. Although there is much more that could be discussed, we have seen Jesus's love demonstrated toward both God and other people. Ultimately, His love was shown through His sacrificial death on the cross to save sinners from spiritual death. Therefore, disciples of Jesus must sacrificially and selflessly love God and others!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to imitate something/someone?

How does Jesus being "Immanuel" make Him deserving of imitation?

How does Jesus sharing in human nature make Him deserving of imitation?

How does Jesus experiencing temptation while on earth make Him deserving of imitation?

How does Jesus's transfiguration make Him deserving of imitation?

Why is picking the right model important when imitating something/someone?

How is learning involved in discipleship?

How is imitation involved in discipleship?

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