

We Must Love Others

The Challenges We Face Today

One of the challenges that many followers of Jesus face is the ability to love others as the Bible commands us.

- Intellectually we know the Bible teaches we should love others, but we find it difficult to live this command daily.
- We find it easy to love those who love us and difficult to love those we don't like or don't get along with.
- We do not really have good current day examples of what it looks like to love others as the Bible teaches and therefore it is difficult to measure our obedience.
- There are many troubled relationships today, between spouses, parents and children, work relationships, and relationships in general. It is a lack of biblical love that keeps these relationships in constant need of mending.
- We have failed to realize that we cannot be a disciple of Jesus if we do not obey Him by loving one another as He taught and demonstrated.

These spiritual challenges must be faced head on and dealt with by learning how to love others as Jesus did.

Lesson Truth

Love is the end goal of how we are to live as a follower of Jesus. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are even commanded to love our enemies. Therefore, we must remove the barriers that keep us from loving others as God commands.

Lesson Goal

The goal for this lesson is for you to begin removing the barriers that are keeping you from loving others so that your love is demonstrated more and more in your daily thinking and behavior towards others.

Lesson Discussion

Love Is Not Optional



1Corinthians 13:13 ESV “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

There are many important teachings, guidelines and truths in the Bible. Of all of these great truths that we must live by, the greatest is love.

The only way we can truly love another is to deliberately choose to love them. Love is not a feeling we wait for before we love another. Love is an attitude and willingness to want the best for another, whether we think they deserve it or not.

Our love for others must be unconditional, just as God's love for us is unconditional. There are times when the feeling of love will accompany loving actions, but not always. We love regardless of what we are feeling.



Matthew 22:37-40 ESV “And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

God commands that we love our neighbor as ourselves. Who is your neighbor? Anyone you interact with through your daily life is your neighbor. You have a responsibility to love them as God loves them.

If we have negative feelings towards another, those feelings are indicators that something is out of order in our lives. Our feelings help us

know what the state of our attitude and thinking are at any particular moment.

If we let our feelings dictate how we act towards others, we will often act in an unloving way towards them. If someone causes me to feel bad, it is because I have taken something personally which then generates bad feelings.

Anytime we have unloving feelings towards another, we must stop and get it resolved. If we are acting contrary to God's standard in any way in our behavior to others, we are walking in disobedience and we must deal with that disobedience immediately.

If you are feeling resentful or bitter against someone, you must get rid of that attitude or you will not be able to love that person. You must forgive that person and then start loving them by actions and behaviors that demonstrate unconditional love.

Through the Holy Spirit we can love as God commanded. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can break free from negative thinking and negative behavior.



Ephesians 4:1-2 ESV "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,"

Our inability to love another is an indication that our relationship with God is out of order. We are walking in disobedience and we must repent and then intend to love that person whether we feel like it or not.

If you intend to follow Jesus, you must obey everything Jesus taught and commanded. You cannot be His disciple and you cannot be Christian unless you intend to be obedient to Him.

Intend To Love

The only way to begin living this truth about loving others is to intend to love others. When I intend to do something, I will deliberately and actively do it.



Romans 13:8-10 ESV "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

If I do not carry through by deliberately and actively loving others, I do not really intend to do it. If I intend to love others, I will stay alert for opportunities to demonstrate love for others, especially in those situations where it is difficult to love another.

I may not always have the feeling of love as I act in a loving way towards others. Remember, God does not command the feeling of love, but the action and behavior of love. The feeling will eventually follow if you begin loving others out of obedience to your Master.

Every day God will engineer opportunities for you so that you can obey His command to love others. You will either obey because you intend to obey, or you will shrink back and convince yourself that you cannot love the person in this particular circumstance.

In the lesson "Love Defined" you were taught specific ways that you can demonstrate your love for others. Review that lesson and 1 Corinthians 13 to see a wonderful list of actions and behaviors that you must intend to practice if you are to love others according to God's standard.

You must examine your attitudes towards everyone you come in contact with and those

you think about throughout your day. If you realize that you have an unloving attitude toward anyone, past or present, you must stop what you are doing and immediately work to resolve it.



1 Corinthians 13:1-3 ESV “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

No matter what sacrifices you make or what success you have in life, apart from love, you have not really accomplished anything. In the end you have gained nothing.

The Holy Spirit will make you aware of unloving attitudes towards others. Then, either you will obey the Holy Spirit by changing your thinking toward that person, or you will rebel and justify your attitude and continue in disobedience.

Any and all disobedience is sin. If you continue to practice such sin, your life is out of order with God’s standard and you have stopped following Jesus. Your sin will separate you from God and your spiritual journey will come to a sudden halt.

You must intend to change your thinking as the Holy Spirit reveals to you any unloving attitude toward another. It does not matter what the other person has done to you or anyone else, you have no right to harbor an unloving attitude towards anyone.



1 Peter 3:8 ESV “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.”

How can you change your thinking? First, if you have anything against that person such as bitterness, resentment, hatred, ill will, or

jealousy, you must repent of that attitude and ask for God’s forgiveness.

If the person has done something to you or someone else that you hold against them, you must forgive them. Even though they may not deserve to be forgiven, you must forgive them or you will be living in sin. If you do not forgive others from your heart, God will not forgive you.



Matthew 6:14-15 ESV “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”

Love Unconditionally

Intend to love others unconditionally. It does not matter what the behavior may be of those you interact with throughout the day, you must love them regardless of their behavior. That does not mean you condone wrong behavior, but that you love regardless of the behavior.

You show them kindness when they are unkind. You continue to desire God’s best for them, even in their rebellion and sin. You do not render evil for evil, but continue to do good to them regardless of what they do.



Colossians 3:12-14 ESV “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Jesus is our example of how to love others. Even while He was being nailed to the cross, he

asked the Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him.

We all fail at times to love others, but the Holy Spirit will always show you when you have an unloving attitude because it will affect your conscience and you will not feel right about your attitude, thinking, or behavior toward another.

Whenever the Holy Spirit convicts you of an unloving attitude, wrong thinking, or unloving behavior, you must admit it, confess it, and do whatever the Holy Spirit shows you to make it right. Then you must intend to love that person as God commands.

Unconditional love does not condone, agree with, or enable sinful or evil behavior, but exposes it, confronts it, and allows the person an opportunity to change their ways. But if they do not change, it is not your responsibility to try and change them.

Jesus confronted the wrong attitudes and behaviors of the Pharisees and Sadducees very bluntly. Yet they would not change, but instead, they wrongfully judged and condemned Jesus to be crucified.

People only change when they intend to change and realize the error of their ways. It may be a long time before they get there and they may never get there. That is God's problem, not yours. Your only responsibility is to love them unconditionally and do the next right thing God shows you to do.

Unconditional love holds others accountable for their actions. It never enables others to live ungodly by ignoring wrong behavior. Unconditional love rejoices in the truth always, stands up for the truth, and exposes evil.

As we hold others accountable to do what is right, we must speak the truth in love, not wield it like a sledge hammer to crush people. As we speak the truth in love, we allow others the opportunity to change.

If they do not repent and they continue in their sin, they will experience the consequences of

their disobedience. Vengeance belongs to the Lord, not to us. Our part is to mourn their disobedience and pray for them that their eyes may be opened to the truth.

Disciples Must Love One Another

Jesus gave a new command to His disciples, that they love one another. One of the things that can destroy fellowship in a disciple community is lack of unity, love and respect for one another. These things will creep in if the disciple community does not embrace accountability.



John 13:34-35 ESV "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Disciples should give preference to each other above those outside the disciple community. Those in the disciple community who are struggling or in need must receive immediate attention first.

Love for the brethren must take precedence over love for everyone outside the community, including family and relatives. It is often our family that is outside the community of disciples that can influence us to act in a way that may be contrary to what is best for the disciple community.

We must love and provide for our families, but it must be done according to God's Word. We must not violate the standard of accountability to the disciple community in favor of our families. Often our families will be within the disciple community, but this is not always the case.

As love within the disciple community is demonstrated and everyone is held accountable, this becomes a tremendous witness to the

outside world and many will want to know what it is that is behind this wonderful unity and love.

Only when self is put off and the life of Jesus is allowed to have its way in our life, will we find true unity in the faith and individual and community transformation. We must give up the right to ourselves now and forever more.

If we only give lip service to the commands and teachings of Jesus and do not practice and live them, we become hypocrites and an insult to our Savior and Master. This can become a cancer in the disciple community that will grow and destroy the faith of others.

We must love our fellow disciples by holding each other accountable to living and teaching the commands and teachings of our Master. Each disciple community must approach accountability in an orderly way that demonstrates love, justice, fairness, consistency, and firmness.



1 Peter 1:22 ESV “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.”

Above all, God’s love and His standard of love must be given priority in each and every situation. Individual attitudes, opinions, ideas, creeds, theologies, or anything else must give way to love and justice according to God’s Word and His standard.

There will be times when people’s passions, opinions, or approaches will be guided by pride, arrogance, self elevation, or self seeking. People have a tendency to want to be right and to believe that their way or opinion is the right one, often stubbornly.

The disciple community must avoid such behaviors and confront them honestly and openly. The Holy Spirit must always be allowed to have the final word. That only happens when

we put our own opinions, wants, needs, expectations, and demands aside and humbly and honestly seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

Love One Step at a Time

Loving others, especially those we disdain or those we do not get along with will be very difficult for many people. We really don’t want to have to love them, but we know we must if we are to be obedient to our Lord.

Each of us already knows those in our lives whom we may have difficulty demonstrating love to. Make a list of those you already know of. Pick one person to begin with and focus your prayer time on them and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you might demonstrate love to them today.

If you have anything against anyone on your list, you must repent and forgive them from your heart, and then you will be spiritually released to love them as God wants you to love them. You can never love as you should if you continue to harbor ill will in your heart towards them.

Review 1 Corinthians 13 often and familiarize yourself with the characteristics of love. Write down small, simple ways you might demonstrate some of the characteristics towards those you have a difficult time loving.

It doesn’t have to be anything radical, but just one thing, one step toward changing your attitude and behavior toward them. Each time you have contact with them, do some small kindness or say some kind thing, even if you don’t feel like it.



1 John 3:10 ESV “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”

Even when others are rude or unkind to you, you must retaliate with kindness and love. It is

very difficult at first, but over time it will become easier and easier and you will experience more peace and joy in your life.

Love in Word and Deed

Many people talk of love and can say very loving words. Some are particularly gifted in expressing love in words. But remember, words are cheap. They mean nothing unless they are backed up by consistent loving behavior toward the beloved.



Romans 12:9-10 ESV “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

Love is demonstrated in how we act towards others; not just in what we say or in how we feel. Our love must be sincere as we devote ourselves to others in love. We must take the focus off ourselves and keep the focus on loving others as Jesus commands.

Some will give love only to get what they want. Once they have what they want, then the loving behavior will begin to cease. When our love is motivated by our own selfish desires and indulgences, love will soon fade away.

Anyone can be good for awhile and demonstrate loving behavior when they want affection or love from others. But unless we learn to love others consistently from our heart and keep that love burning, love will soon fizzle out.

Many boy-meets-girl scenarios happen just like this. At some point the infatuation wears off, the loving behavior ceases, and the relationship falls apart. The large number of divorces is evidence of this dynamic. One out of two marriages will fail because one or both partners stop loving.

How do we keep love alive in any relationship? We must intend to keep it alive and work to

keep it alive. We must understand what true love is and keep our lives focused on loving others in both word and deed.

If we do not maintain a loving relationship with our Master, our relationship with Him will also fall apart. This usually results in other relationships falling apart also. Our relationship with Jesus is the key to having right relationships with others.

If we do not love others according to the command of Jesus, we are willfully rejecting Him and His Word. We will soon stop following Him. Even though it may seem impossible to love as Jesus commands, He would not command this if it were not possible to love this way.



1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ESV “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;^[a] it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Love Your Enemies

Jesus taught us that we must love Him, our brethren, and our neighbors. But He also commanded us to love our enemies. An enemy is an adversary or opponent who intends to do us harm. Why would Jesus command us to love our enemies?



Luke 6: 27-31 ESV “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic^[a] either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.”

Hatred is like a cancer to the soul. It does no good for us and can cause us to be bitter, resentful and angry. Jesus had plenty of good reasons to hate His enemies, especially since they murdered Him unjustly.

Yet even when they crucified Him, Jesus whispered “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”. Learning to love our enemies may be the most difficult challenge in loving others.



Luke 23:32-34 ESV “Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.”

It is very difficult to love those we despise or hate. Yet if we are to be Christian, we must love them. The question to ask your self is this: “am I willing to love them as Jesus commanded?”

If your answer is “I cannot or will not”, you have just rejected Jesus and His Word. You cannot be His disciple and you have stopped following Him. If your answer is “I will be obedient” and you begin to intend to love others as Jesus commanded, you are His disciple.

Even though your answer is “yes”, you will not be able to love perfectly right away. As you learn to submit to the life of Jesus in you, you will find the power to love more and more as Jesus loved.

We must love God, the brethren, our neighbors and our enemies. We can only do this when we separate the behavior from the person. We do not have to love the behavior, but we must love the person. You can learn to love. As you submit more and more to the Holy Spirit and let Him have His way in your life, you will experience more of this fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love.



One Step for Living This Truth

The foundation of the *One Step* series that you have been reading is to be able to live God’s truth, one truth at a time, one step at a time.

Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to allow the truth taught in this lesson to be lived in your own personal life.

You only have to do this step to master this lesson. Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do this step as directed below.

You must learn to love others as Jesus commands. The next section will suggest the step that you can take to begin living this truth.

ACTION STEP

Read this action step every day and then spend at least 30 minutes a day with God, concentrating on Him only.

Review this lesson and the lesson on *Love Defined* as often as you need to so you can be reminded of what love looks like when it is lived out daily in your life.

Each day during your time with God, ask the Holy Spirit to show you any unloving attitudes or behavior you demonstrated to others recently.

Ask God’s forgiveness and determine if you need to make things right with the person by asking their forgiveness. You must do whatever the Holy Spirit shows you and you must do it immediately.

Try to separate people's behavior from the person and love the person. We do not have to condone or accept wrong behavior from others, but we must love the person because God loves them.

You will have completed this lesson when on several occasions you have demonstrated a changed attitude and behavior toward those you have had difficulty loving.

Continue to work on the truth in this lesson until you are satisfied that you are demonstrating unconditional love more consistently to others.

Continue to read a chapter in the Gospels each day. Write down thoughts or Scriptures that relate to loving others.

As you continue to practice living this truth, you may need to come back to this lesson often. Don't be in a rush to start the next lesson.

Even if it takes several weeks to get this truth integrated into your life, keep it as your primary focus until you feel you are living it.

Remember, the most common problem with Christians today is that they know many truths about the Christian life, but are not able to live them. Make sure you are solidly living this truth before attempting to tackle the next truth.