

## What does it mean to sacrificially and unconditionally love others? ([1 John 4:10–12](#))

The Bible is a complex narrative. But what is the big—yet simple—idea behind all the stories and teachings contained in this ancient book? Love—love dominates God’s story.

Jesus confirmed that two commands from the Old Testament—love God and love others—as the greatest of all the commandments during an encounter recorded in the New Testament between Jesus and the religious leaders. [See [Mark 12:28–34](#).]

Followers of God are to live lives distinctly different from those around them. They are to be forgiving and self-giving, showing love to all.

Our capacity to love begins with receiving God’s love for us. From this reservoir we pour out love toward each other. The presence of God’s Spirit in us, working through us to overcome our passion for self in favor of loving others, is confirmation that we are in fact children of God.

### KEY VERSE

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ([1 John 4:10–12](#))

### KEY IDEA

I am committed to loving God and loving others.

### KEY APPLICATION: What difference does this make in the way I live?

For one thing, Jesus’ love in our hearts enables us to love those we could never love before.

The following story is an amazing display of God’s love and a strong example of the power of how radically a life can be changed by Christ.

Chris Carrier of Coral Gables, Florida, was ten years old when a man became so angry with Chris's father that he abducted Chris. The kidnapper burned him with cigarettes, stabbed him numerous times with an ice pick, shot him in the head, and then dumped him out to die in the Everglades. Miraculously, Chris survived and was found. His only lasting physical effect from the ordeal was losing sight in one eye. His attacker was never captured.

Carrier became a Christian and later served as a youth pastor at a church in Florida. One day, he received word that a man named David McAllister, a seventy-seven-year-old frail and blind ex-con living in a Miami Beach nursing home, had confessed to committing the crime all those years ago.

So Carrier headed to Miami. Did he take a gun? Did he plot revenge on the way there? After all, now the tables were turned. The old man was helpless, just as Chris had been when McAllister tortured and shot him, leaving him for dead. No. Revenge wasn't Chris's motive, as it had been his captor's. Carrier was going God's direction—toward forgiveness. And, amazingly, yes, even love.

Chris began visiting McAllister regularly and often read the Bible and prayed with him. Through these visits, Carrier eventually led McAllister to his Lord. Carrier said, "While many people can't understand how I could forgive David McAllister, from my point of view, I couldn't not forgive him. If I'd chosen to hate him all these years, or spent my life looking for revenge, then I wouldn't be the man I am today, the man my wife and children love, the man God has helped me to be."

Each day as we live out our lives, Jesus loves us unconditionally and sacrificially, and he offers ongoing forgiveness. He asks us, his followers, to offer the same in our relationships. Why? This new breed of love allows us to be involved in healthy relationships and also to be free to express God's love to the world.

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