

Love Is the Greatest!

“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”
I Corinthians 12:31

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”
I Corinthians 13:13

Introduction:

1. The text enclosed by the verses above exalts brotherly love far over being an apostle or any spiritual gift.
 - a. The emphatic lesson of this passage by comparative worth and detailed definition exalts brotherly love.
 - b. Paul used this charitable blast to condemn, convict, and convert Corinth’s fighting about spiritual gifts.
 - c. If you consider the verses carefully, how could God and Paul have stated the case for love any stronger?
 - d. He even used the greatest examples of charity and devotion as vanity without getting along with others.
 - e. The charity here is getting along with others in personal relationships – nothing more spiritual or lofty.
 - f. This passage is likely the most useful to those grasping it to prove cessationism against Charismatics.
 - g. For further details about this passage and apostolic gifts ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/heresies/tongues.php>.
 - h. For a detailed exposition of the whole chapter ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/first-corinthians-13.pdf>.
2. The Bible in both testaments presents loving neighbors and brothers as the top relational command and duty.
3. We esteem God’s precepts concerning this subject to be right and hate all contrary opinions (Ps 119:128).
4. We recently studied David’s special traits; he clearly loved God and men (Psalm 27:4; 122:6-9; 119:63,79).
5. Presenting each man perfect in Christ is every pastor’s goal, so this subject is important (Col 1:28-29; 3:14).
6. This subject will do more for you growing in favor with God and man than any other (Pr 22:1; Luke 2:52).
7. **What is love?** Of God, it is a passionate desire to please Him, know Him, serve Him, enjoy Him, exalt Him!
8. **What is love?** Of others, it is selfless desire and help for their profit, by Bible terms, with an eye to heaven!
9. While love of God is greater in duty and value than love of others, nonetheless love of others is very crucial.
10. While love of God is greater in duty and value than love of others, these sermons are about loving others.
11. While love of God is greater in duty and value than love of others, the love chapter is only brotherly love.
12. We are a doctrinal church committed to truth, but love is greater by several measures; this does not mean we compromise doctrine for love, but it does mean we emphasize love as New Testament doctrine exalts it.
13. We must avoid doctrine without love (heartless knowledge Paul condemned in I Cor 13:1-3; 8:1-3) and love without doctrine (the foolish emotion and sentiment of compromise that Jehu condemned in II Chr 19:2).
14. God in mercy has led this church a long way in its 37 years of existence from little or no love to much love.
15. Recent prayer meetings the last two weeks have been for more love, by God’s providence and emphasis.
16. The following categories about love will certainly overlap, but the repetition will be good and is by design.
17. When entering the divine library, we should be filled with expectant wonder; this topic will not disappoint.
 - a. Religions point a thousand directions – from child sacrifice to Nirvana emptiness to ancestor worship to suicide bombing to reincarnational death cycles to trips to Mecca or Salt Lake City to stoning the devil.
 - b. Christian churches can vary from political agendas to growth gurus to seminary classes to music awards.
 - c. Instead of these many diabolical and dysfunctional emphases, we learn love is the great relational virtue.
 - d. We learn God is love, has demonstrated it in the highest degree, empowers us for love, and rewards it.
 - e. It is exalted so high that even the greatest conceivable religious accomplishments are vanity without it.
 - f. If your heart and mind are sound, by God’s enlightenment, you know it sufficiently proves inspiration.
 - g. Do we make too much of love? Hardly! We may sound too dramatic, but we love every word of God.
18. Our recent, long study of David reminded us of his great love for God’s house and congregational worship.
 - a. The house of God, from Jacob (Bethel) to Moses to Solomon to Zerubbabel, is best in a local church.
 - b. A church is far better than any or all of these previous houses of God (II Cor 6:16; Hebrews 12:22-24).
 - c. Can local church members adorn and build an exceeding magnificent palace like David and Solomon?
 - d. A church is an edifice of living stones, a body of believers, held together by love (Co 3:14; Ep 4:15-16).
 - e. We can build this edifice to the glory of God by growing in love, the more excellent way (I Cor 12:31).
 - f. For David’s goal of exceeding magnificent ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/church/exceeding-magnificent/sermon.php>.

Love Is the Greatest ...

1. Duty	5. Grace	9. Source	13. Cure
2. Concept	6. Evidence	10. Challenge	14. Extreme
3. Definition	7. Measure	11. Example	15. Error
4. Ideal	8. Means	12. Bond	16. Creativity

LOVE IS THE GREATEST DUTY

- A. God has placed us under greater obligation to love than the other stated duties of either testament.
- B. You cannot get past the books of Moses without encountering this commandment (Lev 19:11-18).
 1. Far from altering Moses' Law, Jesus confirmed and exalted the rule of love (Mat 19:19; 22:39).
 2. Love of God and neighbor are not only commandments, they are first and greatest (Mat 22:38).
 3. It is the first two laws, the royal law, and includes all the law (Mk 12:28-34; Jas 2:8; Gal 5:14).
 4. Proper love of others fulfills the law, because the law is comprehended by love (Rom 13:8-10).
 5. The Ten Commandments include both commands: 1-4 for love to God and 6-10 love to others.
- C. Our Lord heavily stressed loving one another (John 13:34; 15:12,17; I John 3:11,23; II John 1:3).
- D. Apostles – James, Peter, John – ordered it (James 2:8-13; I Pet 1:22; 2:17; I Jn 2:8-10; 3:23; 4:21).
- E. Paul required love to increase for the godliness to meet Christ (I Thess 3:12-13; 4:9-10; Phil 1:9).
- F. True godliness, or walking as God's children, requires walking in love (Eph 5:1-2; Matt 5:43-48).
- G. Scripture teaches us to love God, husband, wife, children, brethren, pastor, neighbor, enemy, etc.
- H. God's commands are not grievous – this one is gloriously wonderful, if it were only kept (I Jn 5:3).
- I. Without brotherly love as defined by God, all other Christian gifts, graces, or actions are worthless.
- J. The Day of Judgment will include brotherly love as a top concern (Matt 25:31-46; I Tim 6:17-19).
- K. We should provoke each other to love and good works by example and instruction (Heb 10:24).

LOVE IS THE GREATEST CONCEPT

- A. Love is a simple word with a wide variety of meanings to different people – only God can define it.
 1. The infinite and independent Jehovah God is love, illustrated it perfectly, and defined it for us.
 2. He made each man's unique soul, ordained life's relationships, and prescribes the perfect rules.
 3. Elton John and Whitney Houston sang about "love," but they know nothing about it (I Jn 4:10).
 4. Elton John sings about "love," but he means perverse love committed with sodomite buddies.
 5. Whitney Houston sang about "love," but she was worse, with the greatest love being self-love.
 6. We live by every word of God, whether the *Pericope Adulterae* or this simple, precious word.
- B. Love is not chemistry, circumstances, "clicking," or any other childish, foolish term to describe it.
 1. If we include those terms, then we might add puppy love, a crush, infatuation, pitter-patter, etc.
 2. Love does not just happen; it is a perspective and plan toward others to help them optimize life.
 3. God expects you to love everyone you should, even enemies, just like He does (Matt 5:43-48).
 4. God expects you to love anyone you should, a wounded Jew or church members (I Cor 12:18).
 5. God expects you to love such persons regardless of compatibility, convenience, or convention.
 6. You might love ice cream because its flavor positively affects your feelings, but not persons.
- C. Love is more than a feeling – it keeps God's commandments toward others (I Jn 5:2-3; II Jn 1:6).
 1. This fact assumes rightly that God's commandments are the best possible way to treat others.
 2. Loving God and neighbor fulfills the entire law of God (Mat 22:37-40; Ro 13:8-10; Jas 2:8-10).
 3. If I love a man, I will not kill him, steal from him, commit adultery with his wife, etc., etc., etc.
 4. The golden rule – doing to others, as you would have them do to you – is love (Matthew 7:12).
 5. Love is proper thoughts, words, and actions toward others that God in infinite wisdom expects.
 6. Love is proper thoughts, words, and actions toward others for their benefit, pleasure, and profit.

- D. Therefore, love is a choice, and the lack of it cannot be excused as an impulse you no longer have.
1. What most people call love is lust – but those strong feelings have nothing to do with true love.
 2. It is impossible to fall in or out of Bible love, because it is an action that is put on and kept on.
 3. Because you lack the feelings of love is not an excuse – choose to love and feelings will come.
 4. If you exalt the feelings of love (actually lust), your marriage is at risk and adultery is nearby.
 5. Attention from an attractive person always produces feelings – though a capital crime to God.
 6. The familiarity, knowledge, and routine of marriage (after about 48 hours) can easily disappear.
 7. Fixing love is easy in marriage, with Christ (Re 2:4-5), and to brothers – choose to give love.
 8. A Proverb commentary for this point ... http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/07_18.php.
- E. Love is the superlative relational bond – opposed to and superior to fear, duty, instinct, service, etc.
1. We learn God is love, has illustrated it perfectly, defined it, empowers us for it, and rewards it.
 2. While love is a duty, yea, a command, yet it is motivated and driven by bowels of compassion.
 3. Love has no fear, for it is so other oriented that it has no regard for self (I Jn 4:18; II Co 12:15).
 4. Forget reciprocity, love or return from others, for that is not true Christian love (Lu 14:12-14).
 5. Jesus taught it, and Paul quoted it, that giving has a greater blessing than getting (Acts 20:35).
 6. If two or more were to relate by its terms, only perfect peace, pleasure, and profit would result.
 7. A regenerate heart and mind knows this love sufficiently proves the Bible a supernatural book.
- F. Love is kind affection preferring others before self (Rom 12:10; 15:1-2; I Cor 10:24; Phil 2:1-4).
1. This is a glorious concept fully against the natural, popular, devilish love of self (II Tim 3:1-2).
 2. The world foams at the mouth about self-esteem, though they know it is high among criminals!
 3. This thinking by the world's best and brightest proves they are morally and practically insane.
 4. Bible love is opposite the perverse selfishness and destructive sins of self-love and self-esteem.
 5. What if? What if everyone esteemed and honored all others more important than themselves?
 6. What if everyone showed this fantastic alteration of human nature to each individual person?
 7. Christians never think, not for a second, of others doing this to them, but rather them to others.
 8. In any setting and at all times, you should consider yourself the least important person present.
 9. A couple life priorities are ... *I Am Third* ([here](#)) ... and ... *JOY = Jesus, Others, and then You*.
 10. What if? Your prayer requests were mostly for others? Your prayers were mostly for others? Your concern for prosperity was mostly for others? Your health was less important than others?
 11. What if you used social media for others, knowing only a very few want to know about you?
 12. For much Bible proof against self-love and self-esteem ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/lie-of-selflove.pdf>.

LOVE IS THE GREATEST DEFINITION

- A. Love is ... sacrificial desire producing action to help another person realize God's best for his life.
1. Love is ... *sacrificial*. It values others more important, so it will invest anything for its objects.
 2. Love is ... *desire*. Love involves passionate thoughts. Do not foolishly exclude spirit for action.
 3. Love is ... *action*. Love that is felt, believed, or professed is worthless. It must produce efforts.
 4. Love is ... *help*. Its role is to aid others, make a difference, and exploit the precious privilege.
 5. Love is ... *another*. Love is not self-centered, but other-centered. Love looks away from self.
 6. Love is ... *God's best*. It knows God's approval and pleasure are the supreme goals for all men.
 7. Love is ... *his life*. It seeks the best for another's life, here and hereafter, even at self's expense.
- B. Paul summarized the true definition of love in a 15-part glorious sentence in I Corinthians 13:4-7.
1. Love *suffers long*. It will tolerate many offences and still love on (Proverbs 10:12; 17:9; 19:11).
 2. Love *is kind*. It considers others in a gentle, sympathetic, or benevolent way (Proverbs 19:22).
 3. Love *does not envy*. It does not harbor evil feelings because of another's advantage (Pr 27:4).
 4. Love *does not vaunt itself*. It seeks instead to exalt and honor others (Prov 13:10; Phil 2:1-4).
 5. Love *is not puffed up*. It does not think more highly of self than right (I Cor 4:6; 5:2; 8:1).
 6. Love *does not behave itself unseemly*. It is conventional and becoming (Phil 4:8; Col 3:19).

7. Love *seeks not her own*. It will sacrifice self for others (I Cor 10:24,33; Rom 15:2; Eph 5:25).
 8. Love *is not easily provoked*. It will tolerate a lot before reacting (James 1:19; Pr 14:17; 19:11).
 9. Love *thinks no evil*. It will not allow suspicion, but rather believe the best of others (I Tim 6:4).
 10. Love *does not rejoice in iniquity*. It is grieved to see others sin (Lev 19:17-18; Ps 119:136).
 11. Love *rejoices in the truth*. It is glad when its object is in the truth (III John 1:3-4; James 3:17).
 12. Love *bears all things*. It is willing to help others and endure any slights (Rom 15:1-2; Gal 6:2).
 13. Love *believeth all things*. It always places the best construction on others (I Corinthians 11:18).
 14. Love *hopes all things*. Even if circumstances seem contrary, love hopes good (Philemon 1:21).
 15. Love *endures all things*. It is not provoked but tolerates evil or injuries by others (II Co 12:15).
 16. For much greater detail about this definition ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/definition-of-love.pdf>.
- C. Note in the definition above – what the 15 phrases mean, their connections, and their proportion.
1. Of the 15 phrases – 10 are about others’ actions, 4 are what you do not do, and 1 is positive!
 2. It can surprise first-time students many of the phrases are negative – tolerating others’ actions!
 3. Yet experience teaches exactly this emphasis – forgiving others – is a very large part of love.
 4. There is little implied and nothing stated for feelings, embraces, gifts, celebrations, cards, etc.
- D. How do love and charity relate? Are they different? Do they include one another by definition?
1. In some respects, consistent with the dictionary, charity and love are synonyms for each other.
 2. There is not an error, fault, or weakness in the KJV, for charity adds an emphasis much needed.
 3. Charity is a subset of love; it is more love’s negative aspects e.g. suffer, forgive, forbear, etc.
 4. **Charity**. A disposition to judge leniently and hopefully of the character, aims, and destinies of others, to make allowance for their apparent faults and shortcomings; large-heartedness.
 5. Peter separated brotherly kindness (love) and charity in expected Christian conduct (II Pet 1:8).
 6. Is it right for charity to be highest? Indeed! It is harder to forgive offences than take to dinner!
- E. Love includes the rebuking and correcting of sin in other men (Lev 19:17; Phil 1:9-11; Rev 3:19).
1. Since you have their best interests at heart, you want to help them (Proverbs 9:8; 27:5; 28:23).
 2. How does a parent show love to a child? By correcting any errors (Pr 13:24; 3:12; Heb 12:6-8).
 3. Though smiting truly is an act of kindness and love, love is much more than this (Psalm 141:5).
 4. Over-emphasis on this part of love is a distortion and creates a Gestapo mentality in a church.
- F. However, love much more includes the bowels of compassion in God’s elect (Colossians 3:12-15).
1. **Bowels**. Transferred sense. Considered as the seat of the tender and sympathetic emotions, hence: pity, compassion, feeling, ‘heart.’ Consider Genesis 43:30; I Kings 3:26; Song of Solomon 5:4; Jeremiah 4:19; 31:20; Lamentations 1:20; 2:11; and I John 3:17.
 2. It is a choice to restrict or activate bowels of feelings for energy to love (I John 3:17; Col 3:12).
 3. It is a choice to enlarge your heart or your bowels and feelings toward another (II Cor 6:11-13).
 4. This aspect of love is distinguished from coming with a rod in judgment (I Corinthians 4:21).
 5. Consider one mind, compassion, pity, courtesy, blessing for railing, and peace (I Peter 3:8-11).
 6. Love is lowly, kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving of others as is God of us (Eph 4:1-3,31-32).
 7. Love will easily sacrifice personal liberty for another (Rom 14:15; I Corinthians 8:1,13; 10:33).
 8. Love covers transgressions and forgives them repeatedly (Prov 17:9; I Pet 4:8; Matt 18:21-22).
 9. Love includes hospitality (Rom 12:13; Ac 2:44-46), but it must be without grudging (I Pet 4:9).
- G. Love is jealous, but not in the way men naturally think – true love is jealous for its object’s gain!
1. Paul was jealous for the Corinthians – that they would not be seduced into error (II Cor 11:1-4).
 2. In light of love’s concept and definition – Paul’s jealousy was for Corinth’s good, not his own.
- H. Yet, read Solomon’s blast closing out his song about love as strong as death, fire, etc. (S.S. 8:6-7).
1. True love is fiercely, jealously possessive like death’s strength and cruelty and a very hot fire.
 2. True love cannot be extinguished by any amount of water nor can it be purchased for any price.

LOVE IS THE GREATEST IDEAL

- A. **Ideal.** A conception of something, or a thing conceived, in its highest perfection, or as an object to be realized or aimed at; a perfect type; a standard of perfection or excellence.
- B. Men have sought to find an environment, philosophy, or system to realize perfection, or utopia, but they have miserably failed in all forms, especially idiocy like communism, hippy movement, etc.
- C. What causes fighting and wars? The selfish lusts in men not replaced with love for men (Jas 4:1,5).
 - 1. This leads to foolish destruction of war, whether a world war or cold war in a family or church.
 - 2. War causes confusion, despair, fear, hopelessness, loss, mayhem, murder, pain, trouble, worry!
- D. We identify love here as ideal – the highest perfection for relations – for its *perfectness* (Col 3:14).
- E. If two or more were to relate by its definition, only perfect peace, pleasure, and profit would result.
- F. Jesus taught men how to be perfect children of God: He required love of enemies (Matt 5:43-48).
- G. We must love one another to show the invisible presence of God perfected in us (I John 4:12-13).

LOVE IS THE GREATEST GRACE

- A. We would not love at all were it not for the grace of God giving us a nature and teaching us to love.
- B. By nature we are very hateful creatures, living in malice and envy, and hating others (Titus 3:3).
- C. By nature we are the sons and followers of the devil, who is a murderer (Eph 2:1-3; John 8:44).
 - 1. Devils believe and tremble about God and doctrine, but they cannot and do not have any love.
 - 2. A primary device of Satan is to divide and conquer through hate and envy (I John 3:11-13).
 - 3. Bitter envying and strife in the heart is devilish confusion and evil of hell (James 3:14-16).
 - 4. Our warfare is in the spiritual realm with satanic forces, not carnal foes (Ephesians 6:10-13).
 - 5. The flesh rebels with such animosity against this grace that it is an obvious true trait of saints.
- D. Saul hated Christians exceedingly (Acts 9:1; 26:11), but Paul loved them dearly (II Cor 12:15).
- E. Faith and knowledge are great, but they require love and can inhibit love (I Corinthians 8:1; 13:2).
- F. Faith, hope, and charity are wonderful graces of the Spirit, but the greatest is love (I Cor 13:13).

LOVE IS THE GREATEST EVIDENCE

- A. The certain assurance of eternal life to ourselves and to others is by our degree of brotherly love.
- B. Jesus taught His apostles that the mark to identify them as His was brotherly love (John 13:34-35).
- C. Faith is evidence (John 5:24; I John 5:1), but it is very weak evidence without works (Jas 2:14-26).
- D. Devils believe and tremble about God and doctrine, but they cannot and do not have brotherly love.
- E. Faith must have love added to it for it to be valid evidence of salvation (Gal 5:6; I Peter 1:21-22).
- F. The real evidence of election is love of the brethren resulting in action (II Pet 1:5-11; I Thes 1:2-4).
- G. Election and regeneration are proved by abounding love of the brethren (I John 3:10-14; 4:7-12).
- H. We have no real evidence we truly love God unless we love the sons of God (I John 4:20 – 5:1).
- I. We can assure our hearts before God by practicing love as He showed us (I John 3:16-19; 4:12-17).
- J. Jesus taught eternal life by hospitality (Matt 25:31-46; 10:41-42; I Tim 6:17-19; Is 32:8; Heb 6:10).
- K. For more about assurance of eternal life ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/assurance-of-eternal-life.pdf>.

LOVE IS THE GREATEST MEASURE

- A. We approach perfection by God's measurement of us according to our degree of love for others.
 - 1. No spiritual gift or action, even extreme giving, has value without brotherly love (I Co 13:1-3).
 - 2. Other measures of a church are lower – doctrine, prayer, giving, evangelizing, building, etc.
- B. Ephesus lost first love for Christ (Rev 2:4-5), and the Galatians lost it for each other (Gal 5:13-15).
- C. God's perfect children love enemies (Mat 5:43-48); His love is perfected when we love (I Jn 4:12).
- D. Paul described love as the bond of perfection and growth for churches (Col 3:12-15; Eph 4:15-16).
- E. Jesus taught love as the great measure of His disciples (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35).
- F. Ministers, like David, provide an example for the believers by loving good men (Titus 2:7 cp 1:8).

- G. Paul prayed for it to increase (I Thess 4:9-10), abound (I Thess 3:12), and continue (Heb 13:1).
- H. Paul desired and commended its increase (Eph 1:15-16; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:3-4; 2:2; II Thess 1:3).
- I. Many men were measured heroes by their faith and hope (Hebrews 11). But love is much greater.
 - 1. Love will emulate Jesus Christ (John 13:34 cp Eph 5:25-30) and Paul (I Thessalonians 2:7-12).
 - 2. David and Jonathan had a relationship that ought to be emulated by all men (II Samuel 1:26).
- J. Coveting the best spiritual gifts is desirable, but practicing charity is superior (I Cor 12:28 – 13:13).
 - 1. Here is one of the glorious declarations about love – it is more excellent than being an apostle!
 - 2. Without it, the best use of the best spiritual gifts imaginable is utterly and totally worthless.
 - 3. The spiritual gifts that Corinth craved and abused were to end, but charity was to live on!
- K. True love must be unfeigned and without dissimulation (Romans 12:9; II Cor 6:6; Prov 26:24-26).
- L. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven are those who love and serve others (Matthew 20:25-28).
- M. Who cares if we excel in producing and publishing vast quantities of data, if we have little love?
 - 1. The intellectual exercise of texting, blogging, emails, or Bible studies lags far behind charity.
 - 2. Sincere Christians will not excuse or justify themselves by good behavior in another area.
- N. Members in any church are easily ranked by hospitality, encouragement, affection, time, gifts, etc.
 - 1. True love/charity is visible to be measured by others, and the Bible names many known for it.
 - 2. Some for service (Ac 9:36-39; Ro 16:1-16; I Co 16:15; Phil 2:25-30; I Ti 5:10; Philemon 1:7).
 - 3. There are those known for gifts (Lu 7:4-5; Ac 4:36-37; 10:22; II Co 8:1-5,24; 9:2; III Jn 1:5-7).
 - 4. Some are known for ministry, like Timothy and Phoebe (Phil 2:19-23; 2:25-30; Rom 16:1-16).
 - 5. There are those known for prayer (Co 4:12-13) and in general (Ep 1:15; Co 1:4; I Thes 4:9-10).

LOVE IS THE GREATEST MEANS

- A. We may accomplish more good for God's glory and Christ's kingdom with love than anything else.
 - 1. Jesus taught His apostles that the identifying mark as His was brotherly love (John 13:34-35).
 - 2. Churches grow internally through edification of themselves through truth in love (Ep 4:15-16).
 - 3. We adorn a local church as David did a magnificent palace by love's perfect bond (Col 3:12-15).
 - 4. The living stones of a N.T. church are held together by this perfect bond of charity (I Pe 2:4-5).
 - 5. All things must be done in charity, even as strong men, or they have no value (I Cor 16:13-14).
 - 6. Beautiful unity of a local church is by forbearing one another in love (Eph 4:1-3; Ps 133:1-3).
- B. Since a church is a group of sinners serving Christ together, love is necessary to cover all their sins.
 - 1. Love can cover a multitude of sins by overlooking them (I Pet 4:8; Pr 19:11; 17:9; Eph 4:1-3).
 - 2. Love covers a multitude of sins by correction (Ga 6:1-2; Lev 19:17; I Thes 5:14; Jas 5:19-20).
 - 3. Love covers many sins by seeking reconciliation from two directions (Matt 5:21-26; 18:15-17).
- C. A church has lions and lambs, comely and uncomely, but love will avoid schisms (I Cor 12:22-25).
- D. Love causes others to rejoice as they see your charity (II Cor 9:6-15; Philemon 1:7; III John 1:3-7).
- E. Every parent knows their delight when all children happily love each other, and so does our Father.

LOVE IS THE GREATEST SOURCE

- A. We can get more benefits and live more peacefully and prosperously by love than any other means.
- B. Active brotherly love is the means to loving life and seeing good days from the Lord (I Pet 3:8-12).
- C. Read God's abundant and kind blessings on the man considering and loving the poor (Ps 41:1-3).
- D. Marital love, leading about a sister, is God's gift (Eccl 9:9; Pr 5:19; Song of Solomon; Gen 29:20).
- E. Love always thinks the best, believes the best, and hopes the best to enjoy a peaceful and quiet life.
- F. Love destroys the masters and monsters of bitterness, envy, revenge, and other soul-plaguing sins.
- G. If the Bible is true (and we know it is), then giving has more blessings than getting (Acts 20:35).
- H. An environment of love is able to make meager fare superior to great riches (Proverbs 15:17; 17:1).
- I. The response and reward for charitable giving out of brotherly love are very great (II Cor 9:6-15).
- J. David highly exalted the pleasure of brethren dwelling in unity, which requires love (Ps 133:1-3).

LOVE IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE

- A. We must work harder against our sin nature to learn to love and actually do it than anything else.
 - 1. By nature we live in malice and envy, are hateful, and hate one another, individually (Tit 3:3).
 - 2. The old man, which every Christian has in him, is entirely selfish and loves to fight (Jas 4:1,5).
 - 3. Love is a choice and work. You must choose to do something contrary to your natural instincts.
 - 4. Love is commanded, and the commands are repeated, because it takes daily work to practice it.
 - 5. Love, like many of God's commandments, is done without regard to feelings or sentiment.
 - 6. Even the bowels of compassion we are to have for others is to be put on (Colossians 3:12-15).
 - 7. We face a great task against the flesh, the world, and the devil to learn how to love properly.
- B. Love is action, more than a thought or word (I John 3:17-18; I Thess 1:3; Heb 6:10; Jas 2:15-16).
 - 1. Most Christians justify themselves as being loving by their thoughts, words, or lack of murder.
 - 2. Many Christians justify themselves by assembling with others and praying for others – vanity!
 - 3. You must actually do something sacrificial, costly, unnatural, and unpleasant to love another.
 - 4. The righteous know when they do it with a good heart that the sacrifice turns to their blessing!
 - 5. Love involves a cost – giving up your things for the benefit of another – or it is simply not love; therefore, if you are not sacrificing your things in order to love, then you are a hateful fraud.
- C. True love is for the uncomely (Luke 14:12-14; Rom 12:16; Matt 5:46-47; 25:40; I Cor 12:22-25).
 - 1. When you entertain or host family or friends, this is not properly Christian charity or love at all.
 - 2. Of course, in a church some are more pleasant and less work than others, so they do not count.
 - 3. Loving your family, immediate or distant, has little to do with love – pagans do it (I Tim 5:8).
 - 4. Christians love the ugly, their enemies, and those that cannot or will not return the kindness.
 - 5. Remember Paul and his commitment to spend and be spent for no love in return (II Cor 12:15).
 - 6. Giving to the rich, those that really do not need it, is a foolish violation of wisdom (Pr 22:16).
 - 7. Giving is for the afflicted, needy, oppressed, and poor, not those living well (Ja 1:27; Pr 31:20).
- D. Americans are obsessed about a thing they call freedom, yet true love will flush personal freedom.
 - 1. True freedom is not the right to do as you want but rather to do as you should (Rom 6:7,18,20).
 - 2. We call freedom Christian liberty, as the Spirit did, yet it is very restricted (I Cor 8:9; 10:29).
 - 3. Paul said he would not eat meat while the world stands if it might offend a brother (I Cor 8:13).
 - 4. Is it called liberty in the Bible because God has not made any rules about what you want to do?
 - 5. Or is it called liberty because others can do whatever they want and you must curtail your own?
 - 6. Christian liberty, a great mercy from God, is very limited by charity for others (Rom 14:14-21).
 - 7. For detailed restrictions of Christian freedom ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/christian-liberty-2.pdf>.
- E. Consider marriage as an example, for most spouses think they have freedom to do what they want.
 - 1. You married folks are not free at all – you are bound in thought, word, and deed to your spouse.
 - 2. You cannot have your marriage as you want it, but as God wants it and your husband wants it.
 - 3. Husbands must love without bitterness (Col 3:19); they must be ravished by her love (Pr 5:19).
 - 4. Wives must obey, submit, make his desire her own, love him, and reverence him as her lord.
 - 5. Sexual charity in marriage, due benevolence, means whatever your spouse wants (I Cor 7:1-5).
- F. Hospitality, part of charity, is required of Christians, but must be without begrudging (I Peter 4:9).
- G. Reciprocity, either hope or fact, is irrelevant and destructive of charity (Luke 14:14; II Cor 12:15).
- H. There is no contentment in love, for we must grow in this grace (I Thess 4:9-10; 3:12; Phil 1:9).
- I. If you love others, then you will humbly and soberly realize the changes you must make to do it.
 - 1. You cannot let down your example – moods prove selfish hatred of others, opposite of love.
 - 2. You must keep your priorities right and not get off track with publishing or testifying instead.
 - 3. You must consider others, or you will overlook their circumstances, needs, preferences, etc.
 - 4. You will give generously and liberally; true love has few limits, and God already outgave you.
 - 5. You will happily be last in conversation, consideration, public recognition, or other measures.
 - 6. You will happily forgive others' offences, forget them, and press forward with friendliness.

7. You will defer anger and gloriously pass over their offences against you, but not against God.
 8. You will be a peacemaker and expert at reconciliation in both directions pertaining to offences.
 9. You will exalt your responsibilities toward others far over any perceived rights with others.
 10. You will reject any habits, training, tradition, family upbringing that is contrary to the Bible.
 11. You will make each person's life comfortable, peaceful, and pleasant, not your family or self.
 12. You will never seek the attention of others by any means but rather look to give it to others.
 13. You will happily sacrifice preferences, opinions, time, schedule, space, money, emotion, etc.
 14. You will correct errors to help (Lev 19:17), but only meekly (Gal 6:1) and rarely (Pr 19:11).
 15. You will learn that compromise is love when it comes to relationships and Christian liberties.
 16. You will err on the side of mercy from God and from yourself whenever possible (Ps 18:25).
- J. These few ideas of love given in this section are very contrary to the old man and flesh with you.
1. You love to envy and fight, as Paul admitted about himself, which you should also (Titus 3:3).
 2. You are selfish by nature and want yourself to come out on top in any comparison with others.
 3. You begrudge the abilities, successes, and good character and conduct of others as threats.
 4. You enjoy the failures of others because they justify your self-righteousness and criticisms.
 5. You will protect yourself if anyone or anything happens to put you in less the best light.
 6. You will stop loving to protect yourself if anyone has hurt you or does not return your love.
 7. You expect everyone should be praying for your little needs though you seldom pray for others.
 8. You will excuse your lack of love by overstating other duties e.g. prayer, attendance, truth, etc.
 9. You will excuse your lack of love by assuming and expecting others in the church to do it.
 10. You would rather be first in line, and can think of good reasons why, though purely selfish.
 11. You think your children special and inherently superior to others' children for your last name.
 12. You think lightly about either attending every service and/or fulfilling all duties when present.
- K. You can love as God requires, because God has given His Spirit of love (II Timothy 1:7; Gal 5:22).
1. God can put the earnest care for others in your heart, as He did for Titus (II Corinthians 8:16).
 2. Pray for greater love. Faith comes by hearing, but the disciples prayed for faith (Luke 17:5).
 3. While you pray for love, make every effort to practice love yourself. God will enable you.
 4. God by His Spirit and through Christ has given you the ability to love (II Tim 1:7; Phil 4:13).

LOVE IS THE GREATEST EXAMPLE

- A. God's choice to love sinful rebels commends His love as being by far the greatest (Romans 5:5-8).
- B. God's choice to send His beloved Son to death for those sinners is the greatest act (I John 4:8-10).
- C. God's choice to then adopt those rebel enemies as His children is the greatest honor (I John 3:1-3).
- D. You can show a greater degree of God's grace and power in your life by love than anything else.
- E. For more of God's gift of salvation ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/salvation/facets-of-salvation/sermon.php>
- F. For more of Christ's unsearchable riches ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/unsearchable-riches.pdf>

LOVE IS THE GREATEST BOND

- A. Paul declared that charity, or love, is the bond of perfectness for a church (Col 3:14; Eph 4:15-16).
- B. The world may say, *Blood is thicker than blood*; we say, *Blood is thicker than blood* (Christ's).
- C. Five times in the New Testament, partly for cultural custom, salutary kisses were clearly specified.
- D. The world did not know our Lord, and it does not know us in our kingdom (I John 3:1; I Cor 2:15).
- E. Jesus described the bond of Christians as replacing relationships sometimes lost (Mark 10:28-30).
- F. Nationality, race, intelligence, education, sex, income disappear into oblivion (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).
- G. For more about the blood bond of believers ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/blood-is-thicker-than-blood.pdf>

LOVE IS THE GREATEST CURE

- A. If you have a problem in a relationship, simply practicing Bible love to the other party will cure it.

- B. Our loftiest relationship is our fellowship with Christ, and love can be restored (Rev 2:4-5; 3:20).
- C. You are not happy in your marriage? Then choose love regardless (Pr 5:19; Col 3:19; II Co 12:15).
- D. If you lack friends, do not deny it – you fail in one or more aspects of love (Pr 18:24; 17:9; 27:5).
- E. Corinth had severe issues about spiritual gifts, so Paul gave them the love chapter where he did!
- F. It has been said, and it may have value here, you can attract more flies with honey than vinegar.
- G. If you are responsible for a department, group, or organization, love will optimize its productivity.
- H. Corinth had lots of problems, but Paul went right after their internal fighting (I Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-3).
- I. Parents are responsible to exemplify, teach, and enforce sibling love rather than sibling rivalry.
- J. A church cannot be allowed to let any goal or function compete with or exceed its brotherly love.
- K. Jesus knew the apostles' competitiveness, so He directed them to loving service (Matt 20:20-28).
- L. A church cannot have any schisms, and they are avoided by directed love (I Corinthians 12:22-25).
- M. There is no other organizational bond, or in this case, organism bond, than Bible charity and love.

LOVE IS THE GREATEST EXTREME

- A. Love changes men's lives drastically, from selfish malice and pride to selfless, sacrificial kindness.
 - 1. Saul hated Christians exceedingly (Acts 9:1; 26:11); Paul loved Christians dearly (II Co 12:15).
 - 2. The apostles once argued about who would be greatest, but then became servants of slaves!
- B. To love others as yourself and esteem them above yourself is violently contrary to human nature.
- C. What caused God to choose to substitute His only Son for rebel enemies despising His goodness?
- D. Jesus taught it, and Paul quoted it, that giving is better than getting (Acts 20:35; Prov 11:24-26).
- E. Love is so important to churches that God is not content unless it is more and more (I Thes 4:9-10).
- F. True love is for ugly and enemies (Lu 14:12-14; Rom 12:16; Mat 5:43-48; 25:40; I Cor 12:22-25).
- G. Brotherly love as defined by God is more important than any spiritual gift or action (I Cor 13:1-3).
- H. It is much more than a check made out to the poor saints' fund – review its charitable definition.
- I. Paul said he would not eat meat while the world stands if it might offend a brother (I Cor 8:13).
- J. Loving your family, immediate or distant, has little to do with love – pagans do such (I Tim 5:8).

LOVE IS THE GREATEST ERROR

- A. What the world has done to the greatest concept is disgusting, diabolical, dysfunctional destruction.
 - 1. Elton John, as mentioned above, only knows love as abominable, disgraceful, sodomitical lust.
 - 2. Whitney Houston popularized self-love as being the greatest love of all – glorified narcissism!
 - 3. They can write songs and movie scripts all they want – they do not have clue about noble love.
- B. Where do fighting and wars come from? The lusts in men that are not replaced with love for men!
 - 1. James warned about the danger of the human spirit and the Bible's blast against it (Jas 4:1,5).
 - 2. Political infighting within a nation and international posturing outside smell of pride and hate.
 - 3. Heroes and heroines in movies are hard and harsh, only showing sympathy rarely for effect.
 - 4. Rather than forbearance and forgiveness, revenge of massive proportions is the usual theme.
- C. As symptoms 1,9,18 of perilous times, Christians must battle against corrupt love (II Tim 3:1-5).
 - 1. *Self-love and self-esteem*, two narcissistic labels for selfish arrogance, are popular mantras.
 - 2. For a Bible demolition of the insanity of self-love ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/lie-of-selflove.pdf>.
 - 3. *Unconditional love* is another popular mantra without valid definition or real existence in life.
 - 4. For Bible demolition of unconditional love ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/lie-of-unconditional-love.pdf>.
 - 5. Childish and imagined contrasts of *agape* and *phileo* love are delusional distractions from truth.
 - 6. For Bible demolition of this joke (slide 50) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/hermeneutics-lesson-three.pdf>.
- D. Love honors the uncomely (I Cor 12:22-25), but it does not honor the unruly (I Thes 5:14; Pr 26:1).
 - 1. If pastors love good men like David did, what about compromisers (Tit 1:8; Ps 15:4; 101:3-8)?
 - 2. Bible love is tough love and involves correction and rebuke – it is not sentimental feel-good.
 - 3. Poverty does not give a person license or privilege – so love is strict (Exodus 23:3; Lev 19:15).

4. Folly or ignorance does not give a person privilege (Prov 26:3-12; I Cor 14:38; Romans 1:31).
5. Rebellion or sloth does not give a person privilege (Pr 29:1; 15:10; Rev 3:19; II Cor 13:1-6).
- E. Church brotherly love is not a general insurance fund to cover sloth or waste by foolish members.
 1. Every man shall bear his own burden, unless there is an unavoidable act of God (Galatians 6:5).
 2. Most acts of God can be covered or protected against by insurance (Deut 6:16; Prov 22:26-27).
 3. Lazy or wasteful men that do not save or insure can starve (II Thess 3:10; Pr 18:9; 20:4; 16:26).
 4. God's rules about charity ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/practical/charity-haiti-earthquake/sermon.php>.
 5. Proverb commentary for Proverbs 19:17 ... http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/19_17.php.
- F. It is a preposterous fallacy to assume that you love by thinking about others, praying for others, etc.
- G. Some have foolishly suggested Robert Ringer's book, *Looking Out for #1*. What an evil heresy!
- H. Can you get ahead faster by giving and giving (Solomon) or getting and saving (Harvard MBA)?

LOVE IS THE GREATEST CREATIVITY

- A. Love is an active desire toward others – so the opportunities or options for you today are unlimited.
 1. Love is not a mental activity like faith or hope, since it requires action toward others, for them.
 2. Everyone around you, even enemies, are objects of true Christian love – many needy persons.
- B. Do you have a creative mind with innovative thoughts? Show us, but remember that most is vanity.
 1. Politics, economics, health, speculation about anything, cleaning, or decorating are all a waste.
 2. If you have a fertile mind with inventive ability, then think of ways you can love others better.
 3. Reading about anything, especially your favorite topics, is asinine when you could love better.
- C. Liberal devisers that devise liberal gifts for others are opposite of churlish and are blessed (Is 32:8).
- D. Are you ready to distribute and willing to communicate? Are you sure? Then do it (I Tim 6:17-19)!
- E. Consider the love and largesse of the early church by the Spirit's powerful effect (Acts 2:42-47).
- F. Considering others' afflictions is more key here than anywhere (Prov 29:7; Job 29:16; Heb 10:24).
- G. We are all members of one body – think your physical body – and intimately attached (Heb 13:3).
- H. What will you change and do to increase love? It simply takes a little selfless thinking and giving.
- I. Can you let your mind explore options to show love immediately – hug, feed, encourage, pray with, text, give a gift, warn, praise, tip of advice, babysit children, loan something, hear sermon together, music gift, sponsor child, buy a book, warmly greet, pep talk, jewelry, covenant, volunteer, accountability partner, help find a job, etc.
- J. We should provoke each other to love and good works by example and instruction (Heb 10:24).

Conclusion:

1. God led us by His Spirit and word to grow in love, but we cannot be content (I Thess 4:9-10; 3:12; Phil 1:9).
2. For those who truly want to grow in grace, rather than studying to see if you can discover a new doctrine or get prepared to confound seminarians, try learning to forbear, forgive, and serve others like Jesus and Paul.
3. Do something for a personal "enemy" today. Pray for them. Give them a gift. Praise them in public. Do it!
4. If love is truly the greatest in even one of the aspects above, it demands your attention, planning, and action.

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "[The Definition of Love](#)," provides a careful explanation for each term in I Corinthians 13:4-7.
2. The sermon outline, "[The Lie of Self-Love](#)," condemns and refutes the modern narcissistic obsession with self-esteem.
3. The sermon outline, "[The Lie of Unconditional Love](#)," deals with the modern psycho-babble idea of baseless love.
4. The sermon outline, "[Brotherly Love](#)," is a simple review of the importance of loving and serving one another.
5. The sermon outline, "[Bowels of Compassion](#)," deals with the Bible view of bowels, compassion, and empathy.
6. The sermon outline, "[Why Wear Pretty Shoes?](#)" covers the Bible command to love the uncomely members in a church.
7. The sermon outline, "[One Another Duties](#)," explains and applies this inspired compound pronoun for church life.
8. The sermon outline, "[Selfish or Selfless](#)," provides detailed illustration of Paul's love teaching in Romans 12:9-10.