

# 7

## REASONS WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR CHRISTIANS TO EXERCISE LOVE



### Introduction

1. The proof of *hope* is a holy life (1 John 3:2-3), the proof of *faith* is good works (James 2:14-26), and the proof of *love* is obedience (John 14:21). The point is that *genuine* hope, faith, and love are always being expressed in our lives.
2. Paul, speaking of faith, hope, and love, says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Faith is imperfect without love, and hope is self-centered without love. Faith and hope spring from love and need love to survive, which is what makes love the greatest.
3. In this lesson we shall consider why it is so essential that we, as Christians, express or demonstrate love in our daily lives.

#### 7 Reasons Why It Is Essential For Christians To Exercise Love

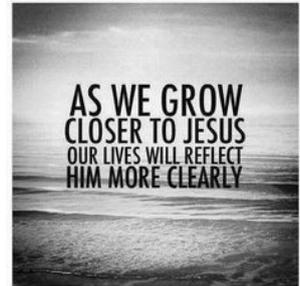
1. Loving one another reflects Christ (John 13:34-35).
2. Loving one another completes the Law (Romans 13:8-9).
3. Loving one another is a result of salvation (1 Peter 1:22-23).
4. Loving one another is an evidence of Christianity (1 John 3:14).
5. Loving one another is a commandment (1 John 4:21).
6. Loving one another is a response to God loving us (1 John 4:7-11).
7. Loving one another demonstrates God’s existence (1 John 4:12).

### 1. REFLECTING CHRIST

Loving one another reflects Christ.

“A *new* commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

- a. In the Law it was written, “... you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Yahweh” (Leviticus 19:18). Jesus highlighted how the Jews had added to this command: “You have heard that it was said [by the Scribes and Pharisees], ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’” (Matthew 5:43). They had wrongly inferred that one ought to hate his enemies. Jesus corrected them, saying, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:44-45).
- b. The Law had said, “... you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Yahweh” (Leviticus 19:18). So in what sense are we to understand Jesus’ commandment to love one another as being “new”? Jesus Himself answers this question, saying, “... as I have loved you”, and what this meant He was about to demonstrate in the laying down of His life for His friends and His enemies; there is no greater love (John 15:13). It is this love we are to imitate (1 John 3:16).
- c. How are we to love? Jesus says, “As I have loved you”. God’s will is that others see Jesus living in us (1 John 4:17; Galatians 2:20). Loving as He loved us reflects Christ.



## 2. COMPLETING THE LAW

Loving one another completes the Law.

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he 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 bear false witness, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Romans 13:8-9).

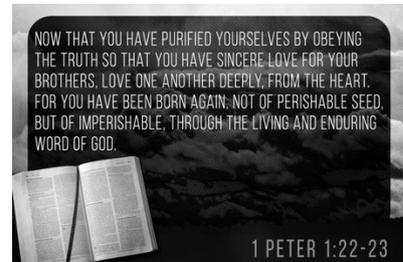
- a. “Owe no one anything”. The meaning is that we must not owe or be in debt to anyone regarding things like fear and honor. “Except to love one another”. The meaning is that we should always feel like we owe or are in debt to everyone regarding the exercising of our love toward them; we should never feel like we have paid that debt.
- b. Can one do good without love? Paul makes it clear that the exercise of one’s gifts and great acts of benevolence without being motivated by love will not profit the soul. The beneficiaries of benevolence do, of course, benefit, but not the giver who is devoid of love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
- c. The great aim of the Law is the right treatment of our fellow man, and the one that loves his neighbor completes or fulfils the aim of the Law (Galatians 5:14). If everything we say and do in our relations with our fellow man is motivated by love, then we will not sin against our spouse by committing adultery or sin against our neighbor by murdering them, etc. Indeed, Paul wrote, “Let all that you do be done with [i.e., be motivated by] love” (1 Corinthians 16:14). Love is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and **those that walk in love fulfill the goal of the law** (cp. Galatians 5:18).



## 3. A RESULT OF SALVATION

Loving one another is a result of salvation.

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth through the Spirit so that you have sincere love of the brethren [G5360 philadelphia], love [G25 agapáo] one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:22-23).



- a. John tells us that the person that practices love is the one that has been born of God (1 John 4:7-8). It is the kind of love that was hitherto unknown, but has now been manifested. We could not know and practice this love unless God had first loved us (1 John 4:19). Paul wrote, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).
 

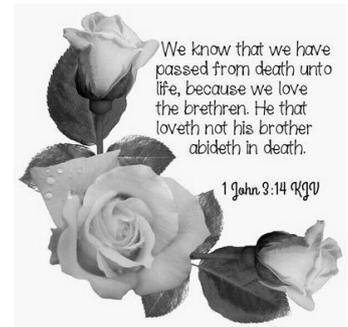
- ☞ A child of God is one that practices righteousness and loves the brethren (1 John 3:10).
  - ☞ Loving the brethren is the proof of our salvation (1 John 3:14).
  - ☞ A willingness to lay down our life for the brethren is the proof that the love of God dwells in us (1 John 3:16).
  - ☞ Love that is not demonstrated is not love (1 John 3:18).
  - ☞ The person that practices love is the one that has been born of God (1 John 4:7-8).
  - ☞ God abides in the one that practices love (1 John 4:12).
  - ☞ We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and anyone that loves Him must love his brethren (1 John 4:21).
- b. “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth through the Spirit and have come to have sincere love of the brethren...”. After having obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:38) we came to have a sincere love of the brethren.
- c. Since we have been purified and come to have a sincere love of the brethren, we must continue loving one another *fervently*. **It is only after we have obeyed the truth that we have a sincere, fervent love of the brethren.**

#### 4. AN EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Loving one another is an evidence of Christianity.

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death” (1 John 3:14).

- a. Sometimes you come across brethren that question whether or not they are saved. Such doubts can be removed by setting aside one’s feelings and believing what the scriptures say. Are my sins really forgiven? If you were baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), then yes. Have I passed from death to life? If you are loving your brethren (1 John 3:14), then yes. Doubts are the proof of unbelief, but belief removes doubts.
- b. You may have come across people that, in an attempt to prove they are Christians, point to their baptism, regular attendance at services, and good works. While these things are good and necessary, the real proof that one is a Christian is seen in exercising the love of God. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). We shouldn’t have to try and prove to others that we are Christians; they ought to be able to see it!
- c. The kind of love that Christians exercise is that love that God Himself has revealed (1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 4:7-10), and **it is this love, the love of God, that is the evidence that Christianity is of God, not man.**



#### 5. IT IS A COMMANDMENT

Loving one another is a commandment.

“And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also” (1 John 4:21).

- a. God has always expected people to keep His commandments (Leviticus 22:31; Deuteronomy 6:17). His commandments have blessings and curses attached (Leviticus 26:1-46). In giving commandments, God has our welfare in mind (Deuteronomy 4:40; 10:12-13). It is essential to heed God’s warning not to add or take away from His word (Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:29).
- b. If Jesus is our Lord, then we will keep His commandments. It is a sad fact that many call Jesus “Lord, Lord” and yet fail to do what He says (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21). Another sad thing: many keep only enough of Jesus’ commandments to make them feel secure. So, for example, while many are happy to attend services (Acts 20:7), they ignore the command to personally “visit orphans and widows in their trouble” (James 1:27) and support preachers (Galatians 6:6). If we seek to please the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9), then we will seek to keep *all* His commandments (James 2:10-11).
- c. Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). Some people think it is an odd thing to be commanded to *love* someone. But, of course, Jesus is not talking about a feeling; He is speaking about an act of will; doing good to others (Galatians 6:10); seeking the welfare of others (Philippians 2:4; Romans 15:1; 1 Corinthians 10:24).

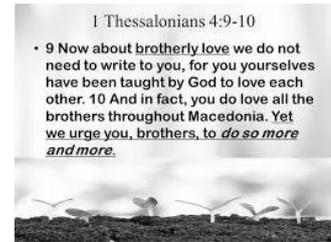


“[i] Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God’s love is seen in the gift of His Son (1 John 4:9, 10). But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects (Romans 5:8). It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself (cf. Deuteronomy 7:7, 8). [ii] Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 2:4; 3:19; 5:2); Christian love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian (Galatians 5:22). [iii] Christian love has God for its primary object, and expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 1:6). Self-will, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God. [iv] Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all (Romans 15:2), and works no ill to any (Romans 13:8-10); love seeks opportunity to do good to ‘all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith’ (Galatians 6:10). See further 1 Corinthians 13 and Colossians 3:12-14” (Vine).

## 6. A RESPONSE TO GOD LOVING US

Loving one another is a response to God loving us.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:7-11).



- a. As Christians our aim is that *we may be sons of our Father in heaven*, and this means loving as He loves (Matthew 5:43-48). The love of God, though, runs contrary to man’s concept of love, which means we must diligently study the scriptures to comprehend it. God has demonstrated His love in the cross (Romans 5:8), and Christ’s willingness to bear our sins in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24) reveals His love for us; which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:14-19).
- b. Speaking on love (agape), Vine says, “... since the Spirit of revelation has used it [i.e., agape] to express ideas previously unknown...” Moses wrote, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), but the Jews wrongly inferred and taught, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy” (Matthew 5:43). Jesus’ teaching on love was totally alien to His hearers: e.g., love your enemies (Matthew 5:43-48).
- c. It is clear from scripture that the love (agape) in which we walk and express toward our brethren is a response to the love (agape) that God demonstrated toward us (1 John 4:9-10): “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9). We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). **Our love for God and for our brethren is a response to God’s love for us.**

## 7. A DEMONSTRATION OF GOD’S EXISTENCE

Loving one another demonstrates God’s existence.

“No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).



- a. Moses asked God, saying, “Please, show me Your glory” (Exodus 33:18). God agreed to make His goodness pass before him, but said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:19-20). While there are instances where God manifests Himself in some form (Genesis 12:7; 17:1; etc.), they do not represent actually seeing God Himself, but only of an assumed form by which He revealed Himself to men. And while some characteristics of God’s nature have been revealed through these manifestations, they do not constitute having seen God (cp. 1 Timothy 6:16).
- b. While it is true that no man has seen God at any time, it is also true that God has revealed Himself in three ways: (i) through the creation (Romans 1:18-21), (ii) through the scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16), and (iii) in His Son, Jesus (Matthew 11:27; John 1:18). Solomon wrote, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Mark Dunagan comments, “Unlike the animals, immersed in time, we long to see them (events) in their full context, for we know something of eternity: enough at least to compare the fleeting with the ‘for ever’ (Kidner p. 39). ‘People have longing or desire to know the extratemporal significance of themselves and their deeds or activities’ (Bible Knowledge Comm. p. 984)”.
- c. “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). As we have noted, God manifested Himself through the revelation of His Son (John 1:18). Since Jesus has returned to the Father, God is revealed through us that have become His children through adoption (Ephesians 1:5; 1 John 3:1), if we love one another. **“The love of God displayed in His people is the strongest apologetic that God has in the world”** (F.F. Bruce).

## Conclusion

1. Speaking of faith, hope, and love, Paul says “the greatest of these is love” (1 **Corinthians 13:13**). Faith is imperfect without love, and hope is self-centered without love. Faith and hope spring from love and need love to survive, which is what makes love the greatest.
2. It is essential for Christians to exercise love because (i) Loving one another reflects Christ (**John 13:34-35**), (ii) Loving one another completes the Law (**Romans 13:8-9**), (iii) Loving one another is a result of salvation (1 **Peter 1:22-23**), (iv) Loving one another is an evidence of Christianity (1 **John 3:14**), (v) Loving one another is a commandment (1 **John 4:21**), (vi) Loving one another is a response to God loving us (1 **John 4:7-11**), and (vii) Loving one another demonstrates God’s existence (1 **John 4:12**).
3. God’s desire is that we come to know and comprehend the love of Christ for us in all its dimensions, and what it means to love others because of Him. It is a love that “surpasses knowledge” (**Ephesians 3:14-19**). To desire us to know something that surpasses knowledge is paradoxical, but perhaps the idea is that such knowledge is inexhaustible – the more we come to know and comprehend of Christ’s love, the more there is to know. The onus is on each one of us to *pursue* that knowledge of His love for us. Are you pursuing the knowledge of Christ’s love? What is not pursued is not desired.

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