

WHAT ABOUT LOVE?

"A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34

"This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." John 15:12

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14

"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." 1 John 3:11

"This commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." 1 John 4:21

"Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8

1. As Christians, we are commanded to love one another. Do you sometimes have difficulty following this commandment, especially in current times?
2. What should we do when we are faced with a situation that someone makes our blood boil instead of giving us warm fuzzies?
3. How do we love someone we don't really want to love?

8 STEPS TO TAKE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

STEP 1: I must confess my lack of love as sin.

That lack of love in my heart, which we will call "unlove," is sin. When my heart attitude is wrong, I must acknowledge it and confess it to God as sin. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin confessed as sin, but it does not cleanse me when I excuse myself.

Next, I must exercise my will and choose to be delivered from the sin of unlove. Love is not just a matter of the will, but I will never be delivered from the sin of unlove unless I exercise my will and choose to be delivered. I must say, "I choose to be delivered from this sin of unlove."

STEP 2: I must count on the fact that, in Christ, I died to the sin of unlove.

I can be delivered from any sin by counting on the fact that, in Christ, I died to that sin. The Bible says,

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" Romans 6:1-2 NKJV

No Christian should continue to live in sin. Why? Because, in Christ, he died to sin. And in Christ, we died to the sin of unlove. Let us make these verses personal:

What shall I say then? Shall I continue in this sin of unlove, that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall I, who died to this sin of unlove, live any longer in it?

Must I be a slave to this sin of unlove the rest of my life? No! God's Word says that I died to this sin. I must step out in faith, believing God's Word.

STEP 3: I must choose to love that person.

I am controlled by the decision of my will and not by my feelings.

I cannot control my feelings, but I can control my will. I cannot make myself have a feeling of love toward someone, but I can choose to love that person. If I make that choice and hold to it, I will find that my feelings will, in time, follow the choice of my will. The important thing to remember is this: I am controlled by the decision of my will and not by my feelings.

You may say, "But what if that person doesn't respond to my love?" You can love him anyway. Jesus said,

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 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." Matthew 5:43-44

STEP 4: I must trust God to do what I cannot do.

Paul said in Romans 7 that he could "will" or choose what is right, but that he could not of his own ability do it. Paul learned that he had to depend on the Holy Spirit within him to enable him to do it.

Depending on God's Spirit to help me choose

This is true of us also. I may choose to love someone I don't love but I will discover that in myself I cannot do it. I must depend on the Holy Spirit within me to enable me to do it. He will do this, but I must make the decision. I must say to God, "Lord, I choose to love that person. In myself I cannot do it. I am trusting You to enable me to do it."

God is always ready to enable us to carry out a decision that is in accordance with His Word. But we must choose it. The Bible says,

"You will also declare a thing, and it will be established for you..." Job 22:28

STEP 5: I must pray that person into my heart.

Sometimes, even after I have asked God to work, nothing seems to happen. What do I do next? I begin to pray for that person. I pray that God will bless that person. I pray that God will bless him and help him. Often, as I pray earnestly and sincerely for God's blessing upon the other person, God works in my heart to change me.

STEP 6: I must earnestly seek to change my attitude toward that person.

To be critical of another believer, or to not love him because he is not like me, is to fail to see God's wonderful plan. God wanted us to be different from each other! He made us all different that each of us might in a special way display the glories of Christ. When I see God's great plan, I will appreciate and esteem every believer because he is precious to the Lord and able in a special, unique way to manifest the glories of Christ.

STEP 7: I may need to go see that person.

Jesus told the man with the withered arm to stretch forth his arm.

Sometimes God works a miracle when we go to see a person and talk with him. We often find, to our surprise, love welling up in our heart for that person. Jesus told the man with the withered arm to stretch forth his arm. As he obeyed the Lord, he found God's power flowing into him, enabling him to do what he could not do before.

STEP 8: I must plan positive behavior.

If you do not love someone, do for him what you would do if you did love him.

You may say, "But wouldn't I be acting like a hypocrite if I did that?" No, you would not. You have within you Christ's life and your sinful self-life. You must choose which one you will express. It is not being hypocritical if you choose to express Christ's life and His love to someone even though you do not feel like it.

You do not have to have a feeling of love to act in love. The Christian writer, C.S. Lewis, said,

The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you love your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we learn one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love them. (C.S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity")

Love Enables People to See the Unseen

How can people "see" the unseen God? There is only one way—they must see Him in His people. The Apostle John said,

"No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:12