



## Living the Christian Life with Love

A spiritually mature Christian is a person who loves like Jesus loves

Give an example of an action or an attitude that is not done out of love: isn't any

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### What is Love?

**Primary Motive:** “It is not too much to say that love is the only motive. At the root of every choice, every action a person takes, lies love” (McQuilkin, *Ethics*, 5).

**Active:** “Biblical love is positive and active—constantly planning and acting for the welfare of others. To refrain from killing one’s enemy is a loving thing, but to give one’s life for an enemy is the ultimate act of love (John 15:13)” (*Ibid* 8).

**Definition:** “Biblical love is an affectionate disposition that motivates the lover to consistently act for the welfare of another whether or not the other deserves it or reciprocates” (*Ibid* 10).

### How Important Is Love?

**Galatians 5:6** “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through *love*.”

**1Cor 13:2-3** “If I...can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not *love*, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not *love*, I gain nothing.”

**1Cor 8:1-3** “We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but *love* builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who *loves* God is known by God.”

**1Cor 13:13** “And now these three remain: faith, hope and *love*. But the greatest of these is *love*.”

**John 13:35** “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you *love* one another.”

**God’s Character:** “God is love” (1Jn 4:8,16).

The loving nature of God is the basis for his creative and redeeming activity. He created man because he is love and desired a being designed on his own pattern so that he could love that creature and be freely loved in return. When man rejected this loving approach of God, breaking that relationship, God continued loving because God is love by nature. And so we have the story of redemption. Love became incarnate. Thus all of life finds meaning in being loved by God and loving him. (*Ibid* 13).

**God’s Command:** “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and *live a life of love*, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (Eph 5:1-2).

So, how important is love?

## Biblical Priorities of Love

**Two Greatest Commandments:** “Jesus replied: ‘*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘*Love your neighbor as yourself.*’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Mt 22:37-40).

1. **Love God:** “This is the goal of creation and redemption: to love God. Not so much to find my fulfillment, but to find his, to bring him joy, to seek his purposes, to do his will” (Ibid 16).  
Essentially the rest of CrossTraining 4 is about learning how to love God more completely. Love for God is applied and expressed by loving others according to his priorities and his own loving character of truth, righteousness and grace.
2. **My Spouse** (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:25; Titus 2:4)
3. **My Family** (1 Tim 5:4,8)
4. **My Fellow Believers** (Gal 6:10)
5. **My Neighbors**, defined as anyone within reach who has needs (Lev 19:34; Lk 10:29-37)
6. **My Enemies** (Ex 23:5; Mt 5:43-48; Rom 5:8)
7. **My Self** (Mt 22:39; Eph 5:28-29)  
“As I see it, the meaning of the command ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ is this: Our Lord is aiming to call into being loving, compassionate, merciful men and women whose hearts summon them irresistibly into action when there is suffering within their reach. And to that end, he demands that they again and again ask themselves this question: *Am I desiring and seeking the temporal and eternal good of my neighbor with the same zeal, ingenuity, and perseverance with which I seek my own?*” (John Piper, quoted *Ibid* 19).
8. **My Things** (Pr 12:10; 1Tim 6:17)

## What Hinders a Sincere Christian From Loving Like Jesus?

- **Embarrassment**—it disarms people and they don’t know what to do and so I fear going against the status quo. People might think I’m weird.
- **Risk**—my sacrificial love might be taken for granted or unappreciated.
- **Vulnerability**—my sacrificial love might be abused or manipulated.
- **Busyness**—it is hard to make time for people.
- **Selfishness**—just too caught up in my own wants, needs and problems.
- **Pride**—I think I’m better than that person, or group of people.
- **Greed/Lust**—I’m more interested in what I can get out other people than what I can give to them.

## Legalism vs. Love

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:8-10).

### **What Legalism Is:**

- Trying to gain right standing with God through your own efforts (Gal 3:3; Php 3:7-9)
- Standards based on outward conformity rather than inward transformation (Mt 23:25-28)
- Rules inconsistent with God’s character and his will for man (Mt 15:3-9; 23:16-22; 1Tim 4:3)
- Rules, without any help to follow those rules (Mt 23:4; Rom 8:1-4)

### **What Legalism Isn’t:**

### **This is called:**

- Following the letter of the law ..... obedience
- Following the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law ..... hypocrisy
- Following a command of God even when you don’t feel like it ..... faithfulness
- Following a command of God when you don’t really believe or love God ..... formalism
- Following a command of God but ignoring His more important values ..... hypocrisy

### **What Legalism Produces:**

- **Judgmentalism**—the focus on outward conformity lends itself to passing judgment on a person’s commitment to Christ based on those outward standards. No effort is made to find out what’s going on in the nonconformist’s life because the only thing that matters is conformity, not inner life change.
- **Hypocrisy**—the focus on the outward standards makes the real, inner heart for God seem unimportant. Motivation is corrupted and integrity is lost.
- **Pride**—we’re better because we look like this and do these things.
- **Prejudice**—we reject you because you don’t look like us or act like us.
- **Fear**—there is no one to trust because everyone’s acceptance of me is conditioned on my performance.
- **Dishonesty**—since I can’t tell you what’s going on inside of me, I’ll just put on a show.
- **Despair**—you can never be good enough through your own efforts to impress God. Everything you work for becomes futile.

Are not every one of these products of legalism the polar opposite of love?

Who is in danger of falling into this legalistic trap?

## Week 2 Homework

† Practice your memory verse: **Ephesians 5:1-2**

† Read Schwarz, pp. 281-286

† Read this short poem: *“Work, work the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. A sweeter song the gospel sings, it bids me fly and gives me wings.”*

Based on what we’ve learned in class about grace, love and legalism, what application does this poem have to the way you view and live the Christian life?

† Read the following verses and answer the specific questions below:

*“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”* (Jn 15:12-13).

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:8).

*“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 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”* (1Jn 4:9-11).

If I am to be an imitator of God as a dearly loved child, how does God’s example of love affect the way I treat my:

- spouse?
- family members?
- fellow believers?
- neighbors?
- enemies?

† Perhaps laying down your life sounds chivalrous, but impractical. List one specific way you can sacrificially love a person in each group listed above *this week*—there are five of them, so why not practice one per day!