

"Loving Others"

The highest calling of life is to love God and to love others. How well are you fulfilling that calling? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to see what it means to love others, so stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word so we can please God. God's way brings peace and unity. It leads people to treat each other fairly and kindly. God's way is humble and compassionate. It's never selfish, never callous, and never hateful. God's way builds up rather than puffs up; it encourages with hope and comfort rather than manipulates with doubt and fear. The more you know about God, the more you'll love Him and His teaching. The more you follow His ways, the more blessing you will see. Don't push God out of your life or let others lead you away from Him. Love Him, serve Him, and lead others to love Him too. Thanks for taking time with us today. We hope you'll join us each week.

The Christian faith can be summed up in two commandments of Jesus found in Mark 12, verses 30 and 31, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'That you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." In fact, every commandment in Scripture is really an explanation of how to love God and how to love people. You simply can't follow the Lord without loving Him and loving others.

The Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount gave us what some call the golden rule. The Lord said in Matthew 7 and verse 12, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Now righteous people, who love the Lord, ask the question, "how do I want to be treated?" Well they treat others the way that they would like to be treated. What if everyone followed this golden rule? Wouldn't our society be a better place?

Now loving others is important, so we offer the information on this program free. Now if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 3, verses 12 to 15, and we'll see what it means to love one another.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Colossians, chapter 3, verses 12 to 15. "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." That's a reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful for Your instruction. And help us to love others the way that You have loved us. To forgive them the way that You have forgiven us, and to be compassionate. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, and may Your will be done on earth. In Jesus name, Amen!

Love is our highest calling. And nothing is more important than loving God and loving other people. You'll likely recall what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 verses 1 to 3, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have

not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." Without love we can't fulfill our purpose in life, we become empty, and we gain nothing. If love is that important, then we ought to learn what love is and how it behaves. Let me make these suggestions:

First, love warms a cold heart. The opposite of love is not hate but apathy or indifference. A cold heart can walk on by and never get involved. Negative and hurtful experiences can dull the heart, can depress the spirit, and can drive away compassion. Love warms your heart up, makes you alive and causes you to feel and to act.

Selfishness and apathy lead people to sit by and do nothing, while others suffer. 1 John 3 verses 16 to 18 says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." Love starts in the heart but it doesn't end there. Love doesn't merely talk about doing something. Love acts.

Many people today live lonely, isolated lives. One fourth of all the households in America have only one person in them. Researchers say that 40 percent of people relate more with others over a cell phone or a computer than they do in real life. Many family gatherings have little conversation and lots of texting. I visited a home recently, and the first thing the host did was ban all use of smart phones. He wanted us to talk. I recently read that the number of people who have no one to discuss important matters with has tripled in the last twenty years. Loneliness can lead to depression and illness. We need each other; we need to love and to be loved. It's essential to life.

Second, love sacrifices its will and itself for another's best interest. Love is never self-seeking or self-serving. 1 Corinthians 13 and verse 5 says that love "does not seek its own." Another version says "it doesn't insist on its own way." Love puts itself last and others first. Love seeks to please more than it seeks to win. Love tries to understand by seeing things through another's eyes. God urges us in Philippians 2 verses 3 to 4, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

Many years ago, Francis of Assisi prayed a prayer worth remembering, he said "Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life."

Third, when problems and conflict arise, love seeks reconciliation. The Bible says in Romans 12 and verse 18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." God has always wanted His people to have a compassionate and understanding heart. Philippians 4 and verse 5 says, "Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." We need a gentle spirit, one that is sweet and reasonable rather than one that stays angry and grows hateful.

Sometimes that means humbly and sincerely apologizing to those whom you have wronged. The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 5 verses 23 and 24, "Therefore if you're presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."

Now if you know you've offended someone, don't wait until that person confronts you, go to him or her and get it straightened out.

Sometimes others offend us. Love moves us to want to remain friends and to forgive, so it's willing to go privately and humbly to the other to work things out. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 18 verse 15, that "If your brother sins (and some versions say sins against you), you go and show him his fault in private; and if he listens to you, you have won your brother." Our world would be a much better place if two people at odds with each other would follow this teaching. Now instead of trying to resolve an issue, many grumble and gossip. Proverbs 16 verse 28 says, that "A perverse man spreads strife, And a slanderer separates intimate friends." Others seek revenge to get even. And instead of making the problem worse, love strives to get along for reconciliation. Love values talking to someone rather than talking about someone. Gossip is still gossip no matter who's doing it or who's hearing it.

We can solve many problems by simply asking some questions. People often assume the worst about others and accuse them of wrongdoing before they know the whole truth. Proverbs 18 and verse 17 says, "The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him." We may get hurt or angry, and when we hear part of the story but don't know all the facts. Sometimes hearing the rest of the story can help us to understand what really happened and why. A few more facts can change our thinking entirely.

I'm reminded of the old story about a fellow at the street corner pushing his wife as a car was approaching. Now we might at first get all excited about a man pushing his wife as a car approached. But we have to determine what the man was trying to do. If he pushed his wife into the path of the car, he certainly is responsible if any harm comes to her. But what if he pushed her out of the path of the car, endangering himself. Wouldn't we admire him? You see, knowing the facts can make a huge difference. Let's not be so quick to judge.

Fourth, love knows how to forgive. The Bible says in Ephesians 4 verses 31 and 32, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Knowing that God had enough love to forgive us of our many, many sins, we should be willing to forgive others of their few sins. God's Word simply says in 1 Peter 4 and verse 8, that "love covers a multitude of sins." Love learns to put offenses behind us and to go on. 1 Corinthians 13 verses 7 and 8 says that "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." You see, love never quits.

Whether you can forgive another is not some small matter; it actually affects your salvation. God expects you to forgive, if you wish to be forgiven. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6 verses 14 to 15, "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." Now people who want to experience the grace of God have obligations to show mercy to others. James 2 and verse 13 says, "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." If we wish to be forgiven, we must learn to forgive.

Now when God forgives us, He no longer holds our sins and trespasses against us. Sometimes we confuse forgiving with forgetting. Now you can forgive a sin, even if you can't forget it. Forgiveness is not forgetting; it's forgetting against. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 19 says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them." Now, our sins are a matter of history. And God's grace touches our hearts, because He dealt with our sins rather than because He

ignored or denied them. Because Jesus suffered for our sins, God doesn't count them against us. The fact that our sins have not disappeared, the guilt for our sins has. God has forgiven us.

Fifth, love will tell you what you need to hear not what you want to hear. God's Word says in Proverbs 27 and verse 6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." Honesty, even when it hurts, from a true friend is far more loving than half-truths and flattery from someone who means to do you harm. The devil will tell you what you want to hear, whether it's true or not; but the Lord will tell you what you need to hear to bless your life, even if it hurts your feelings for a short time.

The very best thing you can do for a friend is to introduce him or her to Jesus Christ and the gospel. The gospel is good news of salvation and hope. And people need the gospel story of Jesus Christ. They need to know that He died on the cross for their sins, He was buried, and He rose again on the third day. They need to know about His loving grace and His call for them to repent and obey.

Sixth, loving others means serving others. 1 Peter 4 and verse 10 says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:" Whatever talent we possess we should use it to bless the lives of others. Galatians 6 and verse 10 says, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

Once upon a time two brothers lived upon little adjoining farms. One was single, and the other married. One year the wheat crop was cut short by the drought so that each man had barely enough for his needs. And one night the married man lay awake thinking of his brother. "The poor man is single and doesn't have the comfort and happiness of a home as I do." And he worried about his harvest. And he thought, "Well I'll get up and carry some of my sheaves into his field and he'll be happier."

On the same night the bachelor lay sleepless and thinking of his brother. "The poor fellow is married, and carries burdens and cares that I don't have. He's doubtless worried about his small wheat field. I'll get up and I'll carry some of my wheat into his field, and when he sees it he'll be happier."

Well out into the darkness of the night those two went, each lugging wheat into the other's field. The moon came out suddenly from behind a cloud, and they stood facing each other with wheat-sheaves under their arms... I tell you, this is the power of brotherly love—it moves men, it unites brothers and sisters, it supplies each other's needs.

Well why have we spent this time talking about love? Without love in the heart we are just empty beings. Without love, our lives are filled with loneliness and sadness. Without love we've failed our purpose in life, we have no value, and we make no gains. Oh, we need the love of Jesus in our hearts and in our lives, so that we may love others. Let's pray together. Oh heavenly Father, we're so grateful that You sent Jesus down to this earth to teach us about love and how to love. Help us to show that love towards others. And may Your will be done as it is heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

God's Holy Word teaches us how to treat one another. The Lord Jesus said in John 13 verses 34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you love one another. And by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." The Lord wants us to love each other the same way that He loves us. How has He loved us? Well Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." The Lord Jesus loved us with a great love; He died for us.

Now when we love one another the way Jesus loved us, people see Christ living in us. Loving others like Jesus did identifies us as Christians. It's not the only mark of a Christian, but it's a necessary one. Let me ask you, are you kind to others? Do you forgive others or hold grudges? Are you compassionate

or do you have a closed heart? Do you seek peace or do you get even? Do you have a sweet spirit of reasonableness or are you constantly grumbling? Do you try to resolve conflicts or do you gossip and slander others? Do you love like Jesus?

When the love of Jesus is in your heart, you'll make a change in your life. And I hope that you love the Lord enough to follow Him. To become a Christian you must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and be willing to confess Him in the presence of others. You must cease doing evil and follow Christ in repentance. And you must be baptized into Christ, immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Oh, I pray that you'll become a Christian today.

Now we hope that today's study about loving others has stirred your heart. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then we ask that you mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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Please get involved though, with a church of Christ in your area. They love you and they support our ministry. Now if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Churches of Christ want you to visit, they want you to come and worship with them, and you know what, you'll be glad you worshiped with them if you go. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program, they may be really grateful that you did. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.