

"What Love Will Do"

To love and be loved is the greatest blessing of life. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." God loves us, but He wants us to love Him and to love others. Love matters. Stay with us.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures reveal the best and the right way to treat other people. The golden rule found in Matthew 7:12 says, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Treat others the way that you want to be treated. Whether it's in marriage, in parenting, or in friend to friend, this is the kind and good way. Everything in the Bible is written for our best interests! Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

1 John 4:7 to 11 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. And anyone who doesn't love doesn't know God, because God is love. And in this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have 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."

The great love that God shows us provides an example to follow. God didn't withhold His Son Jesus from becoming a sacrifice for our sins. Every blessing that we enjoy comes from His hand. That ought to lead us to love! 1 John 4:19 simply says that "We love because he (that is, God) first loved us." Our faith and our love for Christ arises from the cross, where Jesus showed His great love for us. We love Christ because He loved us. We love others, because we love Christ and Christ loves us. That's the Lord's way!

Now we offer this study free on what love will do. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and you live in the United States, 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 have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 1 Corinthians 13, verses 1 to 3, and we'll explore what love will do for you.

Our reading today comes from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 1 to 3. And he describes the importance of love. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I've become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." Without love we are an empty shell. Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that you have loved us in Christ, and loved us every day of our lives and blessed us in so many ways. Help us Heavenly Father to love You with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to love others. Give us the joy that comes from being close to You. And Father we pray that the gospel may go out to those who are lost, and bring them to You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

After Paul spoke of several miraculous gifts, he spoke of a more excellent way. He then described the superior way of love, which gives us the greatest meaning to our lives. Now each of us were made to love and be loved. Love is more valuable than any spiritual gift, more than speaking in tongues, more than prophecy, more than miraculous knowledge, more than faith to work miracles, and more

than giving all your possessions to feed the poor, and even more than giving your body to be burned. Without love, I'm just a noisy gong that gives nothing more than making a sound. Without love I am nothing. Without love, what I do profits nothing.

Love makes the difference between existing and living. And many people long to be loved, but the love we are describing is not the love that you receive but the love you give. God treasures the person who knows how and generously gives love. God treasures the one who sacrifices himself for Him and for the blessing of others.

Now love shows the difference between religion and Christianity. The pagan religions of ancient times feared their gods and were afraid to offend their gods, so that they could avoid a disaster. And they kept their gods at a distance. They never considered their god as a god who could love them, only a god whom they must appease.

Thankfully, we know that our God loves us and watches over us, even in the harshest times. Micah 7 and verse 18 asks, "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love." God's love is loyal love that never stops.

Because God loves us, He wants us to love Him. God's love for us is a greater thing than we can measure. 1 John 4:16 says, "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." The Lord Jesus described the Father's love for us in John 3:16 and 17, there it says "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

Now we can say with David in Psalm 103, verses 1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagles." David observed in verse 11, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him." Again, David says, "But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments" (that's from verses 17 and 18).

The love of God, however, is never a one-way street. God wants us to love Him too. Mark 12:28 to 31 says: "And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he (that is Jesus) answered them well, asked him, 'Which commandment is the most important of all?' Jesus answered, 'The most important is, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Now God grieves when those whom He loves wander away from Him and turn to idols and sin. James 4, verses 4 to 5 says, "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it's of no purpose that the Scripture says that 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'?" God wants our love and our commitment. He wants a close loving relation with each of us.

Part of loving God comes in the form of loving other people. The Lord Jesus, you remember said in John 13:34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved

you, that you also love one another. And by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Now one of the marks of true Christianity is love for others. And when we possess love for God and for others, we find the joy that love brings. Loving others yields the greatest of blessings! And now here's what love will do for you!

First, love will warm a cold heart. You know, it's discouraging to hear about people whose hearts have grown cold toward God and cold toward their fellow man. The opposite of love is not hate but apathy unfeeling. When people grow self-centered and don't care how they treat others, that's not love. Love isn't part of their life, that's when people come into close contact with Christ and the cross, that their heart can change.

And hard hearts can soften! Love, can warm your heart up, make you alive and able to feel again. People can change! God told Israel in Ezekiel 18:30 to 32, "Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live." I tell you, we can awaken and we can get our hearts right with God.

1 John 3:16 to 18 says, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and he sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." The love of God awakens our compassion for those in need. It moves us to make a difference, even with our enemies.

The Lord Jesus said in Luke, chapter 6, verses 27 to 31, "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from the one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so for them." You'll find that you are most alive when you love God and love other people.

Second, love sacrifices its will for another's best interest. 1 Corinthians 13 and verse 5 says that love "does not seek its own." You see, love puts itself last and others first. Love seeks to please others more than it seeks to "win." Philippians 2:3 to 4 says, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Love shows sympathy and empathy. I've always appreciated the prayer of Francis of Assisi, who said: Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; and 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.

I tell you we must hear the words of Ephesians 4:31 to 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." Again, Paul said in Colossians 3:12 to 14, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Third, love always seeks reconciliation. The Lord doesn't want anyone to be lost but to be close to every person. The Father in heaven sent Jesus His Son to die for sinners, so that they could be reconciled. 1 Timothy 2:3 to 4 says, "This is good, and it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." God wants a close relationship with us, as our Father in heaven. Jesus wants a close relationship as our Savior. And like the father of the prodigal son, God is keeping His eye out for us to return to Him. Let's stop fighting and make peace with God.

Let's also be at peace with others. The word of God says in Romans 12, verse 18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Now, that's not always easy, but love reaches out to overcome the conflicts of life. And that may mean talking to others to solve conflicts and, if needed, forgiving them. Love finds out the whole truth before it accuses or complains. It doesn't start with slander. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 18, verse 15, "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; and if he listens to you, you've won your brother."

You may realize that you are the offender and ask for forgiveness. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:23 to 24, "If therefore 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 your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." Love values talking "to" someone over telling everyone else "about" someone who hurt you. Gossip is gossip no matter who is doing it. Proverbs 16:28 says, "A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends."

Love says what needs to be said. Proverbs 27 and verse 6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." Honesty from a true friend, even when it hurts, is more loving than deceitful flattery to your face and slander behind your back. Proverbs 27:6 again says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." God doesn't treat us that way. 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 for a lifetime. God wants to bless you with His love and grace, and He wants you to love Him. Will you?

Let's pray together. "Oh Heavenly Father, we're thankful for the love that You give to us. Help us Father, every day to love You from a full heart, and to love others, to be forgiving, and to be caring. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen."

"Tell me whom you love," someone wrote, "And I will tell you who you are." Whom we love or what we love does define us and tells the world what our priorities are. If we love the Lord, people can see it in our words and our lives. When we love our families, our families know it; but if we fail to love our families, our families know it too! Love can transform your life, if you let it. When love is in your heart, you'll do the right thing toward God and toward others. You'll bless the lives of everyone around you! And if you want to love, look to Jesus.

Come to Jesus, see His example of love on the cross, and follow His teachings! You'll find out what loving and being loved really is. Love is not so much a noun as it is a verb! Love is more than a feeling; it's how we give ourselves to others in order to bless them. Any response to God must be centered in love. The most important response we have is love with all of our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our strength (Mark 12 and verse 30).

This great love should lead us to faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the gospel, the kind of faith willing to confess it publicly. This great love should lead us to turn from our sinful ways and to follow the teaching of our Lord. But we've not fully obeyed the gospel message until we're baptized

into Christ, united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. When we're baptized in water, God washes away our sins, makes us His children, and gives us newness of life. In baptism we're born again. Oh, let your love bring you to Christ.

Now we hope that today's study about what love will do has stirred you to love the Lord even more. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, 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 the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that in your area. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just go to "SearchTVMinistry." Now we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses and many other things. Now we're not here to get your money, we're here to help you get to heaven.

So focus your heart on God, and do it today by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.