What Love Means

The highest __________ of life is to love God and other people, but what does it mean to love? Today, we’re exploring the __________ of love. The God of the Bible is the God of love, who loves us despite ______ our weaknesses. Let’s be thankful for the Bible because it reveals all that God has done to ______ us now and in the ages to come. God’s Word ________ His plans for us and His promises. The more we know about God, the more we’ll love Him. By studying God’s Word, we’ll _______ in our faith and our devotion to Him.

Paul wrote, “If I speak in the _______ 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 ________. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I _______ nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Love is the ____________ of our relationship with God. Without love we’re nothing and gain nothing. Without love, we’re empty and lonely souls.

Imagine waking up in a world _______ love, a world where people don’t care—and they don’t care that they don’t care. Small offenses would start fights because no one loved enough to ________. People would become selfish and ambitious, stepping on others to ________ themselves. It’s a world where the life of the unwanted is cheap, where children and the aged are forgotten, and where people sit silent while evil takes place. A world without love is without _______ and filled with all the ugly substitutions that people find to take love’s place.

Our reading today comes from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

What does it mean to love? The love that we’re talking about isn’t the same thing as physical affection, though many _____ that love. No, “love,” as it’s used in the Bible, is the surrender of _____ for the best interests of others. Love takes place when people put others’ _____ above their own. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Love is more than _______ feelings, though love involves feeling. Love is an intentional _____ of the will; love determines to put self aside to _____ the object of its love. Love sacrifices. Love pays whatever the cost, gives whatever gift, and runs whatever risk to do what is _______ for another. It gladly _______ without complaint. Love will act even when ________ things are required. Love will _______ the harsh and demanding load. Love is like a candle. It makes no noise but softly gives itself _______ to be a blessing to others.

Sometimes love is ________ others. At other times love means allowing the kind will of someone else to ________ us. Love knows how to give, but love also knows how to __________ the love that others graciously give. Peter didn’t want the Lord to wash his feet in John 13:8, but his objection to allowing the kindness of Jesus meant he had no _______ with the Lord. Love means allowing others to enter into our lives and to be _______ to us.

Living without love means our ________ will be empty and indifferent. We won’t _______ about anything but ourselves. We’ll be like the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan; we’ll pass by on the other side of the road and leave others to _________. A life without love means we’ll turn
to selfishness, wanting only to fulfill our own lusts and desires. We’ll be like the rich farmer that was foolish, whose land provided abundantly but all he could think about was hoarding it up for . Living without love means we’ll forget how to be for what we have or how others have sacrificed to bless us.

Living without love means living without a relationship with . First John 4:7-8 says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and . Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” Living without love means living with bitterness. Without love we grow at every offense and plot to get even. Without love, will flourish. First John 2:10-11 says, “The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” Hate fills everything with evil, fear, and violence. A world without love is miserable.

On the other hand, living with love means living with and compassion. We see a and we fill it, we see a and comfort, and we see an opportunity to bless and seize it. God is the great and teacher of love. So let’s see how God loves:

First, God’s love is . John 3:16-17 says, “For God so loved the world, that he his only (or only begotten) Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be through him.” The entire gospel comes to focus in this verse. God’s love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. Here God sets the pattern of true love, the for all love relationships—when you love someone dearly, you’re willing to pay dearly for that person’s responsive love. God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest that he could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the for our sins, and then offered us the new life that he had bought for us. When we share the with others, our love must be like Jesus’ love. We must be willing to give up on our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God’s love.

Second, God’s love is and beyond measure. Romans 8:38-39 says, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” These verses contain comforting . Believers have always had to hardships in many forms: persecution, illness, imprisonment, even death. These problems could cause them to feel abandoned by Christ. But Paul explains these things cannot separate us from Christ. God profoundly loves His people.
Paul bowed his knees before the Father and prayed “that Christ may _______ in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19). If we could but grasp—even a little—the immeasurable love of God for us, we would _______ in our love for Him and for other people.

How then do we love ________? People are not “born lovers” any more than people are born chefs. They have to learn how to cook and they have to learn how to love. You may have thedeepest of feelings, but love is a ________, an act of heart and soul. Loving someone means you’ve paid enough attention to the needs and desires of another that their needs and desires become more important than your ________. The Scriptures ________ us why to love and how to love.

Many want to be loved, but they don’t understand the ________ calling of loving others. Love isn’t merely affection that we receive from others; it’s our determination to sacrifice ourselves for the ________ interests of others. We love because we choose to love. We love because we see the ________ of serving God and serving others.

The Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as ____ have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will _______ that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). We show that we’re the Lord’s disciples to the _______ when we love like He loves. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one _____ down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). True Christianity calls us to sacrifice ourselves for others.

If we become distracted with how people treat us, we’ll _______ how we treat others. Love means setting what we want aside so that we can _____ others by filling their needs and wants. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be _______ to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

The devil _______ people to be arrogant, to be easily offended, to take revenge, to slander, and to grow bitter inside. The Lord Jesus leads us to be kind, even when no one else is kind; to be tenderhearted, even when everyone else is apathetic; and to forgive, even when the world hates you. The Lord 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 and _______ for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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. For if you love those who love you, what ________ do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the ______? And if you greet only your brothers, what _____ are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-48).

God calls us to be His _______ and expects us to grow beyond a purely selfish mindset. The Lord God sacrificed Jesus on His own. We don’t cry out for Him to _______ His Son. He gave Jesus because He _______ loved us, He initiated it. First John 4:9-11 says, “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God _______ his only Son into the world, so that we might _______ 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 _______ to love one another.”

The Lord God forgave us, not because we _______ it, but because He is so loving. He calls us to forgive—even when people don’t _______ it, because we are His children. He calls us to love our
enemies rather than hate them, to pray for those who persecute us, and to love those who don’t love us. Why? Because we are God’s children. That’s the way God is.

Colossians 3:12-14 says, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if anyone has a _________ against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which _________ everything together in perfect harmony.” Have you put on love? Can people _______ the love of God in your heart and in your behavior? Do you care enough to take up a brother’s ________ as your own? Do you care enough to sacrifice yourself for a noble cause?

Love means ________ our selfish, self-centered ways so we can sacrifice ourselves to serve God and serve others. Life without love is empty and useless, sad and lonely. People who turn away from the love of God may not _________ how much they have hurt themselves, hurt others, or what precious things they’ve lost. They lose out on God’s love, God’s forgiveness, God’s ear in prayer, and that room in His eternal house. Do you love God? Will you love God? Will you love others?

After that wonderful love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, comes the command of 1 Corinthians 14:1, which simply says, “Pursue love.” To “pursue” means to __________ something until you seize it. Paul isn’t speaking here about finding someone to love you; he’s _________ us to pursue the practice and the skill of loving others. Pursuing means regularly giving ourselves to do what is ______ for others. First John 3:18 says, “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

Love also means spreading our love by _________ others about Jesus and His love. We preach Christ each week because we love you. When people get to know Christ, they _________ to love in the fullest sense. They truly put others _________ themselves. They won’t _________ God or others by living sinful lives. God’s love and kindness moves us to _________ of our sins and to live moral lives. Love won’t let us _________ on sinning against God or others. God loves you greatly and wants you to be His _________.

If you open your heart to God’s love, and to His Word, you’ll _________ your life. You’ll draw close to God and you’ll become a Christian. Because He loved you, Jesus died upon the cross to make atonement for your sins. Don’t reject His marvelous gift of salvation.

Believe in Jesus, turn away from everything sinful, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. When you’re baptized you’ll enter into a relationship with God that can last eternally. In baptism God washes away your sins (Acts 22:16) and makes you His child (Galatians 3:26-27). As God’s child, He will hear your prayers and give you an inheritance in heaven. If God loved you enough to send His Son Jesus to die on the cross for your sins, will you love Him enough to commit your heart and life to Him?