

# Bible Study



## WEEKLY SABBATH LESSONS

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# “BACK TO BASICS – WHAT IS A TRESPASS? – Part 1”

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## LESSON 1 ■ For week ending January 7, 2023

In Luke 11:1, we find Jesus praying. One of the disciples asked Jesus, “*Lord, teach us to pray.*” It was then that Jesus taught His disciples to pray what is commonly referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer.” It should go without saying that when Jesus tells us to do something, we should follow His instructions to the letter. Let’s take a closer look at what He instructs us to do when we pray.

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**KEY TEXT:** “*Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).*”

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### 1. In Matthew 6:5-8, we find Jesus instructing His disciples about the basic principles of praying.

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- » Read verse 5. According to this verse, not all prayers are offered for the right reasons.
- » What does verse 6 instruct us to do?
- » So many times we try and subvert what God’s Word tells us to do (Romans 8:7). Billions of people around the world pray certain phrases (verse 7)—Jesus called them “*vain repetitions*”—believing that the *quantity* of their prayers is more important than the *quality* of their prayers (Matthew 6:7).
- » What advice does Jesus give us all in verse 8? Jesus establishes that HE is the Teacher—not men (including heathens) and their customs, traditions, and practices. This is a very important lesson for us all. We are not to follow the devices of mankind—we are to follow the instructions of Jesus (John 14:6).
- » II Timothy 3:16, NLT, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*”

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### 2. Let’s take a look at The Lord’s Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-15.

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- » First of all, read the first part of verse 9. Let’s establish up front that this is JESUS—the very Word of God—speaking (John 1:1-5).
- » In verse 9, Jesus begins by telling us emphatically: “*In this manner, therefore pray...*” The *New Living Translation* makes it a little more clear when it says: “*Pray like this...*” The disciples asked Jesus how they should pray and Jesus responds by giving them detailed instructions which covers what they should do—and what not to do!
- » Please read Matthew 6:9-13. Notice that the prayer ends with “*Amen.*” That word simply means *firm, trustworthy, surely (so be it)*. However, that’s not the end of this story. Verses 14 and 15 are found in Matthew’s account, but they are not listed in Luke’s version found in Luke 11:2-4.

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### 3. So, what does Jesus tell us in Matthew 6:14,15?

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- » When a teacher wants to emphasize an important point to a student, he will often repeat or emphasize an instruction so that the student has a better understanding of the importance of that instruction. The same is true with Jesus—the Master Teacher (Matthew 7:29).
- » In verse 12, Jesus instructs us to pray: “*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...*” Luke’s version says, “*And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us...*”
- » The word *debt* in the Greek means: *something owed, that is, (figuratively) a due; morally a fault: debt.* When we sin, there is a penalty due—a debt. That penalty is death (Romans 6:23). This is a law of God established in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve as a penalty for disobeying God (Genesis 2:16,17).
- » The *New Living Translation* version of verse 12 says this: “*and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.*”
- » Read Matthew 6:14,15 again. In these two scriptures we see the introduction of the word IF for the first time in this model prayer.
- » It’s a small—but very powerful—word. The word *if* is a conjunction. Conjunctions are words that link other words, phrases, or clauses together. Next week we will examine these two verses.

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# “BACK TO BASICS – WHAT IS A TRESPASS? – Part 2”

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## LESSON 2 ■ For week ending January 14, 2023

Last week we started our study of The Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-15. This week we will focus on verses 14 and 15. While we are instructed to forgive those that have sinned against us in verse 12, Jesus felt the need to add additional instructions regarding the matter in verses 14 and 15. It is also in these last two verses that we see the introduction of two important words: *if* and *trespasses*. Let's take a closer look.

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**KEY TEXT:** “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart...You shall love your neighbor as yourself...*” (Matthew 22:37-39 partial quote).

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### 1. We concluded last week by defining the word *if*.

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- » The word *if* is a conjunction. Conjunctions are words that link other words, phrases, or clauses together.
- » Jesus uses the word *if* to introduce a set of *conditions* to the prayer He had just taught His disciples. In other words, Jesus said: *If you do this, I'll do that. And, If you don't do this, here's what will happen.*
- » Let's read Matthew 6:14,15, NKJV, “*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*”
- » After reading this passage of Scripture, can we understand why Jesus wanted to clarify what He meant in verse 12? Can we understand the significance of what Jesus is saying? Our salvation, our eternity, our rewards are based on the condition that we FORGIVE (Colossians 3:13).
- » If we fail to forgive, we lose everything!

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### 2. So, what does the word *trespass* really mean? What all does it pertain to?

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- » The word *trespass* comes from the Greek word *paraptoma* (*par-ap'to-mah*) which means: *a side slip (lapse or deviation), that is an unintentional error or willful transgression: fall, fault, offence, sin, trespass.* What does God's Word say about sin? Read Romans 3:23.
- » Please read that definition again and notice the words *unintentional error* and *willful transgression*.
- » Now, let's examine the modern-day definition of *trespass*. The word can be used as a noun and a verb.
- » NOUN: 1) *an unlawful act committed on the person, property, or rights of another especially a wrongful entry on real property; the legal action for injuries resulting from trespass.* 2) *a violation of moral or social ethics : TRANSGRESSION especially SIN; an unwarranted infringement.*
- » VERB: 1) *to commit a trespass especially to enter unlawfully upon the land of another; to ERR, SIN; to make an unwarranted or uninvited incursion.* 2) *to VIOLATE; to trespass the bounds of good taste.*
- » After reading all of those definitions of the word *trespass*, can we agree that *trespasses* can occur daily—either intentionally or unintentionally? What does Jesus say we should do (Luke 17:3,4)? These daily *trespasses* have to be *forgiven*—by us—or they will keep us from having our sins forgiven. Are we allowed to seek revenge? Read I Peter 3:9.

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### 3. In verse 11 of The Lord's Prayer, Jesus is telling us that the prayer He is teaching us is a *daily* prayer.

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- » If we are praying for God to give us daily bread (food), then we are praying the prayer every day. And, if we are praying the prayer daily, that means we are ***forgiving those that have trespassed against us ON A DAILY BASIS*** (Proverbs 19:11). Why daily? Because *trespasses* happen every single day. Consider the response Jesus gave Peter concerning forgiving (Matthew 18:21,22).
- » Every day we have to decide whether or not to forgive those who trespass against us (Ephesians 4:31,32). Whether it is someone who cut us off in traffic, or who violated us by their words, or someone who offended us, spoke sharply to us, ignored us, talked about us, posted something on Facebook that trespassed against us—all of these situations count as a TRESPASS against us (Mark 11:25-27).
- » If we simply ignore the trespass—does it go away? Let's take a closer look next week.

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# “BACK TO BASICS – I FORGIVE YOU – Part 1”

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## LESSON 3 ■ For week ending January 21, 2023

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In this age where everyone wants to be *empowered* and we are encouraged to *know our rights* and even to *demand our rights*, it is amazing that so many people choose to burden and shackle themselves because they refuse to forgive those that have trespassed against them. No wonder Jesus emphasized the importance of daily forgiving those who trespass against us so that we can be free from the torment and despair that accompanies unforgiveness. You have the power to forgive—USE IT!

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**KEY TEXT:** “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*” (Isaiah 61:1).

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### 1. Let’s look at Matthew 6:14,15 again.

- » Matthew 6:14,15, NKJV, “*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (15) But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*”
- » Last week we defined the word *trespass*. We discussed the fact that trespasses happen on a daily basis. That’s why Jesus instructed us to FORGIVE those that have trespassed against us EVERY SINGLE DAY (Ephesians 4:32). So, this week let’s look at what it means to forgive a trespass. Remember, that’s exactly what Jesus instructed us to do. He didn’t say “forget about it,” or “ignore it,” or “pretend it didn’t happen.” Jesus instructed us to FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US. Even if we consider them an enemy, what are we instructed to do? Read Luke 6:27.
- » Let’s look at the definition of FORGIVE. It comes from the Greek word *aphiemi* (*af-ee’-ay-mee*) which means: *to send forth, cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up*. Read the words of Jesus found in Luke 6:37.
- » Biblical forgiveness is *the act of pardoning an offender*. In the Bible, the Greek word translated “forgiveness” literally means “to let go,” as when a person does not demand payment for a debt.

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### 2. We all want to be forgiven—yet we are sometimes reluctant to forgive those who have violated us.

- » First, let’s establish up front that forgiving someone does not mean that you pretend you weren’t violated or trespassed against. In fact, it’s just the opposite. **In order to forgive, you must recognize and identify that you were trespassed.** Jesus alludes to this in Mark 11:25.
- » We can forgive others—because Jesus forgave us first. We didn’t deserve forgiveness, in fact, because of our sin, we deserved death. However, God sent His only-begotten Son to save us (John 3:16,17). Notice that He didn’t come to condemn us (we were already condemned to death), He came to give us an abundant life (John 10:10).
- » If you were abused, your abuser does not deserve your forgiveness. However, when you choose to forgive your abuser, you exercise your God-given right to forgive and be free of the effects of unforgiveness in your life (Proverbs 3:5,6). Satan wants you to hold onto that unforgiveness and be bound by the side-effects: bitterness, discontentment, anger, resentment and more.
- » Jesus wants you to forgive and to experience the joy, peace and tranquility that comes from setting yourself free of that trespass (I John 4:11).

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### 3. When you choose not to forgive, you plant a seed in your heart.

- » Ever talk to someone who is bitter? They will soon tell you that they were hurt (trespassed against or violated) and why they will never trust anyone again. To them, the trespass is alive and well in their mind and heart. How can you tell what is in a person’s heart? Let’s ask Jesus (Luke 6:43-45).
- » How can I tell if I have unforgiveness planted in my heart? It’s simple. Examine what is coming out of your mouth. What kind of fruit are you producing? Are you mad, bitter, resentful (Fruits of the Flesh Galatians 5:19-21 )—but you can’t remember why? Perhaps you have trespasses in your life that you have not forgiven (Ephesians 4:31,32). Perhaps you have said: “I’ll forgive you—but I won’t forget!” Next week we will examine that statement and determine whether or not you have truly forgiven that person.

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# “BACK TO BASICS – I FORGIVE YOU – Part 2”

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## LESSON 4 ■ For week ending January 28, 2023

Ever heard the statement: “I’ll forgive you—but I won’t forget!”? That brings up the question: “Have I really forgiven that person who trespassed against me or who abused me?” This is a legitimate question that we have all probably asked ourselves at one time or another. So, the question becomes: “How do I know if I have truly forgiven someone?” Let’s take a closer look at God’s Word for the answer.

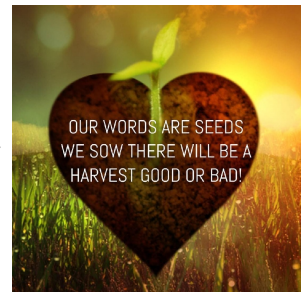
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**KEY TEXT:** “*If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven*” (John 20:23, NIV).

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### 1. It time we become heart-smart.

- » Last week we talked about the fact that when we choose not to forgive those that have trespassed against us, we are actually planting a seed in our heart.
- » That seed of unforgiveness does not remain dormant. It grows. That’s the message of Hebrews 12:15, “*looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*”
- » This scripture tells us that we are to examine ourselves. We are supposed to listen to what comes out of our mouth—which reveals what is in our hearts.
- » So, the question becomes: “How do I know if I have truly forgiven someone?” First, we examine what is coming out of our mouth when we remember that person (I Thessalonians 5:15).
- » Do we still talk about the trespass/violation/abuse? Does it still bring up emotions that overwhelm us or make us angry? Do we become agitated and upset? All these are signs that unforgiveness/bitterness is still growing in our heart (II Timothy 1:7).
- » It’s time to become heart-smart and to empower ourselves to live a heart-healthy life!



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### 2. It’s 18 inches from your brain to your heart.

- » Did you know that the average distance from our brain to our heart is 18 inches? You say what does that have to do with forgiveness? The answer is simple: EVERYTHING!
- » Let’s discuss the statement: “I’ll forgive you—but I won’t forget!” This is a statement that comes from our flesh which is essentially saying, “*You hurt me once, but you won’t do it again!*” So, we try to forgive (because Jesus tells us to—Colossians 3:13) but we can’t let it go (we have a heart of stone Ezekiel 36:26).
- » When someone makes this statement, what they are actually saying is this: “I forgave you in my mind, but I won’t forget because the trespass is still alive and well in my heart.” There’s that 18 inches. And, I’m still talking about it, because the Bible tells me that out of my heart flows all the issues of my life (Proverbs 4:23). What does Jesus say about forgiving someone multiple times (Matthew 18:21,22)?
- » The fact is, you have not forgiven. If this is the way you feel, then you have not fully forgiven the person who trespassed against you. So, to be honest, the trespass is still influencing you, it’s still causing bitterness, and it’s still defiling you (I Peter 4:8). Can you love someone and still be bitter?

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### 3. I choose forgiveness. I choose freedom. I choose an abundant life.

- » Satan is trying to deceive you. He wants you bound, hostile, mad, resentful and bitter. He achieves this by convincing you that it is in your best interest to not forgive. He wants you to hold onto that hatred and bitterness. He’s defiling you and laughing at you the whole time (I Peter 5:8).
- » Jesus died to empower you (John 10:10). He forgave you, and gave you the power to forgive those that have sinned against you (key text). He came to set you free, but the choice is still yours (Joshua 24:15).
- » You say: “I thought all my sins were forgiven when I got saved.” You’re right, they were. We are talking about the people who have sinned (trespassed) against you. You have to forgive them—in order for your sins to be forgiven (Matthew 6:14,15).
- » Tired of carrying those hurts and wounds around in your heart? Choose forgiveness (Luke 11:4). Choose an abundant life in Christ. Next week we will show you a prayer of forgiveness that will set you free!

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# “BACK TO BASICS – I FORGIVE YOU – Part 3”

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## LESSON 5 ■ For week ending February 4+, 2023

Today we will discuss a sample prayer on how to forgive someone. If you've tried to forgive someone in the past, but still harbor harsh feelings towards them, then today's prayer is for you. Not only do we need to forgive that person, but we need to bind that area in our heart that the unforgiveness occupied. Next, we need to speak God's life and love to that part of our defiled heart to fill the void that unforgiveness occupied. Finally, we need to ask God to forgive us for holding unforgiveness/judgment in our heart. Today's your day—God wants to set you free—are you ready?

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**KEY TEXT:** *“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain...Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (II Corinthians 6:1,2 partial quote).

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### 1. “ FILL IN NAME ”, I forgive you for abusing me.”

- » Inside each of us is an inner child. He/she is alive and well. We can remember our childhood in detail. We can remember the good, and we remember the bad as well. We remember those people who treated us right, and we remember those people who treated us wrong, who trespassed against us, and who took advantage of us.
- » We remember our friends, and we remember those who made fun of us. We can remember those who helped us, and those who hurt us as well. All of these memories make us who we are (Hebrews 4:12). All of these experiences help shape us into the people we are today (Psalm 19:14).
- » We live in a sinful world. Sin in this world causes people to do bad things (Ephesians 2:1-3). We may have been a victim of these abuses (Matthew 11:28-30). Perhaps we were unable to defend ourselves or to prevent what was taking place. Perhaps we felt there was no one we could tell. So, we kept it to ourselves. We have tried to ignore it, but it's still there. It's hiding in the depths of our hearts (Proverbs 4:23; 19:20).

### 2. It's time to talk with someone. It's time to get some help (Proverbs 11:14).

- » You've tried to handle it on your own, but you are still struggling. That's okay. Jesus knows all about it. His Word gives us the answer (Galatians 6:2; I John 1:5-9).
- » James 5:16, *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”*
- » When the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the coming Messiah in Isaiah 9:6,7, he referred to Jesus as the “Wonderful Counselor.”
- » How is Jesus a “Wonderful Counselor?” He works through His people. Jesus works through Christian Counselors. They are His hands extended to you and I (II Corinthians 1:4).
- » A Christian Counselor will help identify the problem. They will help you take that problem to the Cross where you can lay it down (by forgiving those that hurt you). They will help you live an abundant life.
- » Romans 15:14, AMP, *“Personally I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are...amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge and competent to admonish and counsel and instruct one another also.”*

### 3. The following is a simple prayer to forgive someone who trespassed against you.

- » We will use the example of a child who was abandoned by their parent (Isaiah 49:15,16).
- » The person who was abandoned as a child is encouraged to say aloud: *“Mom/Dad, I forgive you for abandoning me. I forgive you for leaving. I forgive you for not being there for me. I forgive you for ignoring me. I forgive you for missing so many important times in my life. Mom/Dad, I choose to forgive you.”* Read I John 3:18.
- » The person then asks God to forgive them for holding this judgment and unforgiveness in their heart against their parent: *“Dear God, please forgive me for judging and failing to honor my Mom/Dad. Please forgive me for holding resentment and unforgiveness in my heart. Thank you God for forgiving me.”*
- » The Counselor then prays with the person: *“God, we ask You to bind this area of unforgiveness in their heart. Your Word says that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven. We ask You Holy Spirit to fill this void with Your presence and to saturate their heart with love. You said whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven (Matthew 16:19). We loose Your Holy Spirit into their heart and life. In Jesus' Name—Amen!”*
- » The person then restores their parent to a place of honor in accordance with Deuteronomy 5:16. *“Mom/Dad, I choose to honor you. I restore you to a place of honor in my heart. Amen.”*



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# “CAN I LOVE YOU WITHOUT FORGIVING? – Part 1”

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## LESSON 6 ■ For week ending February 11, 2023

There are some Scriptures in the Bible that we have a tendency to skip right over. Perhaps we rationalize in our minds that we are *working on that*, or, *it's not time for that yet*; however, our rationalizations do not change God's Word or the commands written therein. One such passage is found in Mark 12:29-31. In this chapter we see that Jesus is answering a question asked of Him: “Which is the first commandment of all?” Today we will focus on the response Jesus gave and the incredible mandate His answer placed upon every believer.

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**KEY TEXT: “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you” (John 15:12).**

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### 1. Can we be honest with ourselves? Oftentimes we read the Bible and deliberately skip over or dismiss passages that we deem as too hard to achieve or attain at this time.

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- » First, we do not have the right to do that. God's Word is just that: God's Word! If a passage of Scripture presents a challenge for us, then we should face that challenge head on. We are not alone! We have the Holy Spirit Who helps lead us into all truth. Read John 16:13.
- » Let's read Jesus' response to the Scribe found in Mark 12:29-31, “Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 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.’ This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
- » Love God first, then love your neighbor as yourself. We gladly accept the first commandment, but we want to make conditions or dismiss the second commandment as not realistic in our world today.
- » Notice the use of the word *neighbor*. It's challenging enough to love those that love us (our family, spouses, church family, etc.), and our mind/flesh tells us that LOVING EVERYONE is unreasonable. So, we dismiss it as unattainable and go about our lives. LIFE LESSON: It's not wise to dismiss the words of Jesus—ever!

### 2. While we often focus on the main narrative of the first command (love God), we overlook a key phrase that is central to what we have been discussing in these lessons.

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- » We have just read Mark 12:29-31. Please read the highlighted portion again. Please note that this is Jesus talking. Jesus is telling us that we must love God and our neighbor **with all of our heart**.
- » Let me ask you a question: *How can you do that if part of your heart is filled with unforgiveness/judgments/hatred against your parents, your spouse, your boss at work, homosexuals, Muslims, Republicans, Democrats, and so on?*
- » We have spent the past 5 Sabbath Lessons on forgiving those that trespass against you so that your heart is free of judgments and the resulting bitterness and defilement. While a clean heart benefits you and helps you live an abundant life, it is also a **REQUIREMENT** in order to love God completely and to love your neighbor as yourself.

### 3. How can you love someone if you have a judgment or hatred against them planted in your heart?

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- » It's time we learn that we do not have the right to judge people or to hate them as well (Matthew 7:1-5). Now, before you dismiss that statement by saying, *I don't hate anyone*, please take an honest look at what comes out of your mouth regarding them (your parents, your spouse, your boss at work, homosexuals, Muslims, Republicans, Democrats, and so on). Review your Facebook posts, your text messages, and your conversations with others. What would Jesus—and others for that matter—think was in your heart?
- » First, let's be realistic. You can only love the way that Jesus loves, by having Jesus live in your heart. Having Jesus alive and well in your life/heart is the only way that you can love those that are your enemy, or that spitefully use you. Read Matthew 5:43-48. Don't let the word *perfect* scare you. It simply means *complete, mature*.
- » It's not possible to love God with all your heart and to hate *anyone* at the same time. Your judgment of that person is occupying a place in your heart that is defiling you and making you bitter as well (Hebrews 12:15).
- » You say, *Yes, but the times we are living in are so difficult. Our society is abandoning God and is increasingly hostile to the things of God.* Let me ask you this question: *Is it more wicked than the Roman Empire was during the time of Jesus?* Jesus could have spent His entire ministry railing against the Roman Empire. But He didn't do that. Jesus focused on His agenda which was sharing the Good News that THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND: Repent and be saved! That should be our focus as well.



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# “CAN I LOVE YOU WITHOUT FORGIVING? – Part 2”

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LESSON 7 ■ For week ending February 18, 2023

Part of the reason we have difficulty loving people is because we do not truly understand what Godly love is. When Jesus was born of a virgin some 2,000 years ago, one of the things He did was fully illustrate what Godly love is. In today's lesson we will discuss a new commandment that He gave which changed everything. Let's open our Bibles and examine what Jesus had to say about love.

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**KEY TEXT:** *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (I John 4:10, NIV).*

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## 1. It's a understatement to say that when Jesus arrived on this earth, everything changed; however, it's true!

- » One of the most important things that changed was how we are to love and respond to each other. In the Old Testament things were different. If someone poked your eye out, you were allowed to seek revenge and poke theirs out as well (Exodus 21:23-25). If you hurt me, I was permitted to hurt you in return.
- » Jesus changed all of that. Read what Jesus said in Matthew 5:38-42. Discuss how Jesus instructed us to give to those who are taking things away from us.
- » What a revolution Jesus brought with Him! But, He wasn't finished just yet. He continues to identify a new set of rules by which He expects us to live. Continue reading Matthew 5:43-48. Now, before your mind says that its not possible to do these things, remember this is Jesus talking. He is giving us instructions and commandments—not suggestions!
- » Read verses 46 and 47 again. It's not enough to just love those in our little circle.

**Jesus commands us to love everyone.**



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## 2. What is AGAPE LOVE?

- » There are all kinds of love in this world. There's the love we have for hamburgers. Some people love to go hiking. Others love their recliner and so on. When we talk start talking about Godly love, the Greek word for that love is AGAPE.
- » **AGAPE LOVE is a sacrificial love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return.**
- » This is the way that Jesus loves us. He came and died for us—even those that refuse to accept Him as their Savior. He loves everyone—even sinners that reject Him completely! **Jesus doesn't let the behavior of anyone influence His love for them.** This is what we need to do. We need to love others WITHOUT CONDITIONS.
- » UNCONDITIONAL LOVE is just that—without conditions.
- » This is why Jesus could love the women caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-10). Jesus did not condone adultery. Yet He refused to condemn her and instructed her to "...go and sin no more" (John 8:11).
- » Jesus showed us how to love and stand up for someone whose lifestyle and choices He did not approve of. Why did Jesus do that? Because He loved her unconditionally. **You can love someone without approving of their lifestyle.** And, your love for them is not approval of the ungodly things they are doing.

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## 3. Jesus described this new understanding of love as “a new commandment I give to you” (John 13:34).

- » Jesus was talking about AGAPE LOVE. He clarified it by saying, *“that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* Jesus was ushering in the Grace Dispensation. A period where grace and mercy was the order of the day (Ephesians 3:1,2).
- » This new definition of love can only be accomplished through Jesus Christ living within us and the Holy Spirit operating in our lives. Why? Because AGAPE LOVE comes from God (I John 4:7)
- » Our flesh says to us: “I can't do that because I will get hurt.” The truth is that you may get hurt—Jesus surely did (John 15:13). However, you are willing to take that chance to help someone. Why? Because you are focused on helping people instead of concentrating on protecting yourself and your selfish needs/wants. FLESHLY LOVE is focused 100% on taking care of the flesh. AGAPE LOVE is the exact opposite. It places the needs of others before our fleshly concerns.
- » The only way we can truly love unconditionally is to abide with Jesus. This is what He said in John 15:4. We must abide in Jesus—in order to bear the fruit of UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.
- » The truth is that Godly love is messy. It compels you to respond to those in need (Luke 10:30-37). It compels you to love your enemies as we read earlier. Its compels you to stay through arguments, sickness, betrayals, and failures. It cost Jesus His life—and it will do the same for you and I (Galatians 2:20).

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# “CAN I LOVE YOU WITHOUT FORGIVING? – Part 3”

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## LESSON 8 ■ For week ending February 25, 2023

Last week we defined **AGAPE LOVE** which is a sacrificial love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return. This is the way that God loves us. To be honest, **AGAPE LOVE** is the exact opposite of our fleshly, unregenerate love which focuses on pleasing our flesh—which we all know can never be satisfied! So, what is **AGAPE LOVE**? It’s expounded upon in I Corinthians 13. Let’s take a look.

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**KEY TEXT: “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins” (I Peter 4:8).**

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### 1. God is love and we are created in His image (Genesis 1:26,27).

- » As our spirit encounters life, it seeks nurture. God has designed that our spirits find love and thus power to live through warm physical affection. As babies instinctively search for their mother and learn to nurse, so our spirit seeks touches of love. Read I John 4:7-12.
- » God has designed us so that our spirits find love and thus power to life through warm physical affection. He Himself flows through us in His Spirit when we give and receive affection. The primal drive of our spirit is to find and live in a way for which it was created. We seek **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**—the same way that God loves us I John 4:19).
- » When we do not receive this, we latch onto whatever substitute we can find, and learn to identify love by whatever form it seems to take or package it comes in. Because this never satisfies, we must secure more and more. There is no substitute for unconditional love. Everything else pails in comparison.
- » For this reason—*plus what all we inherit in Adamic sin* (Romans 5:12)—all unregenerate (fleshly/conditional) love is **MANIPULATION, EXPLOITATION, DEMAND, AND CONTROL.**
  - **UNREGENERATE** – *obstinately wrong or bad.* Our “un-regenerate” love does not “generate” love in return. It often “generates” feelings of being used, manipulated or being violated in response.
- » Our view of “love” becomes warped, twisted, and ungodly. And, if we don’t recognize our warped identification of love, it will DESTROY our hopes of experiencing love the way that God intended us to (I John 4:20).

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### 2. True/Godly love lays down its life for others.

- » Unregenerate/fleshly love *lays down the life of others for itself.* Unconditional love *sets the other free* to become all they can become (I John 3:16).
- » Fleshly love *imprisons the other* so that they cannot become who they truly are (I John 4:18).
- » It’s time we lay down our fleshly, twisted, demanding view of love and embrace God’s **AGAPE LOVE.**
- » The Apostle Paul did us a great favor in the book of I Corinthians. He wrote a whole chapter on love and what it is—and is not!
- » Read I Corinthians 13:1,2. In a world where the importance of higher education and increased knowledge are promoted as a way to guaranteed success, what does Paul have to say about the subject? He stresses the fact that all of our increased knowledge is useless—if we can’t love our brother/sister.
- » Read verse 3. So many times we think our deeds can substitute for love. For example, I don’t want to interact with the homeless or needy, so I’ll give money to an organization that does it for me instead. The truth is that we need to be led by the Holy Spirit. If He prompts us to help someone or reach out to them, then we should do it in love.

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### 3. The rest of the story.

- » Now that the Apostle Paul has told us what not to do, he begins to define what we should do. Paul begins to outline what **AGAPE LOVE** really is.
- » Read verse 4. Godly love *suffers long.* We don’t mind *short-suffering.* It’s the *long-suffering* that is real work. True love does not *envy.* This goes back to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:10). God wants us to be content (Hebrews 13:5; I Timothy 6:6,7). Also, true love is humble (Colossians 3:12).
- » Read verse 5 and 6. Godly love is not rude. Some people pride themselves on being rude, demanding, and “speaking their mind.” That is not Godly love. Love is not selfish or self-seeking (having a “what can you do for me” mentality). What does God’s Word tell us about “*vain ambitions*” (Philippians 2:3,4)?
- » True love *thinks no evil* and *does not rejoice in sin/iniquity* (gossip/talebearing). How can we accomplish that? Read and apply Philippians 4:8. Read verses 7 and 8. True love *bears, believes, hopes and endures all things.* How? Read the key text.
- » Finally, read verse 8-13. Love never fails and it is the greatest.
- » Saints of God, let’s share **AGAPE LOVE** with the world today!

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# “LOVING HARD TO LOVE PEOPLE – Part 1”

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## LESSON 9 ■ For week ending March 4, 2023

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What is the answer to the challenges we deal with in the world right now? It's certainly not that someone else needs to do something to change the situations we face. Each of us must do what needs to be done to change what we can change. We must learn to LIVE IN PEACE and WALK IN LOVE. And we absolutely must learn to love people who are hard to love, which includes most of us, because we can all be difficult for others to love, at least at times. Love is much more than a feeling; it is how we treat people. – (*This series of four lessons is based on the book, “Loving People Who Are Hard to Love” by Joyce Meyer.*)

**KEY TEXT:** “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:34,35).

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### 1. Why are some people easier to love than others?

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- » There are some people that we think of as easy to love (Matthew 5:46-48). The truth is that if we knew these people better, we might conclude that we would change our mind about them as well!
  - » Unless we become really good at not being easily offended and extending forgiveness to those who hurt us, is there any hope for real peace and unity in this world? Read Proverbs 19:11.
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### 2. Satan has a plan for humanity, and sadly, at this point in history, many people seem to be playing along with it.

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- » His plan is to divide and conquer, because he knows that if people don't unite, he can defeat us.
  - » According to Ephesians 6:12, we are in a spiritual war, not a natural one.
  - » The only way we can win this battle is to truly love one another. Have you ever considered that the Bible teaches that love is a form of spiritual warfare? Love is our greatest *weapon* (I Peter 4:8). Ephesians 6:11 tells us to “*Put on the whole armor of God...*” If you *put on God*, you are *putting on love* (I John 4:8; Colossians 3:14).
  - » Romans 12:21 says that we overcome evil with good. Romans 13:12 teaches us to put on the armor of light, and only light can dispel the darkness that prevails today.
  - » To live in the light is to live as Jesus lived, and He is love (I John 4:8-11).
  - » He loves everyone with no exceptions—even those who are hard to love.
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### 3. In Colossians 3:14,15, Paul urges us, “*And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*”

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- » What does it mean to “put on” love? It means to love *on purpose*.
  - » This sounds so simple if we would just do it—love people, live in peace, and be thankful.
  - » But we run into the problem that some people are hard to love, and too often we don't want what is hard, so we follow our emotions (feelings) and let the Devil have his way (I John 4:20,21).
  - » We complain about the conditions in the world and think someone should do something. But we rarely think we should be that someone.
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### 4. If you are looking for an easy way to love people who are hard to love, you must understand from the beginning that there is no easy solution for you to automatically love people.

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- » However, when we do something difficult because we love Jesus and want to obey Him, we not only please God but we grow spiritually, becoming more and more like Jesus (I Peter 2:21; 3:8,9).
- » You and I can help by doing our part. It will necessitate our becoming peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) and being willing to make loving others a priority in our lives (I John 3:16,17).
- » This begins at home and spreads from there. That means we have to apply these instructions to ourselves—not merely others (I John 3:18). We have to be willing to see our own faults, not simply those of other people.

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# “LOVING HARD TO LOVE PEOPLE – Part 2”

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## LESSON 10 ■ For week ending March 11, 2023

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Before we attempt to love people who are hard to love, we need to understand the importance of love and know what love is and is not. Loving and being loved make life worth living. Love is the energy of life, and it is what motivates people to get up each day and keep going. Some people are motivated by making money, so they get up each day to climb the ladder of worldly success. Even though they may think they love what they do, they are loving something that can never fulfill or satisfy them. Anything apart from God has no ability to make and keep us happy.

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**KEY TEXT:** “*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love*” (I Corinthians 13:13).

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### **1. Everything you take into your home is in the process of decay and will one day land on a junk pile somewhere, so don't place too much value on material goods.**

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- » The Apostle Paul writes: “*We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it*” (I Timothy 6:7). If you are spending your time trying to get more and more possessions, I encourage you to think seriously about this verse (Matthew 6:19-21).
- » Love gives life purpose and meaning. People in the world are looking for love, but they are really looking for God, because He is love (I John 4:16).
- » Love isn't something God does. It isn't something God gives to good people and withholds from evil people because HE IS LOVE (John 3:16)
- » He cannot do anything but love because God is *what* He is and *who* He is. While we were yet sinners, He loved us and gave His Son to die for us (Romans 5:8).

### **2. We often want God to visit us or to do some miraculous work to prove that He cares for us, but we can see from God's Word that anytime we show love to another person, God is there.**

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- » Read and discuss these Scriptures: I John 4:12; I John 4:16; and I John 4:8.
- » In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus tells us that will happen when He returns and separates the sheep (righteous people) from the goats (unrighteous people). Verses 33-36, “*And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*”
- » Then those on His right will ask when they did these things, and He will answer, “*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me*” (verse 40b).
- » Next Jesus will turn to those on His left and say that when He was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, in need of clothes, sick, or in prison, they did not look after Him (verses 42,43.) Jesus will say to them, “*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me*” (Verse 45b).

### **3. This story is impactful because it teaches us that Jesus considers the way we treat others to be the way we treat Him (Romans 12:9,10).**

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- » Since this is the case, where does that leave all the people who are angry, filled with hatred, selfish and who do nothing for those in need? We should remember that eternity is a very long time, and the way we live now determines where we will spend it (I John 5:11-13).
- » Will we spend eternity in heaven with God, or will we spend it in utter darkness and misery with the Devil? God gives us all free choice, and we should choose to serve Him no matter what anyone else does. The choices we make now determine what our future will be (Joshua 24:15).
- » Where does loving people fit into our list of priorities (John 13:34)? If we keep this one command, we will not sin, because love always puts God first and never does anything that will harm another person.

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# “LOVING HARD TO LOVE PEOPLE – Part 3”

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## LESSON 11 ■ For week ending March 18, 2023

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Today we are going to discuss WHAT LOVE IS NOT. Know what love is certainly helps us learn to walk in love, but we are also wise to understand what love is not. Many people become confused about love because people tell them they love them and then act in ways totally inconsistent with real love. Love is not talk or theory, and it is not merely a sermon. It may produce feelings, but it is much more than a feeling, because we can love by choice even when the feeling of love is absent.

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**KEY TEXT:** *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).*

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### **1. The following is a testimony from Joyce Meyer concerning her parents.**

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- » My father abused me and my mother abandoned me to the sexual abuse my father perpetrated on me, yet God asked me to take care of them when they got older (Matthew 5:44).
- » I will confess that I was never once excited to go to their assisted living apartment and eventually to the nursing home to visit them (Matthew 25:34-36). I went because I knew it was the loving thing to do and that doing the loving thing, even to the people who had abused and abandoned me, was something that God expected of me (Romans 12:14).
- » I didn't feel like spending my hard-earned money on them, but I knew that love would have me take good care of my parents (Deuteronomy 5:16).

### **2. We don't have to feel like doing the right thing in order to do it.**

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- » This is what it means to love people who are hard to love. It means to treat them as Jesus would treat them, no matter how they have treated us (I Peter 3:9).
- » When we decide to love people who are hard to love, feelings of love may rarely be present. Love can be described as how we treat people (I John 3:18). It is important to remember that we can love someone and not like everything we do.
- » The Bible says that God does not show favoritism (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11).
- » He gives everyone equal opportunity and loves everyone the same, but each individual must choose how to respond to Him (II Peter 3:9).
- » All prejudice and racial divides would simply disappear if we all simply loved as God loves.
- » Love sees the best in people, and it is willing to pray about and be patient with the aspects of people that aren't so good. Love always believes the best about others (I Corinthians 13:4-7).

### **3. Love is not selfish or self-centered, and it doesn't have to be right.**

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- » As a matter of fact, **love sacrifices its right to be right.** It is not impatient or harsh. It does not gossip, criticize, or spread rumors about the faults and sins of others, but it covers them and prays for their forgiveness and change of heart. The Bible says that love covers a multitude of sins (I Peter 4:8).
- » In Genesis 9:18-27, we find a story about Noah and his three sons that can teach us a lesson.
- » After the Ark landed, Noah planted a vineyard and in due time he made wine and became drunk. He laid in his tent naked and his youngest son, Ham, saw his father's nakedness. He told his brothers who took a garment, walked into the tent backwards, and covered their father's nakedness.
- » When Noah awoke and learned what Ham had done, he pronounced a curse upon him; however, he praised Shem and Japheth. Ham was Noah's youngest son. Often, young Christians who have no experience or spiritual growth make unwise decisions and act in foolish ways. Ham's behavior was unwise, and it showed a lack of spiritual maturity.
- » In I Corinthians 3:1, the Apostle Paul refers to people who act unwisely as babies in Christ. He even mentions that babies are worldly, jealous, and quarrelsome (I Corinthians 3:3).
- » Joyce Meyer: When I was a young Christian, I was quick to gossip and spread rumors, but as I grew in God, I learned that this type of behavior displeases God. God wants us to cover one another, rather than exposing and spreading bad reports about them. Not gossiping is part of Christianity 101. Love does not gossip, because love treats others the way it wants to be treated.

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# “LOVING HARD TO LOVE PEOPLE – Part 4”

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## LESSON 12 ■ For week ending March 25, 2023

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As believers, we must *PRACTICE LOVING OTHERS*. As we practice loving people on purpose, we develop the habit of loving others. Those who have practiced love and developed the habit of loving even when it is hard will automatically fall back on love in the situations and challenges they face. However, people who don't make a priority of loving will find that love is not their *default* behavior.

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**KEY TEXT:** “*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*” (I John 4:8).

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### 1. The following is a testimony from Joyce Meyer concerning her experience loving people.

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- » Years ago, when God showed me how selfish I was and I started trying to learn how to love people, I had to deliberately try to think about it all the time (I Corinthians 16:14). Now that I have practiced love for years, I think about it without having to make much of an effort to do so (I John 4:19).
- » The same will happen to you! Anytime we form a habit, it is difficult for us (John 15:9,10). We do it, then we forget to do it, and after a while something happens and we remember again and do it for a while then forget again. But if we don't give up and continue praying and asking God for help, we will become more loving people (Colossians 3:14).

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### 2. Of course, we will always be growing in this fruit of the Spirit called love.

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- » Read Galatians 5:22,23. Paul's prayer for the Philippians was that their love would “*abound more and more*” (Philippians 1:9), and he encourages the Thessalonian Christians: “*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else*” (I Thessalonians 3:12).
- » In other words, we cannot love too much and should always continue to find new ways to show love to other people. If you want to love people, you will need to take time to listen to them and find out what they want and need (Luke 6:27-36). Do they need encouragement? Do they need financial help? Do they need to be included in family activities because they are single, widowed, or lonely (I John 3:16-18)?
- » We usually assume that people need and like what we do, but we are all different and everyone feels loved in different ways.

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### 3. In his book, *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman writes about five primary ways people give and receive love.

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- » These 5 ways are: 1) Quality time; 2) Acts of service; 3) Words of affirmation; 4) Gifts; and 5) Physical touch (I Corinthians 16:14). Joyce Meyer: I like gifts and acts of service. My husband likes quality time. One of my daughters likes encouragement. Some people have more than one love language, as I do, but most people usually have a dominant one.
- » If you really listen to people, they will tell you what they want and need (James 1:19). They do this without realizing they are doing it (Galatians 6:2). They are not hinting, but as you get to know them you will notice what they like, and you should be ready to love them in ways that they need to be loved. Luke 6:45b, “*...For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*”

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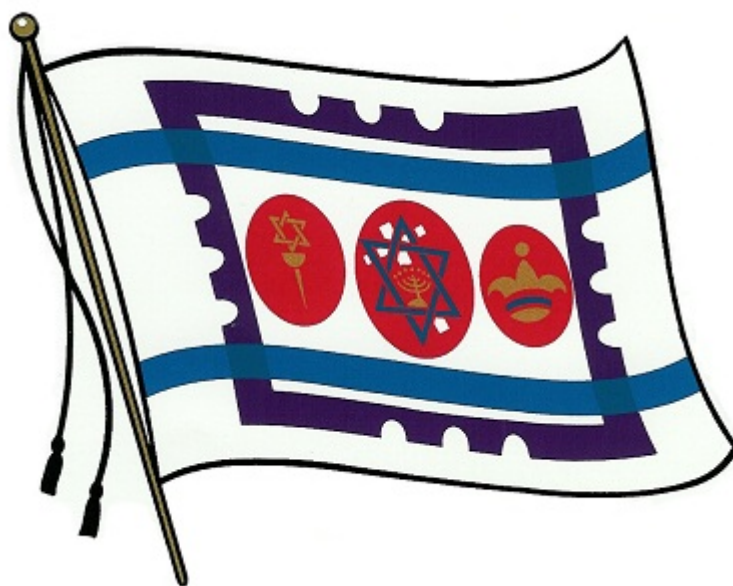
### 4. Loving people means doing what is for their good, not necessarily yours.

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- » Love is the greatest thing in the world. It has power to change lives, and it defeats the Devil in his works on the earth. Nothing gives people more joy than feeling loved.
- » Proverbs 3:3,4, NIV, “*Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.*”
- » We can tell someone we love them, and it is meaningful, but when they *feel* loved, it is much, much better. People will always remember how you made them feel when they were with you, even if they forget what you said or did. Make people feel good about themselves and you will have many friends.







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