

The Best Way to Love Others and Yourself

I believe that other than the gospel regarding salvation through faith in Christ, learning to walk in love is the most important lesson in God's Word. Jesus says that love is the most important commandment (Mark 12:28–31).

The apostle Paul writes that love is the greatest thing (1 Cor. 13:13), and he tells Timothy that the purpose of their instruction is love that comes from a pure heart (1 Tim. 1:5).

If I were only allowed to teach three messages for the remainder of my life, the first would be that we are saved by grace through our faith in Jesus, and by it we are justified and made right with God. The second would be the importance of spending regular quality time with God. And the third would be receiving God's love, loving Him in return and walking in love with other people.

Thankfully I don't have to limit my teaching to three subjects; I share this only to show you how important I believe walking in love is. After we are saved by grace, if we were to focus on this alone, we would avoid most of our problems.

Love does no harm to anyone. And people who walk in love cannot be unhappy, because they don't have their minds on themselves but on what they can do for God and others. I have often said that we cannot be both selfish and happy at the same time.

The kind of love I'm talking about is not a carnal love. It is not a feeling, although it may include feelings. It is the same kind of love God gives to us—unconditional, everlasting and powerful. It is called the "royal law" of liberty (James 2:8) because the person who truly loves others will not break

any of God's commandments.

If we love God as we should, we will happily obey Him and one of His commands is that we should love one another. As a matter of fact, Jesus says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34–35, NIV).

In Galatians 5:13-15, the apostle Paul says, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

Love is something that can be seen and felt. It is displayed in a variety of ways. Love is patient, and it always believes the best. Love helps others, it gives and it is quick to forgive. This is a very basic list, but just those five qualities of love are plenty to think about and ask God to help us do.

I highly recommend that we all major in walking in love. This requires intentionality and saying no to self regularly, but the rewards of peace, joy and greater fulfillment will always outweigh the sacrifices we make. Let us remember that Jesus said what we have done to others, we have done to Him (Matt. 25:40, 45). That is a thought-provoking statement and one that we should take time to meditate on.

The last few verses of Galatians 5 gives us a warning from Paul that if we bite and devour (fight and argue with) one another, it may consume us. It seems today that a large percentage of the population is angry or resentful about something, and Christians are certainly not immune to these negative feelings.

Anger is dangerous because it can devour and consume us, and it often becomes all we think about. The truth is staying angry with your enemies is like taking poison and hoping it will hurt the person who hurt you. I like to say, “Do yourself a favor and forgive.” And Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

This really is the best way to live. And when we do, we’re following Paul’s instruction in Galatians 5:13-14, to “serve one another humbly in love” and to love others as we love ourselves. {eoa}

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