

Genuine Love

We want to be blessed, but we are not desperate for the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus made it clear that love is His No. 1 priority when He said, "I give you a new commandment: that you should love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too should love one another" (John 13:34, The Amplified Bible). The apostle Peter wrote: "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'" (1 Peter 4:8, NKJV).

In other words, we are to have genuine, pure, fervent love for others above everything else we do. If we can manage only one thing in our lives, it should be to love other people. Of course, it is impossible to truly love others without knowing God, loving Him and knowing He loves us.

Many people think great faith is the No. 1 sign of spiritual maturity. But I believe that walking in love is the true test of spiritual maturity, and I know that it energizes our faith walk. If we love God, we have faith in Him.

The Bible teaches that faith works through love. Galatians 5:6 says that what really counts is "faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love."

Love is not talk or theory; it's action. In fact, the Bible says we are not walking in love if we see a brother in need, have what it takes to help him, but do nothing (see 1 John 3:17).

Jesus also said all the law and all the prophets are summed up in love when He declared: "'You shall love the Lord your God

with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets”“ (Matt. 22:37-40).

Jesus gave these words to people who asked which commandment was the most important. They were basically saying to Him: “Just give us the bottom line, Jesus.” In response, He said: “OK. You want the bottom line? You want to fully obey all the law and all the prophets? Then love Me and love people.” End of story. It’s that simple.

Trying to walk in faith without love is like having a flashlight with no battery. We must keep our love battery charged at all times. Otherwise our faith will not work!

I believe Christians can run into problems when we do not diligently pursue walking in love as a vital part of our faith and relationship with God. We want to be blessed, we want to be healed, and we want successful ministries, but we do not seem to desperately want to seek and pursue walking in love and the fruit of the Spirit.

I believe Satan seeks to build a stronghold of cold love in our hearts. He wants us to be selfish and self-centered, thinking, Somebody do something for me, without ever reaching out to do anything for anybody else. He knows that faith works through love and that without love, our faith amounts to nothing.

So what does it mean to have the kind of faith that works through love?

First Corinthians 13 teaches us that love is patient and kind, never envious or boiling over with jealousy, and never boastful. Love is not rude. A person who walks in love is good to people, considerate, gentle and giving.

Love is not easily offended and does not hold grudges or seek revenge. Love forgives and forgets. It always believes the best about people. Love sacrifices and meets needs, no matter how challenging the problem.

I believe real love does not have to be talked into giving; it is always looking for opportunities to express itself. It does not tear down; it lifts up. Love encourages and listens. Love never fails.

As we walk in God's ways and imitate Him by loving others, our relationships with Him will continuously be strengthened and our lives will be enriched.

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