



Introduction

Being a disciple of Jesus is not easy. His invitation is open to any who would follow him but His standard is never relaxed. At the very heart of His definition of a disciple is the requirement to love.

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
John 13:35

But what does it mean to love? And who am I to love? And what if I really don't like the person: How can I love them?

This study will explore the dimensions of loving others and provide answers to these and other similar questions.

The Command to Love

Love is not an option for a follower of the Lord Jesus.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

John 13:34

- Underline the command Jesus gives.
- The word **“one another”** in the Greek means **mutually**. That is, you are to love me and I am to love you. It is like a hug where both parties participate in the hugging.
- Circle the kind of command it is.
- Draw box around how we are to love.
- Read John Chapter 13 to understand the context of this command. **How did Jesus demonstrate his love for them at that particular moment?**

Jesus told us to love one another “as I have loved you”. Compare his directive to that in the Old Testament.

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

Leviticus 19:18

- Circle how love was to be expressed.
- **What is the difference between loving another as you love yourself (Leviticus 19:18) and loving as Jesus loved you (John 13:34)?**

Discipleship...

If you'd like to know more about what is required to be Jesus' disciple, look in the **Basics** group of the **Discipleship Studies** section of the **VDRC** web site at www.vdrc.org.



The context of a statement is always the first place you look to understand the meaning. Looking at the examples of love in John 13 will help you understand how the disciples understood his words at that point in time.

There are many commandments to love in the New Testament. Here are other, similar verses.



John 15:17
1 John 3:11
1 John 3:23

Love Described

Knowing that Jesus expects us to love assumes that we understand what love is like. Fortunately, the Bible is full of descriptions of love. Fill in the table below based upon the definitions in the following passage.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

| Love does / is | Love does not / is not |
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In the table just created above, circle one area of your life that is in need of improvement in the area of giving love.

John gave further illustration to what it meant to love.

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:16-19

- Circle what Jesus did to demonstrate love.
- Underline what we should do from verse 16.
- Draw a box around how we are to love from verse 18.
- **What does it mean to love with word or tongue?**

- **Why is it not acceptable to love simply with words?**

1 Corinthians 13

Called the love chapter, no other passage in scripture gives as complete a description of love.

One way to measure your practice of love is to substitute your name for every reference to the word "love" in 1 Corinthians 13.

"Paul is patient, Paul is kind." He does not envy..."

Laying down your life

Laying down your life does not necessarily mean that you must die a physical death. That is what Jesus did. But it is possible to sacrifice for the sake of another without dying.

For instance, giving to someone in need is a type of laying down of your life. You are giving up something valuable to you so that someone else may benefit.

Love's Boundary

In response to Jesus' statement that he was to "love your neighbor as yourself", a lawyer asked, "who is my neighbor". Jesus responded with the following story.

³⁰... "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."
Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:30-37

- Circle the things the Samaritan did that showed love to the injured man.
- Underline the phrase that describes the actions of a neighbor.
- Notice that the Samaritan assumed the expense of caring for the injured man. **List some possible explanations as to why the Samaritan would offer to pay for the injured man's expenses?**

Another, more difficult group, is also within the boundaries of love.

³² "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Luke 6:32-36

- Circle the ones we are to love (verse 35),
- Underline the activities that demonstrate love in verse 35.
- Draw a box around the reason we are to love our enemies in verse 35 and 36.
- The fact that love is commanded implies that there is a decision involved in loving. **How can you love someone you do not like?**

The Story...

Many **priests** and **Levites** lived in Jericho. They routinely made their way to Jerusalem to perform their duties in the temple. These were men who performed service to God on behalf of the people.

Samaritans were descendants of Jews who had intermarried with Assyrians. They were looked on as half-breeds. They were treated with disdain.

Mercy...

is an expression of love.

Mercy can be provision for one who is suffering or in need, even though they may be unworthy or ill-deserving.

Mercy may also be the withholding of punishment that is obviously deserved.

Notice the emphasis Jesus puts on reward. Why do you think there is great reward for loving your enemies?

Love's Source

Loving your enemies may seem to require more love than you are capable of giving. But love can be appropriated from the source of love.

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1 John 4:7-12

- Circle the one who is the source of love.
- Underline in verse 8 the description of God.
- Draw a box around the way God chose to demonstrate love.
- In verse 12, underline the result of loving one another.
- *God is the source of love. It is His love through us that allows us to love those who do not love us.*
- **What do you think it means to have His love made complete in us (verse 12)?**

Because God lives within us, we should expect to have His capacity to love. In fact, love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, given to every believer in Jesus.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

We can also help each other in the demonstration of love.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:24

- Circle how we are to motive one another.
- Underline the two things toward which we are to spur one another.

Paul had another tool he used to help believers grow in love.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

Philippians 1:9

- Underline Paul's prayer request
- Circle the phrase describing the change Paul requested for their love.

Love is a Decision

God is willing to give you all of the love you need. But often times our feelings get in the way so that we are not **willing** to love.

The key to releasing the love of God within you is often a matter of choice. **You must decide to love.** Once you choose to love, God's love will be released through you.

To learn more about the Fruit of The Spirit, go to the **vDRC** study called **Practicing Fruitful Living**.

You'll find it at www.vDRC.org in the **Discipleship Studies** Section in the Group called **The Character of a Disciple**.



Love's Effect

When love is at work, it is powerful in its effect.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:12-14

- Draw a box around the virtues with which a Christian should clothe himself or herself.
- Circle each virtue that in some way is based upon love.
- In verse 14 underline the effect that love has on the other virtues.
- **Why do you think unity is the result of love?**

Not only does love bring unity, love also provides a covering.

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

- Circle how we are to love each other.
- Underline the result of deeply loving one another.

And showing love to people is really a way to show love to God.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For **I was hungry** and you gave me something to eat, **I was thirsty** and you gave me something to drink, **I was a stranger** and you invited me in, ³⁶ **I needed clothes** and you clothed me, **I was sick** and you looked after me, **I was in prison** and you came to visit me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 25:34-40

- Circle those actions that are based upon love in verses 35 and 36.
- Underline who the actual recipient of love was in verse 40.
- Circle the phrase describing the one who ultimately benefited from love to the least of the brethren.
- *When we do acts of love to those around us, we are actually doing those acts to God himself.*
- **Why do you think a kind act to the less fortunate is really an act of love toward God?**

Love does not remove sin.

Confession to God and reliance on Jesus' death on the cross removes sin. But often men remember sin even though God has forgiven. Love makes it possible to ignore the forgiven sin that is difficult to forget.

Be Observant

Notice that the acts of love described in this passage are simple acts of kindness. Loving others is simply seeing a need and acting upon it.

Review

Write a brief summarization of the key points from each section of this study,

The Command to Love

Love Described

Love's Boundary

Love's Source

Love's Effect

Application

Write the full text of the verse you are applying.

State what the verse mean to you personally?

State what you feel your need is.

State what you are going to do.

State how you plan to check-up on yourself.

Don't Skip the

Application

**Applying God's Word to
your life is the most
important part of study.**