



20 Loving others - 1 John 4:19-21

As this is the last look at 'Love' in this letter just let us have a quick review of previous lessons where we have looked at different aspects of 'love'. In **Lesson 4** we saw how our love walk is directly related to our obedience to His Word. Love is such a strong spiritual force that many other areas of our life's journey depend on it, like our prayer life. Then in **Lesson 5** we focused on 'My Father loves me' seeing that we have to receive His amazing love for us before we can love ourselves or others. The Father has poured His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, **Romans 5:5; Galatians 4:6**. This enables us to love even those

we may want to hate. In **Lesson 7** we learnt that our love is to be wholehearted for God and not dividing our love between the world and Him. We looked at a new way of living in love at all times by the power of His Spirit. In **Lesson 11** we looked at the greatest love, God's love when He knows all about us but loves to call us His children. We looked at 'the love languages of God' and how valuable it is to find out how we receive love and how we can give love to those God has given us to love. In **Lesson 13** we tackled the problem of loving our enemies and all those people where we feel awkward and find it difficult to love as sisters. In **Lesson 14** we looked Perfect Love in the face by seeing what it means to lay down our lives for another person. We also looked at the 'Love Revolution' DVD showing us the world statistics on poverty and trafficking and the enormous job there is to be done if we are to show God's amazing love one person at a time. In **Lesson 16** we saw how the Christian life is the simple Life just believe in the Name and love others. We committed that whatever the Father tells us to do we will obey. Again in **Lesson 18** we saw that God's example of love should be our motivation to preach the Gospel to all people; that our love should not be superficial and sentimental but costly and unconditional. We looked at the prodigal son and the attitude of the older brother and the father never giving up on the son which is exactly like we should be with all unsaved people we know.

Then in **Lesson 19** we saw that as we are full of His Spirit so His Love makes sure there is no room for fear which can dominate so many of our reactions that are not motivated by love. So we have no need to fear because God's aim is not to trip us up or catch us out but to love us and show us His grace and mercy. So much that passes for love these days is in fact possessive and manipulative. Many children feel loved only as long as they are successful in all they do and not an embarrassment to their parents. If they fail or let the family down they fear the love of their parents will not be there for them as it is only self-seeking love, not a God kind of love. But as we focus on God's love the sense of fear will go as we realise He only acts for our good.

Finally in this lesson John sums up all he has said about love previously in this wonderful book. He reminds us that we would never have loved God unless He had loved us first. Of ourselves we do not love with the God kind of love. We cannot truly love without God first pouring His Love into us by the power of the Holy Spirit. We see this Love in us as we see how we love people especially the Body of Christ, it cannot be separated from our love for God. Saying 'I love God' is easy but when people oppose us or give us trouble we must choose to **Love** them. We can only show our true love for God by loving them. All people are made in God's image so there is something of God in every person, **Genesis 1:27**. We have to love the God in them which we can see, otherwise we can't say we love God whom we can't see.

So we can see from this that loving God is not all that easy and certainly not the weak crutch that so many accuse Christians of needing. John was writing this letter to a community of Christians who were under attack from deception and many who said they loved God but showed no love to others and caused trouble and broken relationships in the Church. He is giving us a salutary reminder of the dangers of hypocrisy, of claiming to love God but not really loving Him at all as seen by the way we behave towards others. There is never an excuse for not showing love, if we know and understand how much God has loved us. We cannot truly love God while neglecting to love those who are created in His image. Our love for each other comes from God and is all the more amazing because we know that His Love for us

is undeserved and generous beyond our wildest dreams. If God's love has really reached into our lives and is transforming us then we will not hate our brother or sister. We may be disappointed by them or hurt by them, discouraged or saddened by their behaviour, but we can never hate those whom God has called us to share His Kingdom with. We may hate what they do, or what they say, but to hate them is not possible if we are children of God. If we realise how much God hates our sin and rebellion and yet at the same time His love for us is so deep, then we have a wonderful example to follow in loving others.

The test that John gives for a true follower of Jesus Christ is not how much we pray; how well we know our Bible; how many times we go to Church or go to Christian Conferences. The test is do we confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came in the flesh, fully human, died for our sins and rose from the dead AND do we love our brothers and sisters in Christ? If we do not love those who God has poured His love into 'how can we claim to love God who we have never seen'. We need to live this Truth in our lives and Churches more effectively, allowing the Love of God to be shared amongst us all, allowing Love to dominate rather than our prejudices, opinions and insecurities. How many Christians go to the House of God with a grudge or bad feeling against someone they are worshiping with, this is not the way to love. Some Christians hurt and wound others with their thoughtless comments, that is not love. So many ignore the needs of others, that is not the way of love. We are to love each other unconditionally. We are not to judge who we love by how they behave as people of faith how they live their lives or how they worship. That is between them and God. We do not get a prize for loving unconditionally but we do get a clear conscience and peace and joy in our hearts as we obey our Father

As we love one another we will glorify God and honour Him in front of the rest of the world. This is the most powerful witness we have and shows the world that God loves them as well.
God says love Me, love My children!

Some points about Love.

Jesus' Love is the standard - **John 15:12**

Guarantees our prayers are answered - **1 Corinthians 13:8**

Speech shows love - **Philippians 4:8 James 3:5-6**

Speaking the Truth in love we will grow up into Him - **Ephesians 4:15**

Love builds up - **1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Peter 1:22**

Love has to grow - **Philippians 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12**

Love covers sin - **1 Peter 4:8**

Love is proof of discipleship - **John 13:35**

Love is self-sacrificing - **John 15:13**

Love encourages, is patient, is kind, is courteous, is humble, is unselfish, is good tempered, is gentle, always believing the best and love is sincere - **1 Corinthians 13:1-3.**

Mephibosheth

The most wonderful picture of God's Love is seen in **2 Samuel 9** in the story of David fulfilling his covenant to his friend Jonathan by taking care of his disabled son Mephibosheth after Jonathan's death. David sought the young man out and then took him into his palace and provided completely all he needed, with servants to care for him. This is what our Father has done for us as He has fulfilled His covenant with us through the blood of Jesus Christ and God shows He keeps His part of the covenant by providing everything for us that we need, spiritually, eternally, emotionally and physically. In exchange we give Him our weaknesses, insecurities, sinfulness, and efforts, this is a fair exchange for us!!

Love never fails!

When we have a very difficult problem and we cannot see any solution to it, then we need to put the power of love to work on it. The power of love is the greatest power in the universe, it never fails, **1 Corinthians 13:8.** So we just release God - as He is Love - into the problem situation and then, as we continuously walk in Love, we have given God the responsibility for our victory in the situation. This Love is patient, it is kind, it is not jealous or haughty or conceited or rude. It doesn't insist on its own way. It is not touchy or resentful and it pays no attention to a suffered wrong. Love rejoices when Right and Truth prevail and it bears up

under anything and everything that comes. It is ever ready to believe the best of every person. Its hopes never fade under any circumstances and it endures everything without weakening, **1 Corinthians 13:4-7 AMP**. We need to release love every moment into every situation, every prayer and every thought until Love completely overtakes our life. This Love will strengthen us and cast out every fear (**1 John 4:18**) that has robbed us of God's greatest blessings. It will drive the devil out of all our activities and set us free from the torment of darkness.

Take a few moments to put your own name in the spaces in **1 Corinthian 13**. We need to realise that as Jesus lives in us by the power of the Holy Spirit, **Romans 8:11**, we are filled with the amazing Love of God Himself.

Love Confession.

(name).....endures long and is patient and kind; never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, she does not display herself haughtily. is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride); is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. (God's love in me) does not insist on her own rights or her own way for she is not self-seeking; is not touchy or fretful or resentful;takes no account of the evil done to her (she pays no attention to a suffered wrong)does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail.bears up under anything and everything that comes is ever ready to believe the best of every personhopes are fadeless under all circumstances, andendures everything (without weakening).never fails. **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

One wonderful way to give love to someone is praying for them. Here are a few suggestions.

Intercession - what does this mean?

1. Unselfish praying.
2. Taking on the mind of Christ, so that we can see the circumstances as Christ sees them.
3. It is joining with Jesus in pleading that God will act in a way that would fulfil His will for that person or situation, **Psalms 91:2-5**.
4. It is facing God the Father on behalf of a person. **1 Timothy 2:1; Ezekiel 22:30**.
5. Praying what is the mind of the Spirit. **Philippians 2:13; Romans 8:26**.
6. Taking back from Satan what rightfully belongs to God. **Ezekiel 22:30**

How to pray for other Christians:

1. Be thankful for their faith and changed lives. - **Colossians 1:3-5**.
2. Ask God to help them know what He wants them to do - **Colossians 1:9**.
3. Ask God to give them spiritual understanding. - **Colossians 1:9**.
4. Ask God to help them live for Him. - **Colossians 1:10**.
5. Ask God to give them more knowledge of Him. - **Colossians 1:10**.
6. Ask God to give them strength and endurance. - **Colossians 1:11**.
7. Ask God to fill them with joy, strength, and thankfulness. - **Colossians 1:11**

In our love for God we must make sure He is first in our worship. If we put programs, revelations or methods over God Himself then we become unbalanced, we cling to lifeless forms, and the life of God moves on without us. But if we minister to Him first and put Him first, then our lives will be continually enriched by Him and made channels of blessing and love to others. We can never love Him too much. We can never spend too much time with Him, for our first ministry is to Him. He is worthy to receive 'glory and honour and power: for He has created all things, and for His pleasure they are and were created' **Revelation 4:11**

9. Do you think God's commands are burdensome? **1 John 5:3** Give reasons for your answer.

10. How can we overcome the world?

11. What does faith mean to you? Do you apply it to your life? When?

12. Are you sure you are a child of God? On what do you base your answer? Are there verses in this passage that you can refer to when plagued by doubts.

13. Sum up in one short sentence the best thing you have learned from this study.

14. **Memory Verse.** 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.' **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**