



Thinking

About Loving Each Other

By

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The concept of loving God and others is all over the Bible – hundreds of Bible verses speak to its importance. It's easy to see why we should love God – look at all He's done for us! But why love others? What have they done for us? Why in the world would God ask us to love other people – especially people we don't like and often don't like us?

Let's begin with this question – does God command us to do anything that's not good for us? Think carefully before you answer – does God command us to do anything that's not good for us? Make a list of everything God commands His people to do – then write beside each command anything you can think of that is bad for you. Here are some examples of commands in the Bible about **love**. You can do this with any command in the Bible, but for the sake of this short study let's look at love.

You can print out this page and use it for your own study. I'll list the command, then you can write anything about the command that would be bad for you underneath each Bible verse.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 – “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”

Deuteronomy 10:18-20 – “He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.”

Joshua 22:5 – “But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Matthew 5:43-45 – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you

may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

Matthew 19:18-19 – “Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Matthew 22:37-40 – “Jesus said to him, ‘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.”

John 13:34-35 – “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 15:11-13 – “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

Romans 12:9-19 – “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

I Corinthians 13:1-8 – “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”

Ephesians 4:1-3 – “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 5:1-2 – “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

Colossians 3:12-17 – “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

I Thessalonians 4:9 – “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another”

Hebrews 10:23-25 – “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

I John 3:1 – “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

I John 3:23 – “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.”

I John 4:11 – “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Do you have a problem with anything from this list of commandments about love? Are any of the commands bad for you? If so, why? Be honest with yourself and God. If we read something in Scripture that God commands us to do and we believe it's bad for us, talk with God about it. God will show you the Truth – that's what He does!

I believe all of these commandments about love are good for us – so I'll obey them to the best of my ability, knowing God will help me where I struggle with obedience. My struggle is not with **believing** that God's commands are true and good for me – my problem is with

doing what He commands. So, back to our question – why should we love each other – especially those who are hard to love?

God knows the power of His Love (remember that God is Love). He knows that His Love will open minds, heal hearts, solve problems, and direct lives – so He commands the people who belong to Him **to love each other**. Love is the power that changes everything in life! God Loves us and His Love changed us from miserable sinners to joyful saints – that’s a good thing. God Loves other people, too – and He uses us to Love people and bring about major changes in their lives – another good thing. Loving others makes us stronger and leads others to be stronger in Christ. It also helps change us from being **selfish** to **selfless**. When we are focused on God we will see life through His Eyes – we will love what He Loves and that’s people – *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

Love is the great motivator in God’s economy. Why do we love God? Because He loved us first. How did God prove His love for us? “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

The word “love” is used for almost anything – I love flowers, I love dogs, I love cars, I love clothes, I love my job, I love you. But what happens when we **demonstrate** our love for another person with

actions? That's when people know our true feelings. We **know** that God loves us because He sent His son to die for our sins. God wants us to love other people with His love. What will that love do?

“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. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” 1 John 4:9-11

Those are powerful words – “since God loved us, we also ought to love one another.” God showed us what love is by giving what was most precious to Him – and He wants us to do the same.

The Bible is more than a list of God's commands – it's the story of His Love for the human race. What God told people to do was a demonstration of love – we might call it the **force of love**. God is our Heavenly Father and we are His grateful children. Like all human children – we are sinners. Selfishness and rebellion are part of our spiritual DNA from the **sin nature**. God knows our hearts and understands our mortality and frailty. He gives us boundaries and direction so we'll know how to be **saved and safe**. God's loves us and cares about us more than any human father or mother can love their children.

God allows us some amazing insights into how He thinks, what He wants and why He wants what He wants. So, we are able to answer the question about why Christians ought to love other people. Here's an insight from King David of Israel –

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing— Life forevermore.”
Psalms 133:1-3

Unity is at the heart of God's Heart and at the center of God's purpose for eternal life – it's about being one with God and those He has chosen. Here's an insight from Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He first defines **eternal life** –

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” John 17:3

Eternal life is knowing God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's that simple. We don't have to get a college degree and spend a lifetime searching the world for the answer. Jesus made it clear – eternal life is knowing God – and we know Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

Next, Jesus asked His Father to do something special for us –

“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.”

John 17:11b

Jesus asked His Father for two things – protection and unity for those who believe in His Name. Why should we love each other? Because the goal of our salvation is to be one with God and that includes being one with each other. Jesus taught it, prayed for it, died for it and rose for it. Loving others is at the heart of all of God’s great purposes. It is a unique demonstration of belonging to God. It marked Jesus’ disciples as belonging to Him and would be the same mark used throughout the history of the Body of Christ –

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:20-21

Jesus prayed for all who would believe in Him through the message of the Apostles – that all of them may be one. Jesus does not want unity for just a select few of His followers – He wants “all” of us to be one.

The Spirit of God inspired the Apostle Paul to use the human body as a description of how the Church, the Body of Christ, should function at peak performance. Unity is at the heart of God's message –

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has

combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Do you love yourself? Do you take care of yourself? Do you make sure every day to meet your body's basic needs? Do you take steps to protect yourself during the day and night? Do you care about what happens to you? Do you want what's best for your life? That's what God wants us to do for each other. It's what Jesus meant when He said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." As Christians, our neighbor includes every believer. They are our brothers and sisters in the family of God. We are members of the same spiritual Body. We need each other.

Paul made a strong plea to the Christians in Ephesus to do everything in their power to protect the unity God had given them in the Body of Christ –

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as

you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:1-6

Notice all the “ones” in Paul’s plea? Bearing with **one another in love, one Body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all**. Also notice the context of keeping the unity of the Spirit – “to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” God’s calling has great **spiritual value**. Our calling comes from the wounds inflicted on the body of Jesus Christ – from the Blood He shed for us on the Cross. Our spiritual walk in this world has great value to God. We are to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” Loving our brothers and sisters in Christ – striving for unity in the Body of Christ – has great value to God. He places a high importance on how we treat one another in this life.

Look around at your world today. Who do you see? People – lots of them. They all need love. Unsaved people need to know God loves them. We can show them God’s love for them as we love them and share the Gospel with them. Saved people need to experience God’s love. We can show them God’s love as we love them in the same way God loves us. God encourages people through us – He demonstrates compassion through us – He shows mercy and forgiveness through us. The way we treat others has a huge impact on their lives and ministries.

Let me leave you with these extraordinary thoughts from the Apostle John – the one who Jesus loved. John had experienced God’s Love in ways few humans have. He understood it and knew the power of love. We can learn a lot about love from what Jesus taught John.

“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.” 1 John 4:16-21

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