

# Love

By Peggy Lively

**Core Verse:** 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. 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 4:10-12**

**Creed:** I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

## Part One: God Initiates Love

Our core verse (1 John 4:10-12) defines love by stating that love began with God: “Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” He loved us and sent his Son Jesus to save us from our sins. He took the initiative to love us and sacrifice everything for us.

*“Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.”*

**Ephesians 2:4-5**

1. What does this verse in Ephesians tell us that God did for us because of his great love for us?

Read **Romans 5:8**.

2. How did he demonstrate this love for us?

God’s desire to save us and give us eternal life was driven by his love for us. “For God *so loved the world* that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) His love for us was so great that he was willing to sacrifice his Son in order to have a relationship with us. We often forget or overlook the heart of *love* that initiated God’s sacrifice for us. His passion for us was manifested by his act of sacrificial love, the greatest kind of love: “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) Nothing in us is worthy of this kind of love. Remember, we were still *sinners*, when Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) He chose to love us in spite of our unworthiness, and *because* of our unworthiness.

3. “We love because \_\_\_\_\_.” **1 John 4:19**

Because he loved us first, he teaches us and enables us to love others. Brennan Manning states, “Being accepted, enamored, and loved by God comes first, motivating the disciple to live the law of love.” Abba’s Child, page 85

### Bring it Home:

\* God has initiated love towards me; what is my response to him?

As we believe in the love that God initiates towards us and receive Jesus as our Savior, He fills our hearts with his immeasurable love. Paul prays in Ephesians that as we accept Jesus into our hearts by faith, we may be “rooted and established in love,” and that we “may have power together with the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19) As we begin to grasp the vastness of God’s love for us, we begin to experience the fullness of this love that indwells our hearts through his Spirit.

### Part Two: He instills us with His Love

“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” **Romans 5:5**

4. Looking at this verse, how has God poured his love into our hearts?

5. How great is the love the Father has \_\_\_\_\_ on us, that we should be called \_\_\_\_\_! And that is what we are! **1 John 3:1**, NIV

Because of God’s amazing love for us, we can call him Father. He *lavishes* his love upon us! This is an amazing thought: that the God of the Universe pours his love upon me. I have done nothing to deserve it; I simply receive it. Once I have believed and received his love, what is the next step? How do I then remain in his love?

Read **John 15:9-10**.

6. How do we remain in God’s love?

### Bring it Home:

\*Have I allowed God’s love to be poured into my heart by His Spirit? Explain your answer.

\*Am I remaining in God’s love? How?

We receive God’s love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and we remain in God’s love by obeying his commands. But we are not told to simply “receive and remain.” We are told

that we must also love each other: “if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” (1 John 4:12) He completes his love in us as we love one another.

### Part Three: He instructs us to love

“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” **1 John 4:10-12**

Read **Matthew 22:36-40**.

7. What did Jesus say is the first and greatest commandment? The second?

All of Jesus’ teachings are summed up in these two commands to *love*: first love God, then love others. Jesus said, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (verse 40) The most important thing that we do as believers in Jesus is to love. All of salvation hinges on love: God’s love for us, and our response to receive and reciprocate his love.

Read **1 John 3:23**.

8. What is God’s command, the two things he asks us to do?

Again, it is made very simple; there is not a long list of rules to follow. God wants us to *believe* and *love* ... believe in his Son Jesus Christ and love him and each other.

Read **John 13:34-35**.

9. How does Jesus say that people will know we are his disciples?

Our love for others is the evidence of God’s love in us. “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 4:19-21**

10. According to this verse above, how is it impossible to say we love God and still hate our brother?

11. Who does Jesus instruct us to love in **Matthew 5:44**?

If we want to live a life that reflects Christ, we must live a life of love. Brennan Manning says that “discipleship is not about being right or being perfect or being efficient. It’s about the way you live with each other. In every encounter we either give life or we drain

it. There is no neutral exchange. We enhance human dignity, or we diminish it (Abba's Child, page 169). How do we encounter those around us with the love of Jesus? I know that so many times I can become task-oriented and forget to love the person in front of me. We need to begin to encounter each person as if they were placed before us by God, and intentionally and actively love those that He puts in our paths each day.

**Bring it Home:**

\*How can I begin to intentionally love those around me – my neighbor, my brother, my enemy, a total stranger?

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*I know that my love is so fickle and conditional compared to your pure, unchanging, unconditional love. Lord, help me to truly grasp the fullness of your love so that I may be filled by it, rooted and established in it. I know my love will never be as pure as yours, but I pray that others may get a glimpse of your perfect love that indwells me. Please, help me to be quick to love and slow to condemn, reflecting your love and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen*