

# What is Love?

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*Jason A. Graham*

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## The First and Second Commandments

**Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)** <sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup>Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup>Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup>Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup>Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

**Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)** <sup>37</sup>Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

- Jesus said this was the First and Greatest commandment
- He also said that a second one is just like it: to love your neighbor as yourself.
- On these two hang the law and the prophets
  - What does that mean?
    - It means that for a believer to obey all the laws and statutes handed down by God through the Old Testament scripture all they have to do is Love.
    - Now on one hand this seems very simple. Where it may not be so simple is in some common misunderstanding about what it means to “love”.
    - What does a biblical definition of Love look like?

## What is Love?

Love is God. Or, if you flip the two sides of the equation around, it will read the way the Bible says it:

**1 John 4:8 (NIV)** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**1 John 4:16 (NIV)** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

- So, Love is a person. A spiritual person, but still a person. That person has a nature. That person does certain things, and always avoids other things.
- When we evaluate love in our life, it must be evaluated against the nature of God himself.
  - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 is possibly the most concise description of the nature of God that we see in scripture, and it is the measuring rod for true love in our own lives.
- ***The degree to which we love like the scripture says is the degree to which we are like God.***

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)** <sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

- Notice that all of these things describe either the nature of love (love is or is not) or the actions that love does or does not take (love does not, keeps no, always does, etc.).
  - Therefore we can conclude that love is never just something that we feel inside—it is not an emotion.
  - It is a real thing that has a certain nature. It “is” or “is not” certain things.
  - Because of that nature it “does” or “does not” do certain things.
  - It is a picture of God.

## 16 Truths About Love

From 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 we see 16 truths about love. This is how we should love.

### LOVE:

1. Is Patient (longsuffering, long-spirited, or long-tempered)
  - a. This does not just mean being able to wait a long time for something to happen. It means to be:
    - i. Mild
    - ii. Slow in avenging
    - iii. Slow to anger
    - iv. Slow to punish
      1. Many modern parenting ideals, even in the church, directly oppose this idea of biblical love. For example, there is often the thought that parents must punish a child quickly who demonstrates disobedience or rebellion so that they won't develop the idea that their behavior is okay. However, the biblical concept of love would allow for being slow to punish.
      2. The Heavenly Father certainly demonstrates this kind of patience with us.
2. Is Kind (mild, sympathetic, forbearing, affectionate)
  - a. I've found that kindness is best understood when it is contrasted with something that it is often confused with: being nice.

- i. Kindness is not being nice (pleasant, agreeable, polite), which mostly has to do with outward appearance.
- ii. Kindness has to do with one's inward nature—being mild, sympathetic, forbearing, and affectionate.
- iii. Being nice can be rooted in deception; however, kindness is always rooted in the truth.
- iv. The Bible never tells us to be nice. It does tell us to be Kind.
- v. It never says that God is nice. It says He is kind, and that his kindness leads to repentance.
  - 1. **Romans 2:4 (NIV)** Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?
- vi. So, in us love will have much more to do with our mild inward nature than any false outward display. Also, I believe that the kindness of God revealed through us in love can also draw others to repentance.

### 3. Does Not Envy

- a. The word for envy here is also translated as jealous in other passages of scripture. In some passages it has a positive meaning:
  - i. The Lord is Jealous over us.
    - 1. In this sense it means that he wants our whole hearts, and He doesn't want us drawn away by other lovers. That is a good thing.
- b. When meant in the negative way, as in this passage of scripture, it means to have no jealousy or envy over what others have—to not desire what they have in discontent.
  - i. Now, I have found that envy likes to hide its ugly little face. Very often people will say that they don't envy meaning that they are not sitting around wanting the things that someone else has.
  - ii. However, envy often manifests in a more subtle form of not being happy for other people when they get something good that we don't.
  - iii. So, rather than looking at envy as just consciously wishing you had other people's possessions, judge your heart to see if you genuinely have a hard time being happy if other people get or do what you want to your exclusion.
  - iv. Be very wary of the phrase "That's not fair." It can be a sure sign of envy in our hearts.

### 4. Does Not Boast

- a. Love is not self-centered; therefore, walking in love will cause you to not make a display of yourself.
- b. This is often connected with rhetorical embellishments about oneself. In other words, verbally attempting to make oneself look:
  - i. Important
  - ii. Smart
  - iii. Unique
  - iv. Strong, etc.
- c. This can take the form of intimidating others or putting others down in an attempt to explain how much better or different you are than most other people.
- d. Boasting is the outward action of inward pride, which I have personally come to believe is one of the ugliest conditions the human heart can have before the Humble King.

### 5. Is Not Proud

- a. The nature of love is to be humble. The lover does not try to exalt themselves, but rather praises and builds up the one they love.
  - b. Having true love will cause you to see yourself rightly—humbly.
    - i. Humility doesn't lower self-worth, but rather raises it—because it allows us to see ourselves as God himself does.
    - ii. Pride on the other hand lowers self-worth because its self-adulation is empty and false, which leads to us reaching for a self that does not exist, and ultimately leaves us feeling empty and worthless.
    - iii. The true deception in this is that the condition it leads us into causes us to boast all the more, looking for others to see us how we want to be, which turns to anger when they don't see it and ends in deep self-loathing.
    - iv. That is not the nature of love.
6. Is Not Rude
- a. Some translations say “does not behave unseemly”.
  - b. This doesn't only mean “rude”—although that is definitely an accurate way to look at it.
  - c. It has a deeper meaning of not acting inappropriate for the circumstance. So, love never behaves inappropriately.
7. Is Not Self-Seeking
- a. Love is never motivated by self-fulfillment.
  - b. Modern sentiments like “whatever makes you happy”, in the world of love and relationships, fall way short when we look at a biblical definition of true love.
  - c. Love is self-fulfilling—of that there is no question. However, it is not motivated by self-fulfillment.
  - d. True love's motivation is in fulfilling others rather than self.
  - e. It recognizes the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.
8. Is Not Easily Angered
- a. This really goes hand-in-hand with patience. When we deal with someone else through a position of love, then we will not be easily provoked, irritated, or angered.
  - b. This is one of the key characteristics of love that should make a home a safe place.
  - c. In love, everyone should feel the freedom to exist, speak, and act without the fear of punishment.
  - d. **1 John 4:16-18 (NIV)** <sup>16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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.
    - i. This scripture shows that, in the face of the very judgment of God, love will cause us not to be afraid, because there will be no fear of punishment.
    - ii. Love should be the primary motivation in our homes for leading children toward obedience—not the fear of punishment.
    - iii. This doesn't mean that there is never punishment for wrong-doing, but rather that children should not be motivated toward obedience through fear of punishment before being motivated through love.

- iv. As discussed in my teaching on “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil”, this makes the difference between lovers of God and sons of hell.

#### 9. Keeps No Record of Wrongs

- a. Some translations say “seeks no evil” instead of “keeps no record of wrongs”. Why the difference? The Greek word translated into “seeks” in those translations actually means “take an inventory” or “to number—to estimate”.
- b. So, it actually does mean that it doesn’t keep a record of evil or wrongdoing.
- c. This is one of the more challenging aspects of love, I believe, for us as humans because it seems so “natural” to have a good arsenal of mistakes to shoot off as soon as someone crosses us.
  - i. However, we should be endeavoring to live supernaturally—to be like Jesus.

#### 10. Does Not Delight in Evil

- a. The word for evil here means “iniquity” or “injustice”.
- b. This means that love is never happy about injustice—even if the injustice would cause them to come out on top.
- c. Injustice is always evil, and love always recognizes it as such.

#### 11. Rejoices with the Truth

- a. There is a conjunction (but) that joins this phrase with the phrase before it. This gives us more of a clue of what it would mean to rejoice in truth.
- b. Love does rejoice in truthfulness, as the scripture clearly says. Also, in context we could derive the fact that it rejoices in justice rather than injustice.
- c. Love rejoices in justice, even when it brings personal harm. We can see this characteristic in the Father when the Bible speaks of His reaction to the suffering and death of Jesus.
  - i. **Isaiah 53:10 (NIV)** Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.
    - 1. The phrase “it was the Lord’s will to crush him” is actually more accurately translated as “it PLEASED the Lord to crush him” or that the Lord “delighted” in crushing him. I use the NIV here because the wording of the rest of the verse is so much clearer than many other translations.
    - 2. The Father’s heart Rejoiced with Justice over sin, even though it meant the crushing of His own son.

#### 12. Always Protects

- a. This word means to protect by covering.
- b. This concept of providing a covering is abused in some ways in manipulative teachings about anointing and hierarchical spiritual authority.
  - i. In these teachings the focus about covering is usually presented as a warning that those under the one with anointing must endeavor to stay under the covering of that ministry in order to maintain the blessing of God on their lives, or to have “God’s best.”
- c. However, the idea of covering from this scripture actually works in the opposite direction.
  - i. The one providing the covering **always** provides it out of a motivation of love, even if others do not “deserve” it.
  - ii. There is never a threat of anyone losing it because love “always protects”.

- d. This means that love will not uncover the one it loves.
  - i. It won't expose to danger.
  - ii. It won't expose to ridicule.
  - iii. It won't expose to humiliation.
  - iv. It won't expose to shame.
  - v. It always protects. Always covers.
- e. We see in the account of Noah becoming drunk, how his son Ham failed to cover his father.
  - i. **Genesis 9:20-23 (NIV)** <sup>20</sup>Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. <sup>21</sup>When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. <sup>22</sup>Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup>But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.
  - ii. If Ham had shown love to his father, Shem and Japheth would have never known their father had been naked for two reasons:
    - 1. Ham would have covered Noah himself.
    - 2. Ham would not have attempted to expose his father to ridicule or shame.

### 13. Always Trusts

- a. This word in the Greek derives from the word for "faith".
- b. It means that love believes; however, it is not intended to indicate that love is gullible or that it will just believe anything.
- c. It means that love has trusting faith.
  - i. In what? In the one that it loves.
  - ii. In other words, love always hopes for the best and believes in the other person.

### 14. Always Hopes

- a. This goes hand in hand with love always trusting.
- b. Love never gives up hope.
- c. It always believes that there is reason to not give up because God is faithful.
- d. **Romans 15:13 (NIV)** <sup>13</sup>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - i. Here God is called a God of hope, and we see that hope is something that is granted to us by the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - ii. This does not mean a simple longing like "I hope it is a pretty day tomorrow."
  - iii. It is a powerful gift given by the Holy Spirit that causes us not to lose heart even in the hardest of circumstances.
  - iv. *It believes that even though it can see no way to reach into the dark and bring light, that light will still come.*
  - v. Love always Hopes.

### 15. Always Perseveres

- a. The meaning of this word in the Greek doesn't mean perseverance in the way we often think about it. It doesn't mean the ability to keep going no matter what. Although I do believe that is true of love, certainly.

- b. However, the meaning of this word gives a totally different picture. Rather than the ability to “keep going” this word means that love “keeps staying”.
- c. It literally means “to remain” or to “stay under”—even in times of great pressure.
- d. So, love will not leave. It will always stay through all circumstances. Love always endures.

#### 16. Never Fails

- a. This word “fails” in the Greek literally means “to fall out of”, in the sense of being taken off course.
- b. To say that love never fails is to say that love never falls off of its course—it never falls away from its purpose.
  - i. Unlike what we would often wish that it means, it does not mean that love will never disappoint us by not giving us what we want.
  - ii. If that is what failure means to you, then you may think that love fails.
- c. The truth is that love never does fail—it never falls off its course.
- d. What is its course?
  - i. To be patient.
  - ii. To be kind.
  - iii. To not envy.
  - iv. To not boast.
  - v. To not be proud.
  - vi. To not be rude.
  - vii. To not be self-seeking.
  - viii. To not be easily angered.
  - ix. To keep no record of wrongs.
  - x. To not delight in evil.
  - xi. To rejoice with the truth.
  - xii. To always protect.
  - xiii. To always trust.
  - xiv. To always hope.
  - xv. To always persevere.

LOVE NEVER FAILS. GOD IS LOVE.