

What Does the Bible Say About Love?

No word is used more, or understood less, than love. The world sings about it, sells with it, and excuses almost anything in its name, yet it can hardly say what it means. Usually it means a feeling, and feelings come and go. The Bible means something far stronger and far more demanding. It roots love in God Himself, defines it plainly, and commands it of us. Let us see what it says.

Love Begins With God

We do not start with our love. We start with His. *"God is love"* ([1 John 4:8](#)), and everything we know of real love we learned from Him. *"We love him, because he first loved us"* ([1 John 4:19](#)). And He did not love us because we were lovely. *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* ([Romans 5:8](#)). The cross is the definition of love. *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* ([1 John 4:10](#)).

The Two Great Commandments

When Jesus was asked which command was greatest, He gave two and tied everything to them. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"* ([Matthew 22:37-39](#)). Love for God comes first, and love for our neighbor flows out of it. A man who claims to love God but has no love for people has fooled himself, for *"he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"* ([1 John 4:20](#)).

What Love Looks Like

The Bible does not leave love as a vague glow. It describes it in plain acts. *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil... beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"* ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)). Notice that almost every mark is something love does or refuses to do, not something it feels. Love is patient when it would rather snap, kind when it gains nothing, and slow to take offense. This is a high standard, and it is meant to be.

Love Is Shown, Not Just Felt

Because love acts, it cannot be only words. John wrote, *"let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"* ([1 John 3:18](#)). God Himself loved this way, for *"God so loved the world, that he gave"* ([John 3:16](#)). His love moved Him to give His Son. Our love, if it is real, will move us to give as well, our time, our help, our forgiveness, our very lives if need be. Love that costs nothing and does nothing is not the love of the Bible.

Even Our Enemies

Anyone can love those who love him back. The love Christ calls for goes further. *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you"* ([Matthew 5:44](#)). This is the hardest love, and it is the love that most resembles God, who sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. To love only our friends is to do no more than the worst of men already do. To love an enemy is to act like a son of our Father in heaven.

The Greatest Thing

Paul ranked love above the most prized gifts and graces. Without it, he said, the most eloquent tongue is only noise and the greatest sacrifice profits nothing ([1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#)). And at the end he wrote, *"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"* ([1 Corinthians 13:13](#)). Love is also the sum of God's law toward others, for *"love is the fulfilling of the law"* ([Romans 13:10](#)). So love God first and with everything you are, and let that love spill over onto everyone around you, friend and enemy alike, not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

Every Scripture reference in this study links to the King James Version. Open it and read for yourself.