



LESSON 1 . . . Loving One Another

More than fifty times in the New Testament we find the phrase *one another* or *each other*, telling us what God wants us to do for one another. The purpose of the church revolves around what we are to do for each other. In this lesson we will discover what the Bible says about **loving one another**.

More than anything else, **loving one another** reveals whether or not we are truly Christians. It's neither the church we attend nor the doctrines we believe, but how we show our love for one another. How does Jesus make this clear in John 13:35?

When Jesus made this statement, He gave the world the right to judge us by our love. In this lesson we will use the word LOVE as an acrostic to reveal **four** requirements for **loving one another** as the Bible teaches.

Listen to people.



Few things reveal our love for people like really listening to them. Listening is becoming a lost art because it requires tremendous concentration. Most people speak about 120 words a minute, but we listen, or think, three times faster than that. Therefore, as we listen to someone speak, our minds have a lot of time to wander. Most problems in marriage, parenting, and other relationships are listening problems. That's why James 1:19b gives us what command?

Loving one another by listening begins in the home. One man who was having real problems with his son went to a counselor. He said to the counselor, "I just don't understand my son. He won't listen to me." The counselor said, "I thought you got to understand people by listening to them, not by talking to them." Parents, more than anything else your kids need to know you really listen to them. Put down the newspaper, turn off the TV, and listen. One of the most common teenage complaints about parents is, "They don't understand me." Why? Parents don't listen. Listening to your kids is the major way to avoid violating what command in Colossians 3:21?

The word translated *fathers* (PATER, pat-air) can also be translated "parents" (as in Heb. 11:23). Parents, few things frustrate, children like feeling Mom and Dad don't really listen to them. The best time to listen is during a sit-down meal. Studies have revealed if families have a sit-down meal at least four times a week, the kids are three times less likely to get involved in drugs, premarital sex, and many other problem behaviors.



Men, one of the five basic needs of a woman is conversation, which is mostly listening. In a list of the five basic needs of a woman, marriage counselor Dr. Willard F. Harley, Jr. ranks conversation second. Conversation is more about listening than talking. Men, listen to what your wife feels and means, not just what she says. Sometimes a woman just needs someone who will lovingly listen to her express her feelings, hurts, and fears—without criticism or correction.

Never is it more important to listen than when there is conflict in a relationship. We all have the natural urge to defend, justify, or

rationalize our behavior. We don't even like to entertain the thought of being wrong. However, what does Proverbs 12:15 tell us?

Don't be a *fool*! Some of the best advice you will ever receive will come from listening to your spouse or children.

Loving one another requires we **listen to people** and . . .

Offer assistance.

Everyone needs practical help. This also begins at home. **Men**, offer to help cook, wash dishes, clean the house, etc. Ask your wife what you can do around your home that would most show your love for her. **Wives**, offer to help your husband work on the car, play golf with him, go fishing with him, etc. Offer to help your children with their homework, or assist them in some other way. **Love is a verb—something you do, not just something you say.** In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul writes that he and his associates loved the Thessalonian believers. They loved them so much they were happy not only to share the Gospel with them, but what else as well?

Sharing our lives is lovingly giving our time to assist others. We can show our love for others by offering childcare. Senior adults, there are young couples in your church who would love for you to keep their kids so they could go out on a date.

On the other hand, some senior adults may need someone to clean their yards, repair something, help put up Christmas lights, etc.

Offering assistance is one way we obey what command in James 1:22?

Loving one another requires we **listen to people, offer assistance**, and . . .

Value people.

We do this by expressing appreciation for them. Appreciation is shown in the form of praise, which is one of the most powerful forces in any relationship. There are at least **two** things we should value in people.

1. Value their loyalty. Some people have stuck with you through thick and thin—you can always count on them. Paul writes that he thanks God every time he thinks of the Philippian believers (Phil. 1:3). According to Philippians 1:5, why was he so thankful for them?

Some of you have marriage partners who have stuck with you through a lot of junk. Maybe it was a mid-life crisis, an affair, a financial disaster, a health problem, etc. Maybe you're often in a bad mood and hard to live with at times. I know some people who have been in a bad mood for over 20 years, and that makes them hard to love.

2. Value their efforts. Don't take people's efforts for granted, regardless of the results. This is critically important for people

with children or grandchildren. Don't forget to show appreciation for their efforts, regardless of how well they play a game or how good their grades are.

Too often we think things must be perfect or successful to be appreciated. So, we give "pokes" instead of "strokes." However, **loving one another** means we practice what truth in Proverbs 25:11?

The point of this verse shows the immense value of skillfully spoken words. We should be skilled at giving compliments for efforts made. This practice will pay valuable dividends in all our relationships.

Loving one another requires we listen to people, offer assistance, value people, and . . .

Emulate Jesus.

The word "emulate" means to be like, or imitate. Not only does God give us commands about **loving one another**, but He also gives us a marvelous example. Nothing helps us understand something like an example. When Jesus gives His disciples *a new commandment*, telling them to *love one another*, what example does He give them in John 13:34c?

To obey Jesus' *new commandment*, we must **emulate** His love by giving of ourselves as He did. Therefore, to *love one another* as the Bible commands, all we have to do is look at the example of Jesus. Furthermore, the great



love chapter (1 Cor. 13) is a word picture of Jesus. One of the most obvious characteristics of love is found in 1 Corinthians 13:7a. What is it?

That's what Jesus did when He died on the cross. He bore our sins on the cross to protect us from the consequences of our sins and from living a life without purpose.

As Jesus went to the cross for us, we should lovingly go "to bat" for people who are objects of gossip or slander. One of the most important ways we can show our love for one another is to protect people's reputations. Therefore, we should never participate in gossip. You may be thinking, "Tommy, when are you going to quit writing against gossip?" When you stop doing it, I will stop writing about it.



One of the most frequently and harshly condemned sins in the Bible is gossip because it hurts more believers and more churches than any other kind of sin. Ephesians 4:29b tells us we are only to speak what kind of words?

This means we are not to say anything that hurts or slanders. When we corrupt someone's reputation by gossiping, we are not emulating Jesus. Rather, we are emulating the Devil because the Greek word translated "devil" (DIABOLOS, de-ab-o-los) means "slanderer." It's easy to talk about the faults, mistakes, and weaknesses of others. However, what does 1 Peter 4:8b command?

This doesn't mean love ignores or tries to hide sin. It means love is like a shock absorber that cushions and smoothes out the bumps and irritations in our relationships with other people. Love enables us to overlook hurts or wrongs done to us, and to forgive. What does 1 Corinthians 13:5d tell us about love?

The word translated *thinketh* (LOGIZOMAI, log-id'-zo-my) means to keep count. Therefore, love does not calculate the evil or wrong done to it. That's why Jesus was willing to die on the cross for our sins.

Loving one another requires we . . .

**L-isten to people,
O-ffer assistance,
V-alue people, and
E-mulate Jesus.**

You can't love like Jesus Christ if He is not in your heart as Savior and Lord.