

## DO YOU LOVE?

*Well, isn't that a dumb question? Of course I love!!!* Society, however, has diminished the term greatly. We can “love” almost anyone or anything. Love has been labeled as a term of emotion. Love has also been dragged into the gutter to describe actions of the flesh!

I read an article just the other day about a group that has labeled the Bible as a bestseller that's rarely read, is x-rated, full of violence, obscenity and immoral conduct committed by or blessed by the biblical deity.” The trouble I see is that the group is a little loose with the facts and remains on the fringe of pointing out events that are meant to teach a lesson, not be promoted.

*News flash* – 1 John 4:8 tells us “God is love!” Over the noise and chatter of our culture, do we really know what is love?

Jesus told us if you have seen Him you have seen the Father. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that we have had witnesses to Jesus' ministry on earth and the love He demonstrated to others. His example and actions are truly the definition of love!!!

We are His disciples, *at least we say so*. Just as He taught the disciples through parables and example what love really is, we can be that example to a world that needs *real love*, not the phony, mushy, emotional, and flesh satisfying one.

The “love” verse that we can definitely apply is – **the truth will set you free**. We have the truth, what love really is, and we should display the actions to back it up. Then people will see the truth and it will set them free to live a meaningful life.

I found an acronym that really sums up “love” for us. **Love – living our values every day. Do you?**

In today’s reading from Matthew, the two commandments Jesus recites to the lawyer come from verses in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Jesus then tells the lawyer on these two verses that **“this sums up whole law”**. There are times when Jesus is short, concise and to the point. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

I found that the word “love” is used almost 600 times in the Bible depending on the version you are reading. It is only exceeded by the words God and Lord. Love is the attribute God desires us to have. His greatest demonstration of that love for us was giving us His son so the relationship with Him could be restored.

In a short time we will partake in Communion. Immediately after our confession comes the pardon in these words “hear the good news; Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; **that proves God’s love toward us.**” Love is not an option for us as a disciple. Love God, love your neighbor are commandments not suggestions to follow! If we are supposedly **living our values every day** and not demonstrating love then what are we doing? Where are our foundational values?

Titus tells us if we claim to know God but by our actions can deny him then we are worthless for any good deed.” God desires us to live in a manner that real love is reflected by us to others. It is not a game to play or when we feel like it.

That brings me to another point. **Love is not, love is not, a feeling.** How many movies have we watched or TV series like the soaps that would make us believe such a delusion? As disciples we are to be different. Our view of life is not that of the world in which we dwell. “Love” is a great example of the difference of being **“in the world and not of the world”**.

A Norman Vincent Peale book, and for younger people, he was a minister who authored a book “the power of positive thinking”. In another book he told the reader that ***love is not a feeling but an act of the will***. He gave a very practical illustration. His wife would cook him breakfast. He knew many mornings his wife did not “**feel**” like cooking, but because she loved him, an act of the will, she did. We all can likely site examples of where we really did not want to attend an event or perform a certain task however; we did because of our will to do it.

**Love** with a biblical foundation is clearly defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 *“love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”*

And combine that with the traits of Galatians 5:22-23 *“what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely or as we know “the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

A tall order? Yes, on Wednesday someone in the Bible study shared that being a disciple is a ***daily struggle and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise***. It is when we tell the truth to those around us and our struggles, our story that things are real, no rosy glasses gospel. The good news is that in our struggles God is there to strengthen,

guide and give grace – and that is **love – living our values every day.**

God does, and in our thankfulness is He due anything less than our best? *Perfection no*, but it does not mean we give up trying! Grace – it is there for us every day, every hour, every minute from a God that loves us!

The commandment Jesus gave us *“to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind”* encompasses love - emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

We can't just serve God emotionally and not intellectually, or serve God intellectually and not emotionally, or serve God intellectually and emotionally, but no actual obedience requiring our strength of will.

***Now the added kicker - we are to love our neighbor too.*** Did you realize that five of the ten Commandments address doing no wrong to our neighbor? If you love your neighbor, then there will be no killing, adultery, stealing, lying or coveting things.

Jesus demonstrated love – **living our values everyday!** He showed us the way. Paul writing to the Romans in Chapter 13 said *“love is fulfilling the law”* and that reminds us of Jesus' earlier words – *“all the law depends on these two commandments”* (of love).

**A second acronym of “love” pertains to our actions – let our voice echo.** *What do we as disciples echo?* What are we saying to the world? What are we doing out there? Are we different or when it comes down to it are we a creature of the culture? I ask you to examine yourself and discover where exactly you are!

***The last acronym I will give you for “love” – life's only valuable emotion.*** Jesus thought it valuable; He loved us enough to go to the cross. **Ask yourself the question – do you love?**

**It is by “living our values every day” and “letting our voice echo”  
in actions to those around us Amen.**