

How is Love in the Bible Different from Love in Our Culture?

May 28, 2023 ▪ Nick Braitto

God intends for His people to be _____ by love.

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall **love your neighbor** as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (*Matthew 22:36-40*)

To properly understand love, we must look at God's love as revealed in _____.

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is from God**, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (*1 John 4:7-11*)

In Christ we see that our love for others is to be...

..._____ (**pursuing what's best for them**).

..._____ (**giving of ourselves for their good**).

..._____ (**remaining faithful even when loving them is hard**).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (*John 3:16*)

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, **because of the great love with which he loved us**, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he

might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus...¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (*Ephesians 2:4-7, 10*)

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, **as Christ loved the church** and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church. (*Ephesians 5:25-29*)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: How would you define love? How might your definition overlap or differ from some more commonly embraced cultural understandings of love?

Read and Discuss: 1 John 4:7-11

1. What can we learn from these verses about biblical love? What are some practical opportunities to love others in the way God has loved us, as verse 11 instructs us to do?

Read and Discuss: John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:4-7,10

2. From these verses, how would you describe God's intended outcome of showing His love through Christ as He did? To what extent should we consider the end result of our actions when showing love to others? Explain.
3. How does reflecting on all God intends to do for us through Christ affect the disposition of your heart towards God? Does recognizing that God expects His love for you to result in a change in you cause you to not feel affirmed? Why or why not?
4. How is mercy (v.4) connected to the love God showed us? How is mercy connected to our obligation to show love to others?

Read and Discuss: Ephesians 5:25-29

5. How is Christ's pursuit of holiness for the church as expressed in verses 26-27 an act of love? What would it look like for us to express a similar love for those God has given us relationship with? How can we help people pursue holiness without putting ourselves in the place of the Holy Spirit in their lives?
6. In what ways is the kind of love described in this passage honored in the culture of our world today? In what ways does the world reject this kind of love? How should we respond to that resistance?

Apply: How has your understanding of love grown over time to better align with God's Word? Where does your practice of loving others have disparity with God's model of love? How might you overcome this?

Pray: Pray God would enable us to correctly understand His love and to love others as Christ has loved us.