

love
HOW CAN I
THOSE
PRICKLY PEOPLE?

JUANITA PURCELL

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How Can I Love Those Prickly People?

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PREFACE

Why do we need “one another” when Christ said He would never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)? The Lord Jesus needs to be preeminent in the lives of believers (Colossians 1:18), but the Bible clearly teaches we need other believers to encourage us, to love us, to build us up.

I once read of nine physically disabled people who climbed Mount Rainier. Despite the fact that five people were blind, two were deaf, one was epileptic, and one had an artificial leg, they all climbed to the top of the 14,000-foot mountain and made it back down. When asked how they accomplished this amazing feat, one of the blind members said, “We had a lot of help from one another.” To some degree, each of us has a weakness in some area. We all need one another.

Who will help bear the burden of a fallen sister? Who will encourage her sister when all hope seems to be gone? Who will go the second mile to save a relationship? Will you? God has commanded us to do this! He wants us to be “one another” Christians.

We all know we should do it; the question is, How can we do it? What about the prickly, pestering, pouting people among us who aren’t easy to love and care for? Can we relate to them? The Bible contains positive commands about what believers should be doing for others and what they should not be doing against others.

In a quick search of the New Testament, I found forty-three “one another” passages that could transform our lives. (If you check more thoroughly, you may find even more.) I have listed the verses under two headings on the following page.

Following Christ’s example as given in these one another verses will make a definite difference in how we treat one another. In this study we will look at twelve of these commands in more detail.

DO

Love—John 13:34; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12
Be kindly affectioned—Romans 12:10
Be kind—Ephesians 4:32
Be of the same mind—Romans 12:16
Be like-minded—Romans 15:5
Edify—Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11
Receive—Romans 15:7
Admonish—Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16
Care for—1 Corinthians 12:25
Greet—1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14
Salute—Romans 16:16
Serve—Galatians 5:13
Forbear—Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13
Forgive—Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13
Submit—Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5
Comfort—1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11
Show compassion—1 Peter 3:8
Minister to—1 Peter 4:10
Show hospitality—1 Peter 4:9
Exhort—Hebrews 3:13; 10:25
Consider—Hebrews 10:24
Confess faults—James 5:16
Pray for—James 5:16
Prefer—Romans 12:10
Bear burdens—Galatians 6:2
Wash feet—John 13:14

DON'T

Judge—Romans 14:13
Grudge—James 5:9
Consume—Galatians 5:15
Provoke—Galatians 5:26
Envy—Galatians 5:26
Lie—Colossians 3:9
Show partiality—1 Timothy 5:21
Speak evil—James 4:11

LESSON 1

Love One Another

*“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”
(John 13:34).*

Loving God is usually easy; loving people is work! It requires conscious and unconscious commitment twenty-four hours a day. Even the most lovable people are hard to love at one time or another. So why bother to love others when they probably will end up hurting you at some point in your life? Why bother? Because God commands it!

I enjoy the Godspeed program on my computer. I typed in “love one another,” and, with one keystroke, I discovered that “love one another” appears nineteen times in the New Testament. Isn’t that neat! Wouldn’t it be great if we could carry out the command as easily as I could get that information?

Keeping the command to “love one another” is vitally important in our relationship to God and to others. John 14:15 says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Many people say, “I love God,” but do they really? If you were to ask for evidence of their love for God, you might get these answers: “I go to church every Sunday”; “I read my Bible every day”; “I give my tithe every week.” I know people who do all these things—but they won’t speak to their next-door neighbors because they say they can’t stand them. I know a person who won’t allow her sister-in-law in her home because she doesn’t like the way the sister-in-law acts. I heard of a professing Christian who hasn’t spoken to her father in thirty years because he disapproved of her marriage. Do these ladies really know what God’s kind of love is all about? Do you? Let’s find out how God says we are to “love one another.”

Why must we love one another?

1. Can a person have a right relationship with God and hate

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her next-door neighbor or her father? Read 1 John 4:20 and 21. Explain your answer.

“One’s love for God is equal to the love one has for the man he loves least.”¹

2. What was the setting when Christ gave the command to love one another in John 13:34? Read John 13:1–5, 31–35.
3. To love others was not a new command to the disciples; they had heard this before. Use a Bible concordance to find the first Biblical reference to loving your neighbor as yourself.
4. What does “love thy neighbour as thyself” mean?
5. Loving one another was not a new command, but Christ added to it. What was new about His command in John 13:34?

“The first thing God does is to knock pretence and the pious pose right out of me. The Holy Spirit reveals that God loved me not because I was lovable, but because it was His nature to do so. Now, He says to me, show the same love to others —‘Love as I have loved you.’ ‘I will bring any number

of people about you whom you cannot respect, and you must exhibit My love to them as I have exhibited it to you.' You won't reach it on tiptoe. Some of us have tried to, but we were soon tired.

. . . Neither natural love nor Divine love will remain unless it is cultivated. Love is spontaneous, but it has to be maintained by discipline."²

6. Was this command just for the disciples? Who is a disciple of Christ?

7. When we show the kind of love commanded in John 13:34 and 35, what will people know about us?

"The Apostle John makes love for our fellow Christians to be a test of true faith, insisting that as we grow in grace we grow in love toward all of God's people: 'Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him' (1 John 5:1). This means simply that if we love God we will love His children. All true Christian experience will deepen our love for other Christians!

Therefore we conclude that whatever tends to separate us in person or in heart from our fellow Christians is not of God, but is of the flesh or of the devil."³

How must we love one another?

Christ said we are to love others the way He loves us. The Greek word for the kind of love Christ has for others is *agape*. *Agape* means "seeking the greatest good of another person."

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8. In seeking the greatest good for us, what did Christ do?
Read Ephesians 5:25.

Agape love is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. This is the kind of love we are to have for one another.

9. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. Summarize each of the characteristics of love from that passage with one word.

- Love suffers long (v. 4). _____
- Love is kind (v. 4). _____
- Love doesn't envy (v. 4). _____
- Love doesn't vaunt itself (v. 4). _____
- Love isn't puffed up (v. 4). _____
- Love doesn't behave itself in an unseemly way (v. 5).

- Love doesn't seek its own (v. 5). _____
- Love isn't easily provoked (v. 5). _____
- Love thinks no evil (v. 5). _____
- Love doesn't rejoice in iniquity (v. 6). _____
- Love rejoices in the truth (v. 6). _____
- Love bears all things (v. 7). _____
- Love believes all things (v. 7). _____
- Love hopes all things (v. 7). _____
- Love endures all things (v. 7). _____
- Love never fails (v. 8). _____

10. How many of these characteristics describe your life?
What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

PERFECT LOVE

Slow to suspect—quick to trust
Slow to condemn—quick to justify
Slow to offend—quick to defend
Slow to expose—quick to shield
Slow to reprimand—quick to forbear
Slow to belittle—quick to appreciate
Slow to demand—quick to give
Slow to provoke—quick to conciliate
Slow to hinder—quick to help
Slow to resent—quick to forgive ⁴

After studying 1 Corinthians 13, you may be prone to respond something like this: “I can never live like that; it is too idealistic! I’ve tried a thousand times to live up to those standards. I just can’t!”

11. What must happen in our lives before we have the power to practice this kind of love? Read 1 Peter 1:22 and 23.

12. Has your love for others changed since you’ve been born again? Recall an experience where God enabled you to love the unlovely.

13. If you are still saying, “I just can’t love that person,” maybe you are trying to do it in your own strength. How can we do things beyond our strength? Read Philippians 4:13 and Isaiah 40:31.

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“It is natural to love them that love us, but it is supernatural to love them that hate us.”⁵

14. Now that you have studied this lesson, write your understanding of what it means to love one another as Christ loves us.



From My Heart

What does love look like? Love looks like Jesus! How often do I look like Jesus in the way I treat others? Some days my grade would be good, but other days my score would be zero. Still, I am finding that my love for others has increased as my love for Christ has increased. So if you are having a hard time loving others, get to know Christ better. The more you know Him, the more you love Him; the more you love Him, the more you can love others.

It might be well if we sang this old hymn each day as a daily prayer:

More love to Thee, O Christ, More love to Thee!
Hear Thou the prayer I make On bended knee;
This is my earnest plea:
More love, O Christ, to Thee,
More love to Thee, More love to Thee!

Elizabeth Prentiss not only wrote the words to this song, she lived out the words in her life. If you want to be challenged and blessed, read *Stepping Heavenward*, the story of her life. She lets us read portions of her daily diary and reveals her struggles in getting to know her Savior in a personal way.

Remember, the more you love Christ, the more you will be able to love others. Try it; it works!

From Your Heart



Whom are you having a hard time loving? Why must you love that person? What have you learned from this lesson that will help you love that person? Try praying for that person each day. As you pray for the person, and as you ask God to give you strength to obey His command, you will find yourself loving someone whom you thought you could not love.

Notes:

1. John J. Hugo, quoted by Eleanor Doan, compiler, *The Speaker's Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 155.
2. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1935), p. 132.
3. A. W. Tozer, quoted by G. B. Smith, compiler, *Renewed Day by Day* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), December 22.
4. Benjamin R. De Jong, *Uncle Ben's Quotebook* (Irvine, CA: Harvest House Publishers, 1976), p. 226.
5. De Jong, p. 224.