



Love



Need for Love

“Love” is often defined as “a deep and tender feeling of affection or devotion.”¹ Such love usually depends on the loveliness of the object loved. However, the Bible uses “love”² in a broader sense. For example, God’s love is not dependent on the loveliness of the object loved. God’s people are called to love in a similar way.³ Such love is willing to give & sacrifice for the well-being of others.

All of us have a basic need to feel loved. Most of us have a deep desire for relationships of love.

1. If love is so desirable, why is love often lacking? Why isn’t there more love in our world?⁴

Source of Love

“God is love” (*1 John 4:8b, 16b*). Love is part of the very *nature* and *character* of God. God is the source of love...”for love comes from God (*1 John 4:7b*). God’s love is perfect and unfailing.⁵

Hope Because of Love

In the Old Testament period, Israel had hope *because* of God’s love. The LORD said...

- 📖 “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt. Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful.” (*Jeremiah 31:3-4, NIV*)

Advent of Love

While the word “love” is not found in the “Christmas story” (*Matthew 1:18-2:23; Luke 2:1-40*), God’s love is obvious. God’s love is made clear in the following famous verse:

- 📖 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son [Jesus Christ], that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (*John 3:16, NIV*)

Christmas is a time of giving but the greatest gift ever given was the gift of God’s Son.

2. When you consider God’s gift of his Son, why do you think it was a gift of love? In what ways is God’s love evident in the giving of Jesus Christ?⁶



¹ ‘love’ in the English language has a broad range of meaning, but this is the most common understanding of the word.

² The Hebrew verb *’āhēb* (noun *’āhābā*) and Greek verb *agapaō* (noun *agapē*) are the most common words for ‘love.’

³ This certainly applies to loving ‘unlovely’ people. But our first love should be toward God, who is ‘most lovely!’

⁴ People and groups tend to be self-centered and self-serving. The biblical diagnosis of the problem is a broken or impaired relationship with God who is the Source of love.

⁵ The phrase ‘His love endures forever’ is found 44 times in the Bible. The words ‘unfailing love’ are attributed to God 29 times. The Old Covenant is called a ‘covenant of love’ seven times. God’s love and faithfulness go together.

⁶ God’s gift of his Son demonstrated his ‘unfailing love.’ God remained faithful and loving even though his people had been unfaithful and unloving. Everyone deserved judgment but God provided redemption. As he promised, God sent a Savior – the Messiah. Also, the humility of the Incarnation is amazing! ‘...being in very nature God, [the Son] did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness’ (*Philippians 2:6-7, NIV*). God the Son greatly humbled himself to identify with human beings. He entered the world through physical birth in a very humble way. He passed through human infancy and childhood before beginning his earthly ministry. See ‘demonstration of love’ below.

Demonstration of Love

3. God's love was demonstrated in the giving of his Son in the form of a baby. But what was the ultimate (greatest) demonstration of God's love? Consider the following verses.

- 📖 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (*Romans 5:8, NIV*).
- 📖 "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (*1 John 4:9-10*).
- 📖 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (*1 John 3:16, NIV*).



Benefits of Love

Because of God's love in Christ Jesus, we can have...⁷

- ✂ Peace with God, and restored relationship with him (*1 John 4:9-10, Lesson 2*).
- ✂ Joy of salvation and eternal life (*John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5; Lesson 3*).
- ✂ Hope of a glorious inheritance as God's beloved children (*Romans 8:16-17; 1 John 3:1*).
- ✂ The indwelling Holy Spirit who fills our hearts with God's love (*Romans 5:5*).
- ✂ A new ability (empowered by the Spirit) to love others with God's love (*Galatians 5:22*).
- ✂ Eternal security in God's love in times of trouble, hardship and attack (*Romans 8:35-39*).
- ✂ Mutual blessing and unity in the fellowship of love – the church (*Colossians 3:12-14*).

These benefits are offered in the gift of God's son, Jesus Christ.

4. When someone gives us a costly and valuable gift, how do we respond? When someone sacrifices greatly to give us a gift we desperately need, how do we feel toward that person?

Response to Love

God has offered us the gift of his Son, and we should receive His Gift!⁸ Once we have received him as Lord and Savior, we should continue to respond to God's love on a daily basis.

5. *How should we respond? What are specific ways to love others? How can we love the way God calls us to love? Consider 1 John 4:7-12, Galatians 5:22-25, and other verses you know.*

Reflection & Application

- Do you desire love? Do you know the Source of love? Have you received the gift of God's Son? If you do not believe, ask questions, seek answers, and seek the source of love.
- Brothers & sisters, do you think about the love of God on a daily basis? Are you loving God and loving others as you should? Are you truly relying on the Source of love? Review this lesson.

⁷ Every truly good thing comes from God – the God of love. This list could be much longer!

⁸ Of course, many people do not receive the Gift. The reasons vary. Some people don't receive Jesus because they don't believe in God or the Bible, including the Bible's claim that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (*John 14:6*). If you have not received Jesus for this reason, I encourage you to further investigate the claims of the Bible. Some people do not receive Jesus because they want to maintain control of their own lives instead of giving their lives to Jesus. But Jesus said, 'whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?' (*Matthew 16:25-26b, NIV*).