

## LOVE: LEADER'S GUIDE

Everybody has their own view of what it means to “love”. For some people, “loving” someone means letting them do whatever they want, and being a good friend to them regardless. Others might encounter “tough love” often, where their only experience with love is discipline and harsh words, trying to shape them up for success in the world.

Whatever someone’s experience, we all start with our own subjective view of love, which stems from our experiences. For the Christian, however, love is something much greater. It is the ultimate expression of sacrifice, fully expressed in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for our sins. The Christian’s goal turns to be a reflection of this love that God has poured into us, and give it to those around us.

### PURPOSE

- To clarify what the Bible means by “love”.
- To give the disciple an understanding how God expects a Christian to love others.
- To equip them to be able to create their own application after the reading of this lesson.

### PLAN

1. Remember to go over the verse review! It’ll take up a bit of time each week, but it’s important to get them in the habit of making sure they’re keeping up. If they are struggling with remembering certain verses, spend a little time thinking through why they feel challenged and help them come up with a solution.
2. Make sure to emphasize that God’s love is for them as well! Some people struggle with understanding how God could love them, so wherever you think your disciple might have been struggling to understand about God’s love up to this point, make sure they get it here.
3. When talking about the Discipleship Challenge, help them formulate a SMART application! This is the first discipleship challenge that doesn’t have a specific application for them to do. Take advantage of that! Don’t give them an application, but ask questions to guide them to come up with one on their own.

# LOVE

Memory verse checklist:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17       Matthew 28:19-20
- Joshua 1:8
- Psalm 119:11
- Philippians 4:6
- Hebrews 10:24-25

**VERSE OF THE WEEK:** Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

## GOD LOVES US MORE THAN WE CAN IMAGINE!

Think of somebody you know that loves you: how do you know they do?

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According to this verse, when did God demonstrate his love towards us? What happened?

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What is significant about what this verse tells us about God’s love?

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## EXAMINING GOD’S LOVE AND HOW TO EMULATE IT.

### 1. It is unconditional.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

The Greek language has multiple words for “love.” The one used most often to describe God’s love for us is “agape”. It is defined by being totally focused on the greater good of others, to the point of sacrifice. It is active, and is fully expressed in Jesus’ death on the cross.

### 2. It is towards friends and enemies alike.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” Matthew 5:43-47

God doesn’t just love those who love Him back. He loves everyone, even the people who ignore Him or reject Him. That’s what makes Romans 5:8 so powerful! Christ died for us before we loved Him.

### 3. It is totally dependent on God’s strength.

“I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain?” - Galatians 3:2-4

# BE A DISCIPLE

Loving the way God loves requires incredible strength: God's strength! You'll only be able to love like Christ for a lifetime by regularly going to God and trusting in the Holy Spirit (if you're confused about the role of the Holy Spirit, don't worry: that's the topic of the next lesson).

## How can we express God's love? 1 Corinthians 13

Often described as the "Love Chapter", 1 Corinthians 13 does a great job of describing what a loving Christian does. Read it together below:

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

- 1 Corinthians 13

There are quite a few "love is..." statements. Which one(s) do you think is the easiest for you? Which one(s) is the most difficult? How could you work on the ones you struggle with?

**DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE:** Pick one of "Love Is" statements and form an application to do this week. Memorize Romans 5:8.