

Introduction

A number of years ago my wife and I were doing some marriage counseling with a couple. Both of them had a closet full of offenses that they were quick to bring out and use against one another. They had not properly dealt with the issues, and had just stored them in closets to bring up and use when they were angry. They said that they loved each other, but that they just couldn't live together. I took them to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, and went phrase by phrase through it, asking them if each characteristic of love was being demonstrated in their relationship. Sadly, even though they had read 1 Corinthians 13 many times in their life, the truths of the passage had never sunk in. After going through it with them, they came to the correct conclusion that they had never really loved one another. I have found that many people do not understand agape love. Many think that love is a good feeling, or a romantic feeling towards another person. They don't think of love as being patient, kind, humble, unselfish, and forgiving. They don't think of love as laying your life down for one another. You cannot walk in love if you do not know or understand what love is. Mature believers know and understand what agape love is, and are walking in love.

In 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul wrote, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." In Colossians 1:28-29, we saw that Paul's purpose or goal was to present every man complete in Christ. Are these goals different? No, they are not different.

(1 Ti 1:5) "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

(Col 1:28–29) "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

In Galatians 4:19, Paul wrote that he was "again in labor until Christ is formed in you." His goal was to have Christ formed in every believer. For someone to be complete or mature in Christ, they had to have Christ formed in them, and become like Christ. They had to look like Christ, think like Christ, and act like Christ.

(Ga 4:19) "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—"

A mature believer walks like Christ. John wrote that the "one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

(1 Jn 2:6) "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

How did Christ walk? In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul exhorted us to be imitators of God, as beloved children. We see that we are loved by God; we are His beloved children. As beloved children, we are to walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us. How did Christ walk? He walked in love, and we are to be imitators of Him and walk in love.

(Eph 5:1–2) "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; {2} and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

God has numerous characteristics. He is all powerful, all-knowing, eternal, creative, etc., but the one characteristic that really stands out to me is that He is love. In 1 John 4:8, we read that God is love. John wrote that if we do not love, we do not know God for God is love. We are commanded to love one another because that is what God does; He loves us. He loves us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins. Jesus loved us so much that He demonstrated His love by dying for us.

(1 Jn 4:7–8) “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

(Jn 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

(Ro 5:8) “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus commanded us to love one another, even as He love us. Then He said that by our love for one another, all men will know that we are His disciples. Love is the distinguishing mark of a mature believer. Love is the one characteristic that shows people that we are like God, because He is love. A mature believer is going to be full of love, because that is who God is.

When Paul exhorted husbands to love their wives, he told them to love their wives like Christ loved the church. Christ laid His life down for the church, demonstrating His love for us. Men are to lay their lives down for their wives, demonstrating their love to them. We are to be like Christ, which is to be full of love. That is the goal, and that is the ultimate test of whether we are mature or now. Mature believers walk in love.

(Eph 5:25) “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,”

In this final message on being complete in Christ, we will see that mature believers walk in love. They have come to know and experience God's love in their own life. Second, they understand what love is. Third, they walk in love. They love God, and they love others, the two greatest commandments.

Mature Believer's Walk – Part 2 (Love)

1. Knows God's love
2. Understands God's Love
3. Walks in God's Love
 - a. God
 - b. Others

1. Knows God's Love (1 Jn 4:7-8, 19)

In 1 John 4:7-8, we are exhorted to love one another. The Greek word for love is agapao (Strong's G25). Agape love is a perfect love. It is the kind of love that God demonstrated to us by sending Christ. It is the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated by laying His life down for us. God's love is selfless, sacrificial, and perfect. This kind of love comes from God. In order to have this kind of love of others, we must be born of God and know God.

(1 Jn 4:7) “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

Without being born of God and knowing God, we cannot love others with this agape love. John continued, “the one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” For a person to walk in love, he must be a believer, one born of God, and he must know God. Unbelievers do not know God, have not experienced this love, and are unable to walk in this kind of love.

(1 Jn 4:8) “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

When a person receives Christ into their life, he is born of the Spirit, and God puts His Spirit in us. Paul wrote in Ephesians that when we believe in Christ, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We saw in Part 1 that mature believers walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. Therefore, the fruit of their lives is not fleshly, but spiritual. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. This perfect, selfless, sacrificial love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that comes when a believer sets his mind on the things of the Spirit.

(Eph 1:13) “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,”

(Ga 5:22–23) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

God gives us the ability to love others. John wrote that “we love, because He first loved us.” He loved us before we even knew what love was. He loved us with a perfect, sacrificial love, and gave us an example to follow. He gave us the ability to love others in the same way that He loved us. Because He loved us while we were sinners, and laid His life down to forgive us of our sins, we ought to love others.

(1 Jn 4:19) “We love, because He first loved us.”

(1 Jn 4:10–11) In this is love, not that we 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.”

2. Understands God's love (Eph 3:14-19, 1 Cor 13:4-7)

It is not enough for us to know God's love us, and for us to experience His love, we need to understand His love, so that we can love in the same way that He loves us. In the book of Ephesians, Paul wrote that he bows his knees before the Father that we be rooted and grounded in His love, and that we might comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of love and that we might know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. Paul was writing to believers who knew God's love, but he was praying that they would really know and understand His love. He wanted them to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love. There are different levels and facets of God's love, and Paul did not want them to have just a surface level of understanding; he wanted them to have a full and complete understanding of God's love. A person does not receive this understanding of God's love automatically when becoming a Christian. Many people in the body of Christ do not understand God's love, so Paul's prayer is an excellent prayer. If we are going to walk in love, we need to have a good understanding of what love is.

(Eph 3:14-19) "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, {15} from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, {16} that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; {17} so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, {18} may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, {19} and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

The Greek word that is translated as "know" is *ginosko* (G1097), which means to be aware of, feel, perceive, be resolved, can speak, be sure or to understand. The Lord wants us to fully understand and to fully be aware of His love. He wants us to have full knowledge of His love. I think it is a great prayer today for the church, as there is a lot of confusion about what love is.

In the introduction I mentioned a couple that had come for counseling, and they discovered that they had never loved one another the way the Bible tells us to love. They did not understand what real love is.

Let me give you another example. I was preaching a series on love, and a young woman came up to me afterwards and said that she did not think that I understood love. She said that love is a feeling that you get for someone. I told her that God's love may produce some feelings in you, but it is not a feeling. The Greeks had a number of different words for love. They used *phileo* for a brotherly type of love. In the New Testament it is frequently translated as brotherly love. A second Greek word is *storge*, which refers to a love between family members, like parents and children. A variation of *storge* is used in Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3. A third type of love is *eros*, which refers to a romantic passion and intimacy. This word is not found in the Scriptures. The concept of romantic passion is what many people mistakenly think is the definition of love. The love that God wants us to have for him and others is not *eros*, but *agape*, which is a perfect, unconditional, sacrificial love.

In 1 John 3:16-18, John tells us how to know God's *agape* love. We know God's love because He laid His life down for us. We know someone else's love for us by the way they lay their life down for us. John goes on to give us an example of what laying our life down for someone is. If a brother is in need and we have the world's goods, we should give it to him. The material possessions that we have worked hard and accumulated represent part of who we are. When we give them up, we are giving of ourselves. This is not a feeling, but an intentional act of love.

(1 John 3:16-18) "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. {17} But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? {18} Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

Paul gives us another way that to know love. He wrote the Corinthians a letter with many tears so that they might know the love which he had especially for them. Sometimes, a willingness to share hard words with someone speaks of the love they have for you. When someone shares a hard word with you and their goal is not to tear you down, but to help you to grow and mature in the Lord, it is a sign of their love and commitment to you.

(2 Cor 2:4) "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you."

In the book of 1 John, we find another way of knowing whether we love God. We know that we love God when we observe and keep His commandments. In other words, when you confess your faults and pray for one another, we know that you love God. When you render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars and do not fudge on your taxes, you know that you love God. When you render unto God the things that are God's, you know that you love God. When you go and make disciples of all nations, you know that you love God. When you spend time meditating on His word and doing all that is in it, you know that you love God.

(1 John 5:2-3) "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. {3} For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

Similarly, in John 14:21, God tells us that those that have His commandments and keep them are those that love Him. Love is obedient to God.

(Jn 14:21) "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

One of the best places to look to gain understanding God's love is found in 1 Corinthians 13. In the first three verses, God tells us of the surpassing value of love. In verses four through seven, we learn the character of love. In verses eight through thirteen we learn about the duration of love. Since we are trying to understand what love is, we will take a brief look at verses four through seven. You will notice that there are seven different statements about what love is and eight statements about what love is not, fifteen statements in all.

(1 Cor 13:4-7) "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

The Character of Love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)	
Love is:	Love is <u>not</u>:
Love is patient.	Is not jealous.
Love is kind.	Does not brag.
Rejoices with the truth.	Is not arrogant.
Bears all things.	Does not act unbecomingly.
Believes all things.	Does not seek its own.
Hopes all things.	Is not provoked.
Endures all things.	Does not take into account a wrong suffered.
	Does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

A. Love is patient. (1 Cor 13:4)

Patience is being slow to anger, long suffering or forbearing. It is to endure with calmness, not getting riled up about something quickly. The Greek word for patience is makrothumeo (G3114). It comes from two Greek words: makros (G3117) and thumos (G2372). Makros means long, and thumos means to breathe hard, to have passion or to be fierce or angry. A person walking in God's love does not get angry or upset easily; he is patient.

B. Love is Kind. (1 Cor 13:4)

The word for kind in the Greek is chresteuomai (Strong's G5541). It means to show oneself useful, to act benevolently or kind. It comes from the word chrestos (Strong's G5543) which means to be employed, or to show yourself useful, good, or kind. Pastor and author, Steve Sjogren, wrote two books on kindness: Conspiracy of Kindness, and Community of Kindness. Both books talk about how acts of kindness are effective in reaching people with the gospel.

C. Love is not jealous. (1 Cor 13:4)

Love is not envious. The Greek word is zeloo (Strong's G2206), which means to have warmth of feeling for or against. The definition of envy is: 1) a sense of discontent or jealousy with regard to another's advantages, success, possessions, etc. 2) desire for an advantage possessed by another. It means to covet or desire earnestly, to be envious, jealous, or zealous. Love does not desire the things that our brother or sister have.

D. Love does not brag. (1 Cor 13:4)

Brag means to speak boastfully. The Greek word for brag is perpereuomai (Strong's G4068), and it means to boast or vaunt itself. Boastful means to speak with pride or vanity. It means to be proud in the possession of. Love does not speak boastfully. It does not try and let everyone know how great you are and what wonderful things you have or have done. Love is not trying to build yourself up. Love tries to build up and edify another. Proverbs says that a stranger should praise you and that your own lips should not do it.

(Pr 27:2) "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips."

E. Love is not arrogant. (1 Cor 13:4)

The opposite of bragging is not being arrogant. The Greek word for arrogant is phusioo (Strong's G5448), and it means to blow up, inflate, puff up, or make proud. Arrogant and haughty people are not easy to be around. They generally have a puffed-up attitude about themselves and esteem others lower than themselves. God's love is not arrogant, but is humble.

F. Love does not act unbecomingly. (1 Cor 13:5)

The Greek word that is translated as "not unbecoming" is aschemoneo (Strong's G807), and it means to behave self-uncomely. It can also mean to behave indecently. Love does not act indecently or in an unbecoming way. Love does not do things which will detract from the impression that one should have for the person. Poor table manners are not attractive. Love would not do things that are going to take away from the appearance and look of Christ in our lives. The ESV and NIV translate it as rude. Love does not act rudely.

G. Love does not seek its own. (1 Cor 13:5)

The Greek word for seek is zeteo (Strong's G2212), which means to seek, desire, endeavor, or require. Love does not seek, desire, or require that things be done their way or for them. Love is not selfish. One of the best explanations of this is in Philippians 2:3-7, where Paul exhorts the church to do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind to regard one

another as more important than themselves. He said that this was the attitude that Christ had. He emptied Himself, took the form of a bond-servant, and died for us. He did not seek His own, but He was looking out for our interests. God's love does not seek its own, and is not selfish. While many marriage counselor say money or poor communication are the leading causes of divorce, I have found that selfishness creates a lot of conflict. When conflict is not properly dealt with, communication becomes difficult. I believe that selfishness is a major cause in troubled relationships.

(Php 2:3-7) "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; {4} do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. {5} Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, {6} who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, {7} but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

H. Love is not provoked. (1 Cor 13:5)

Provoke means to anger, vex or exasperate. The Greek word is paraxuno (Strong's G3947), and it means to sharpen alongside, to exasperate, or easily provoke. Love does not get angered or vexed or exasperated. When we get angry at someone, it reveals that we do not have God's love for the person. We find that Jesus was stirred up over the money changers in the temple. He had a righteous anger over the situation. We have the right to be upset about sin, but we need to maintain love for the sinner.

There are 51 times in the Scriptures where the word provoke is used. Most of the time it is used in our provoking the Lord to anger through our idolatry and sin. The implication is almost always of our doing wrong that provokes God. When Scripture says that we are not to be provoked, in the context of how the word is used, it is saying that when our brother sins, we are not to be provoked. Love covers a multitude of sins. We need to exercise forgiveness towards one another. When we forgive, we are not provoked.

One day one of the pastors of the church we were attending came to our house to speak to me. In our conversation, I told him that what he (and the elders) was doing was not Biblical. He responded by asking me to leave the church. The senior pastor heard what had happened and asked me to stay, but we left. God had called me a year earlier to plant a church, and this was just the nudge that I needed to move forward. What the pastor had shared with me really provoked me, and the Holy Spirit convicted me that I was not full of love, since love is not provoked. I went to the pastor's house and told him that I had been provoked, and therefore was not acting in love. I asked him to forgive me.

I. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. (1 Cor 13:5)

Love does not take into account a wrong or evil that is suffered. The Greek word is kakos (Strong's G2556), which means worthless, depraved, bad, evil, harm, ill, or wicked. Even thos a person has done something evil or bad to us, we are not to take account of it; we are to forgive. Love forgives. In Matthew 18, Jesus had just taught on church discipline, and Peter asked the Lord, how many times he needed to forgive his brother. Jesus tells him seventy times seven or infinitely. The word, seven, signifies perfectly or completely.

(Mt 18:21-22) "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus said^ to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Many people take the wrongs done against them and put them in a closet to bring up at another time, particularly in a fight. God tells us to deal with offenses. Sometimes we need to confront and forgive, and at other times we are simply to forgive. At no time are we to hold on to these wrongs and take them into account.

J. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness. (1 Cor 13:6)

The Greek word that is translated as unrighteousness is *adikia* (Strong's G93), and means injustice, to act morally wrong, to commit iniquity, unrighteousness, or wrong. God hates sin, and we need to align ourselves with God's values. We are not to rejoice in immorality, injustice, and other forms of unrighteousness.

K. Love rejoices with the truth. (1 Cor 13:6)

The Greek word for truth is *aletheia* (Strong's G225), and it means not to conceal anything. We are not to be deceitful, but are to be straight-forward and truthful. Another aspect of truth is God's word, which is called truth. In John 17:17, Jesus prayed that we would be sanctified in the truth, and then He said, "Your word is truth." We need to rejoice in God's word. In Psalm 119:162, the psalmist stated, "I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great spoil." We should pray for a love of God's word, and for joy. In Jeremiah 15:16, the prophet said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart." I pray this for myself and others. If you are walking in God's love, you will rejoice with the truth.

(Jn 17:17) "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

(Ps 119:162) "I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great spoil."

(Je 15:16) "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts."

L. Love bears all things. (1 Cor 13:7)

The Greek word is *stego* (Strong's G4722), which means to roof over, or figuratively to cover with silence, to endure patiently. The word bear means to support or to hold or remain firm under a load. In Galatians 6, Paul wrote about restoring a brother who has sinned. We are to do it in a spirit of gentleness and humility. Then, he said we are to "bear one another's burdens, and fulfill the law of Christ." The process of restoring a brother may take some time, and we are to bear his burden to help him be restored. The law of Christ is love, love bears all things.

(Ga 6:1-2) "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. {2} Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."

M. Love believes all things. (1 Cor 13:7)

The Greek word for believes is *pisteuo* (Strong's G4100), and it means to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), to believe, commit, or trust in. One of my strengths is that I trust people. Unfortunately, one of my weaknesses is that I trust people. God wants us to believe and trust, but we also need discernment and wisdom.

N. Love hopes all things. (1 Cor 13:7)

The Greek word of hope is *elpizo* (Strong's G1679), which means to expect, confide, hope, or trust. People need hope, and we can love people by giving them hope. God's word is full of promises, and sharing these with people give them hope.

O. Love endures all things. (1 Cor 13:7)

The fifteenth and last characteristic of love is that it endures all things. The Greek word is *hupomeno* (Strong's G5278), and it means to stay under, remain, undergo, bear trials, have fortitude, persevere, endure, or suffer. Endure means to hold out against; sustain or undergo without impairment or yielding. When you endure something, you make it through the process until the end is reached. In Romans 5, we are to exult in our tribulation because it brings about perseverance or endurance. Our endurance brings about proven character and hope. In 2 Peter 1:5-8, we find that there are seven qualities that help us to be fruitful and useful. One of those qualities is perseverance (endurance). Mature believers have a love that endures all things.

(Ro 5:3–5) “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; {4} and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; {5} and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

(2 Pe 1:5–8) “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, {6} and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, {7} and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. {8} For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

3. Walks in God's love (Eph 5:1-2)

In order for us to walk in love, we must be born again. Second, we must know and understand what love is. Third, we must intentionally walk in love. In Ephesians 5:1, Paul exhorted the church to walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us. Walking in love is something that we must continually be aware of and practice. We will have choices all through the day to lay our lives down as an offering and sacrifice. When Christ was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, He said, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” He did not want to go through it, but He made a choice to do the Father's will. We may not want to stop what we are doing and serve someone, so we have to choose to lay our lives down when God gives us opportunities. Walking in love is going to require us to lay our lives down for one another, and this requires us to be intentional.

(Eph 5:1–2) “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; {2} and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

(Lk 22:42) “saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

We may see someone in need, and we have a choice of whether we are going to give some money to this needy person or not. John wrote that “we know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.” God will give us opportunities to walk in love, and we must choose to walk in love.

(1 Jn 3:16–18) “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. {17} But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? {18} Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

We may be having a conversation with someone, and the things they are saying rub us the wrong way. We have a choice to make. Are we going to be provoked, or are we going to patiently listen and respond gently? We may be driving and the right lane ahead is going to end. We get in the proper lane, but someone comes keeps driving up the right lane and now wants to cut into the line. We have a choice of whether to be kind and let them in, or to leave no gap or opportunity for them to cut in. There will be opportunities throughout our lives to show and demonstrate love to God and to others. It is not enough to know about God’s love, we must walk in it. We must be patient, kind, humble, forgiving, and selfless.

Several years ago, there was a fad in the church to wear rubber bracelets that said WWJD, which stood for “What would Jesus Do?” Jesus walked in love, and He asks us to walk in love also. John wrote that “the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked,” which was in love. That bracelet was a great reminder to people that we need to walk in love like Jesus did.

(1 Jn 2:6) "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

a. **Loves God**

Here are six ways to love God.

1. **Put Him first in your life.** When Jesus was asked by the wealthy young man what he had to do to obtain eternal life, Jesus responded by saying, “If you wish to be complete (telios), go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” The young man went away grieving for he owned much property. Jesus told him this because his wealth was an idol in his life. He may have kept some of the other commandments, but the first commandment was to have no other gods and the second was not to have any idols. In order for him to be complete, he had to get rid of this idol. We cannot put anything, whether it is wealthy, work, or hobbies before God. We cannot put other people before God. He must be first and preeminent in our lives.

(Mt 19:21–22) “Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” {22} But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

2. **Spend time with God.** Set aside time to read His word. Spend time talking and listening to Him. Spend time worshipping the Lord. If you are musically inclined, you can use an instrument, but if not, use a CD or songs on U-tube. We spend time with the people that we love, and God is no different; we need to spend time with Him. Paul commended the Ephesian elders to God, and to the word of His grace. Spend time with God in prayer and in His word.

(Ac 20:32) “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

3. **Tell God that you love Him.** Solomon wrote that an open rebuke is better than love that is concealed. Don't conceal your love; tell God You love Him. I tell my wife every day how much I love her. Tell God how much You love and appreciate Him.

(Pr 27:5) “Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed.”

4. **Be obedient to God.** Jesus said, “He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me...” We show our love to God by being obedient to His word.

(Jn 14:21) “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

5. **Serve the Lord.** Use your gifts, abilities, talents, and resources to serve the Lord. Use your gifts. Paul exhorted us in Romans 12 to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship. Then, he followed that up with a discussion about the different gifts and parts of the body. We are to present ourselves to God and serve Him with our gifts.

(Ro 12:1) “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.”

6. **Honor the Lord.** Honor the Lord with your first fruits, which are your tithes. Honor Him also with your wealth. Jesus rebuked the nation of Israel for not honoring Him with their tithes and offerings. (See Malachi 1:6-9 and 3:8-12.) We give gifts to people we love, and God is no different. We should honor Him with our gifts and offerings.

(Pr 3:9) “Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce;”

In Ephesians 5:1, God tells us as beloved children to walk in love, He gives a number of ways that husbands are to love their wives. Then, He tells women to be subject to and respect their husbands. Finally, He says that He is really talking about the church. We are the bride of Christ, and as the bride, one of the primary ways of showing our love to the Lord is by honoring Him. We should honor Him with our words, actions, and our wealth.

(Eph 5:32–33) “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. {33} Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.”

b. Love Others

When Jesus was asked about what is the greatest and foremost commandment, Jesus said to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Then He added, “The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” When we think about walking in love, we need to love God and love others.

(Mt 22:37–40) “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 foremost commandment. {39} “The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ {40} “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

These two commands are separate, but they are related. John wrote, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

(1 Jn 4:20–21) “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. {21} And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

When I have invited people to church, some have said that they have a great relationship with God, but it's people that they have a hard time with. According to Scripture, these people are not good with God, because they don't love their brother. Many of these people have been hurt or offended, and stopped going to church. God wants people to learn to forgive one another, and to be properly connected to one another. He will use these difficult situations to help us grow and mature. He does not allow these situations to come into our life to drive us away from the body, but to mature us. Loving God and loving people are two separate commands, but they are closely related to one another.

There are over thirty-one one-another commands in the New Testament, so there are many ways to love one another. Here are five things we can do to love one another.

1. **Serve one another.** Use your spiritual gifts to serve others in the body. Peter wrote, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another...”

(1 Pe 4:10–11) “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. {11} Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

2. **Encourage one another.** The assembling of ourselves together is supposed to be a time of encouragement. We are to give consideration to how we can stimulate others to love and good deeds. Therefore, we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves, so that we can encourage one another.

(Heb 10:24–25) “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

3. **Share meals together.** The early church broke bread together. They were devoted to fellowship and breaking bread together. Meals are a great time for fellowship and to grow closer together.

(Ac 2:42–46) “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... {46} Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,”

4. **Meet needs within the body.** The early church met each other's needs. They went as far as selling property and possessions to help those in need.

(Ac 2:44–45) “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; {45} and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

5. **Forgive one another.** It is critical that we live in right relationship with one another. We are all going to say or do something that could offend someone. We have to learn to forgive each other. We also need to learn to confront and resolve differences. We need to live at peace with one another.

(Eph 4:31–32) “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. {32} Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Conclusion and Applications

God wants the body of Christ to grow up and be mature. Paul labored and strived to present every member complete in Christ. He laid good foundations in the churches he planted. We have to get these foundations down in our lives so that we can move on to maturity. Maturity in Christ is a process, and does not happen overnight. Paul was not working alone; he was laboring with Christ. God is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it. He will use things in our lives for our good. He will use trials and tribulations to make us complete. He works all things together for good in our lives.

There are things that we must do on our part. We must learn how to eat meat, and not depend on others to feed us milk. We need to learn to rightly divide the word of God, and this takes practice to train our senses. We need to learn to walk in the Spirit, not in flesh. We have to set our minds on things above, and not on the things of the flesh. We have to learn to walk in love. We need to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We also have to love our neighbor as

ourselves. This is how those that are complete in Christ walk. They walk in the Spirit, and they walk in love. Love is the ultimate mark of a mature believer.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for being a loving God. Thank You for being our loving Father. Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we might be called the children of God. Jesus, thank You for demonstrating Your love to us and laying Your life down for us. Help us to love one another in the same way that You loved us. Help us to be rooted and grounded in love. Help us to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of Your love, which surpasses all knowledge. Help us to learn to walk in love. May the love that we have for one another be a witness to the world that we are Your disciples. Help us to be complete and mature. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Introduction (1 Cor 13:4-7, 1 Ti 1:5, Col 1:28–29, Ga 4:19, 1 Jn 2:6, Eph 5:1-2, 1 Jn 4:7–8, Jn 3:16, Ro 5:8, Eph 5:25)

1. **Knows God's Love** (1 Jn 4:7-8, 19, Eph 1:13, Ga 5:22–23, 1 Jn 4:19, 1 Jn 4:10–11)

2. **Understands God's love** (Eph 3:14-19, 1 Cor 13:4-7, Ro 1:31, 2 Ti 3:3, 1 Jn 3:16-18, 2 Cor 2:4, 1 Jn 5:2-3, Jn 14:21)
 - a. Love is patient. (1 Cor 13:4)
 - b. Love is Kind. (1 Cor 13:4)
 - c. Love is not jealous. (1 Cor 13:4)
 - d. Love does not brag. (1 Cor 13:4, Pr 27:2)
 - e. Love is not arrogant. (1 Cor 13:4)
 - f. Love does not act unbecomingly. (1 Cor 13:5)
 - g. Love does not seek its own. (1 Cor 13:5, Php 2:3-7)
 - h. Love is not provoked. (1 Cor 13:5)
 - i. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. (1 Cor 13:5, Mt 18:21-22)
 - j. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness. (1 Cor 13:6)
 - k. Love rejoices with the truth. (1 Cor 13:6, Jn 17:17, Ps 119:162, Je 15:16)
 - l. Love bears all things. (1 Cor 13:7, Ga 6:1–2)
 - m. Love believes all things. (1 Cor 13:7)
 - n. Love hopes all things. (1 Cor 13:7)
 - o. Love endures all things. (1 Cor 13:7, Ro 5:3–5, 2 Pe 1:5–8)

3. **Walks in God's love** (Eph 5:1-2, Lk 22:42, 1 Jn 3:16–18, 1 Jn 2:6)
 - a. **Loves God**
 1. Put God first in your life. (Matt 19:16-22, Ex 20:3-5)
 2. Spend time with God. (Ac 20:32)
 3. Tell God that you love Him. (Pr 27:5)
 4. Be obedient to God. (Jn 14:21)
 5. Serve the Lord. (Ro 12:1)
 6. Honor the Lord. (Pr 3:9-10, Mal 1:6-9, 3:8-12, Eph 5:1, 5:32-33)

 - b. **Loves Others** (Mt 22:37–40, 1 Jn 4:20-21)
 1. Serve one another. (1 Pe 4:10–11)
 2. Encourage one another. (Heb 10:24–25)
 3. Share meals together. (Ac 2:42–46)
 4. Meet needs within the body. (Ac 2:44–45)
 5. Forgive one another. (Eph 4:31–32)

Conclusion and Applications