

Get and Reflect the Love of God



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VISION: To hear the midnight cry, "The bridegroom comes, go out to meet Him" (Matthew 25:6) and become like Him when I see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

MISSION: Purify myself even as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3) to be glad, to rejoice, give honor to Christ and be ready for the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7).

VALUES: Follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4), be without fault before God (Revelation 14:5), be perfect even as my Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48), wear the Lamb's fine, clean and white linen (Revelation 19:8) do righteously (1 John 3:10) and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

OVERALL AIM: Studies presented here unveil Bible knowledge to inquiring minds to prompt the following inquiries: "Are our feet on the rock of ages? Are we one with Christ as He is one with the Father" (John 10:30 in Evangelism, {Ev} 199.1)? Am I crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20)?

26 **PURPOSE/REASON FOR/WHY**

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28 The focus here is comprehension, procurement and reflection of God's
29 love.

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32 **OBJECTIVES/WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH**

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34 At the end of this study, the reader is equipped to self-assess
35 whether God's love or its alternative resides in the mind.

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38 **SIGNIFICANCE: SO WHAT**

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40 John asserts that "He that loves not knows not God; for God is love"
41 (1 John 4:8). To be certain that we do not mistake love for purely
42 an emotion, John recorded the words of Jesus, which says: "If we love
43 [God we will] keep [His] commandments," "keep His words" (John 14:15
44 & 23; 1 John 5:3 & 2:5) and "...Feed [His] sheep" (John 21:15-17). The
45 centrality of love in the Christian experience is further highlighted
46 in Paul's assertion that love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans
47 13:10). "[Even if we give] all [our possessions] to feed the poor
48 and [offer our] body to be burned and have not... [love]--it [profits]...
49 nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3)! Clearly, no other attribute or
50 sacrificial service can substitute for the lack of love in the
51 Christian life. More importantly however, God loves them that love
52 Him and fills their treasures (Proverbs 8:17 & 21; John 14:21).

53
54 **BACKGROUND CONTEXT**

55
56 Jesus said to the early disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so
57 have I loved you; **continue... in my love**" (John 15:9). It is impossible to
58 continue in the love of God if it is misunderstood or not known.
59 Hence, an imperative exists for 21st century believers to learn, to
60 practice and to teach the love of God revealed in His Word. This
61 background provided the impetus for the study question that follows.

62 **STUDY QUESTION**

63
64 What are the qualities of God's love that I should know and reflect?
65

66 **ANSWER SOURCE: HOLY BIBLE**

- 67
- 68 1. **God's love is sacrificial!** "...God, [who] is love" (1 John 4:8)
69 knew of His son's consent to die as sacrificial lamb from the
70 foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8 & 1 John 4:10). Hence,
71 "When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son... to redeem
72 them that were under the law that we might... [be adopted into the
73 family of God]" (Galatians 4:4-5). That sentinel act "...Manifested
74 the love of God toward us, because God sent His only... Son into the
75 world that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). For this
76 reason, John says, "God so loved the world that He **GAVE** His only
77 begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but
78 have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Hereby perceive we the love
79 of God, because **He laid down His life** for us and **we ought to lay**
80 **down our lives for the brethren** (1 John 3:16). Regarding laying
81 down our live: does the cemetery or crematorium hold a special
82 place in your mind when you think about love for one another?
83
- 84 2. **God's love is transparent!** He did not do a prenuptial with sinners
85 before giving expression of His love. Neither is His love
86 deceptive, seeking to harm others under the guise of affection.
87 "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and
88 sent His Son to be the propitiation (substitute) for our sins" (1
89 John 4:10). Long before any sinner was converted, we read, "...God
90 commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,
91 Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "...God, [who] is love" (1 John
92 4:8) "...Was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Him, not imputing
93 their trespasses unto them..." (2 Corinthians 5:19). And after God
94 revealed His love to sinners, He beckoned, "...Whoever is thirsty,

95 let him [or her] come and whoever wishes, let him [or her] take the
 96 free gift of the water of life (Revelation 22:17 NIV). This love
 97 relationship is not compulsory but invitational. It says, “Behold
 98 I stand at the door [of your mind] and knock, if [anyone] hears my
 99 voice and opens the door [of his/her mind], I will come in and sup
 100 with him [or her]...” (Revelation 3:20). God is very honest about
 101 the terms of the divine-human relationship. He desires intimacy
 102 with self-denial, cross-bearing and obedience (Mark 8:34).

103
 104 3. **God’s love is compassionate.** The imagery within the Most Holy
 105 place in the earthly tabernacle, which was patterned after the
 106 heavenly model, is a perpetual reminder to humanity that divine
 107 love sits above mercy, which sits above law. Examine the picture
 108 in **Exodus 25:8–10, 16 & 40; 31:18; 25:21–22; 26:34 & 1 John 4:8**).
 109 God also sets the standard for love, which involves not keeping a
 110 record of wrongs and not delighting in evil (1 Corinthians 13:5–6
 111 NIV). Hence, when “...The Scribes and Pharisees brought unto
 112 [Christ] a woman taken in adultery...” (John 8:3) and invoked the law
 113 of Moses, the compassionate love of God was quick to respond with
 114 no condemnation (John 8:4–11), which still stands today for all
 115 repentant sinners (read Romans 8:1). In this sentinel act, Jesus
 116 demonstrated that “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,
 117 slow to anger and of great mercy” (read Psalms 145:8 & 103:8;
 118 Nehemiah 9:17; Jonah 4:2 & Joel 2:13).

119
 120 4. **God’s love is patient.** The ancient covenant people of God often
 121 broke their treaty with Him (read Hosea 2:14–15; 7:9–14; 13:2–6).
 122 Israel and Ephraim committed whoredom and dealt treacherously
 123 against the Lord (Hosea 2:4–6; 5:3 & 7) “...in departing from the
 124 Lord” (Hosea 1:2 NIV) and looking to other gods (Hosea 3:1). This
 125 idolatry prompted God to say--“My people are destroyed for lack of
 126 knowledge! Because thou hast rejected knowledge, [a.k.a., God,
 127 read Proverbs 1:7 & 29, 2:4–6; 1 Corinthians 1:30 and Isaiah 11:2],
 128 **I will also reject thee that thou shall be no priest to me.** Seeing

129 thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy
 130 children" (Hosea 4:6). "As they were increased...; they sinned
 131 against [God]... (Hosea 4:7) and forgot Him (Hosea 13:6). "Israel
 132 slides back as a backsliding heifer..." (Hosea 4:16). "Ephraim is
 133 joined to idols, let him alone..." (Hosea 4:17). "...Ephraim [has]
 134 made many altars to sin..." (Hosea 8:11). "...Ephraim... commits
 135 whoredom and Israel is defiled..." (read Hosea 5:3 & 6:10). "They
 136 will not frame their doings to turn unto their God for the spirit
 137 of whoredom is in the midst of them and **they have not known the Lord [just**
 138 **like the sons of Eli did not know Him (read 1 Samuel 2:12)];**" "...therefore, shall
 139 Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall
 140 with them" (Hosea 5:4-5) and "Ephraim shall be desolate in the day
 141 of rebuke among the tribes of Israel..." (Hosea 5:9). "Ephraim...
 142 [has] mixed himself among the people... Strangers have devoured his
 143 strength and he knows it not..." (Hosea 7:8-9). "...Israel [has also]
 144 gone a whoring from thy God" (Hosea 9:1). "They are all
 145 adulterers..." (Hosea 7:4 & 14:3). "Ephraim has surrounded me with
 146 lies [and] the house of Israel with deceit..." (Hosea 11:12 NIV).
 147 "[God's people are bent on backsliding from [Him]; though they
 148 called them to the Most High none at all would exalt Him" (Hosea
 149 11:7). "...[God] desired mercy, not sacrifice; [He desired] the
 150 knowledge of God more than burnt offerings but they like men have
 151 transgressed the covenant... [and] dealt treacherously against [God]"
 152 (Hosea 6:6-7). Despite this history of backsliding, God was
 153 patient with His people and appealed to them to "Sow to yourselves
 154 in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for
 155 it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rain righteousness
 156 upon you" (Hosea 10:12). "O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself;
 157 but in me is [your] help" (Hosea 13:9). "I will ransom [you] from
 158 the power of the grave; I will redeem [you] from death..." (Hosea
 159 13:14). "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou has
 160 fallen by [your] iniquity" (Hosea 14:1). "I will heal [your]
 161 backsliding; I will love [you] freely for [my] anger is turned

162 away..." (Hosea 14:4). "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall
 163 grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (Hosea 14:5).
 164 God's love invited Israel back to Him that He might speak
 165 comfortably, covenant with, remarry, respond to as in attend to
 166 their needs and love them (Hosea 2:14, 18, 19, 21 & 23 NIV).

167
 168 5. **God's love is enduring** (Exodus 34:7 NIV)! He honored His pledge
 169 and give His Son as a sacrifice for humanity when transgression
 170 entered Eden. Trace that picture in Revelation 13:8; Titus 1:2;
 171 Isaiah 14:13-14; Revelation 12:7-9 & 12; Genesis 3:15; John 3:16-
 172 18; Matthew 1:21 & 27:23-26. "The Lord... appeared of old unto me,
 173 saying, '...I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore,
 174 with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). **"A voice**
 175 **was heard upon the high places, weeping and [supplicating for] the**
 176 **children of Israel for they have perverted their way and they have**
 177 **forgotten the Lord their God"** (Jeremiah 3:21). And God said:
 178 "Return, [you] backsliding children and I will heal your
 179 backslidings..." (Jeremiah 3:22). Among God's people are found the
 180 wicked (Jeremiah 5:26). Hence, God said, "If my people... shall
 181 humble themselves, pray, seek my face and turn from their wicked
 182 ways; then will I hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal
 183 their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). God extends this invitation
 184 because the wicked lacks peace (Isaiah 48:22 or 57:20-21) and "The
 185 way of the wicked is an abomination to... [Him]" (Proverbs 15:9).
 186 Therefore, if "...The wicked forsakes his [/her] way... and returns to
 187 the Lord, [God] will have mercy upon him [/her] and... abundantly
 188 pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). "If the wicked will turn from... sin... and
 189 keep all [God's] statutes and do that which is lawful and right,
 190 [s/he] shall surely live [and] shall not die" (Ezekiel 18:21, 23 &
 191 27; 33:11, 14-15 & 19). "[God's love] is longsuffering..., not
 192 willing that any should perish but that all should come to
 193 repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), learn of Jesus and experience new life
 194 (John 17:3) as a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

195 **ANSWER SOURCE: SACRED WRITINGS:**

196

197 We are pursuing answers to the question: What are the qualities of
 198 God's love that I should know and reflect? One more answer follows!
 199

200 1. **God's love is cooperative.** It is a love born of mercy for
 201 [undeserving] human beings; "Mercy-[which came into existence on
 202 account of sin, thus implying] the imperfection of the object
 203 toward which [love] is shown" (In Heavenly Places, {HP} 12.2).
 204 "Through the gift of His Son [God] has revealed toward [humanity]
 205 His infinite love and mercy" (HP 12.3). **"God proposes cooperation
 206 with His frail, erring creatures that He has placed on vantage
 207 ground. On the one side there are infinite wisdom, goodness,
 208 compassion [and] power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness,
 209 absolute helplessness, poverty [and] dependence...** [Humanity] is
 210 given the privilege of working with God in the saving of [their]
 211 own soul" (Philippians 2:12 in HP 12.4). "The plan of redemption
 212 was arranged in the counsels [of heaven] between the Father and the
 213 Son [Revelation 13:8]. Then Christ pledged Himself to render an
 214 account for [the Eden couple] if [they] proved disloyal. [Christ]
 215 pledged Himself to make an atonement which... unites every believing
 216 soul to God" (HP 12.5). "In His infinite love Christ devised the
 217 plan of salvation. **This plan He stands ready to fulfill in behalf
 218 of all who will cooperate with Him. In their behalf He says to the
 219 Father, 'Do not impute their sins to them, but lay them on Me. Be
 220 merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their
 221 iniquities remember no more. They have accepted My merits and made
 222 peace with Me... My righteousness is theirs and for My sake bless
 223 them with all spiritual blessings'**" (HP 12.6). This redemptive
 224 love restores and offers humanity the opportunity to be one with
 225 God in character. "...What shall we do that we might work the works
 226 of God? ...Believe on Him whom [God has] sent" (John 6:28-29) and
 227 "...Lay hold on eternal life..." (read 1 Timothy 6:12).

228 SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS: In this study, we examined the qualities of
 229 God's love that we might obey Christ's command to continue in His
 230 love. From our study we learned that God's love is sacrificial,
 231 transparent, compassionate, patient, enduring and cooperative.
 232 Because it is of little redeeming value to engage in Bible Study
 233 merely for information, subsequent paragraphs follow that make a
 234 practical application of the truths set forth here.

235

236

237 **DISCUSSION: WHAT DO THESE THINGS MEAN?**

238

239 **For centuries a baleful condition has crept into the church.**

240 “[Although] God's love... [is] ever extended toward sinners (That I May
 241 Know Him, {TMK} 46.6) it has been lost from view. “After the
 242 Savior's ascension, the sense of the divine presence, full of love
 243 and light, was still with... [the disciples] (The Acts of the Apostles,
 244 {AA} 65.1) and they “...Rejoiced in the sweetness of communion...; but
 245 gradually a change came. [Later on], believers began to look for
 246 defects in others. Dwelling upon mistakes, giving place to unkind
 247 criticism, they lost sight of the Savior and His love. They became
 248 [stricter] in regard to outward ceremonies, more particular about the
 249 theory than the practice of the faith. **In their zeal to condemn
 250 others, they overlooked their own errors. They lost the brotherly
 251 love that Christ had enjoined; saddest of all: they were unconscious
 252 of their loss.** They did not realize that happiness and joy were
 253 going out of their lives and that having shut the love of God out of
 254 their hearts they would soon walk in darkness” (Reflecting Christ,
 255 {RC} 222.2). Not surprisingly John urged upon believers... the
 256 constant need of love (RC 222.3).

257

258 **In the 21st century, shall we not love one another despite how others
 259 might appear in our eyes?** “We differ so widely in disposition,

260 habits [and] education that our ways of looking at things vary. We
 261 judge differently. Our understanding of truth [and] our ideas in
 262 regard to the conduct of life is not in all respects the same" (The
 263 Ministry of Healing, {MH} 483.1); "We... see and condemn faults [in]
 264 others, while we have greater faults which we have never realized,
 265 but which are distinctly seen by others" (Testimonies for the Church,
 266 Volume 5, {5T} 333.3). Not surprisingly, God asks--"Why do you look
 267 at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to
 268 the plank in your own eye" (Matthew 7:3 NIV). We should file
 269 bankruptcy in the business of Judging one Another and enter a new
 270 line of work that involves loving each other with a love that
 271 reflects divine attributes of patience, compassion and so on.

272

273 **Our Savior describes himself as the vine and presents us as**
 274 **branches...** Using this analogy, if a branch remains in the vine it
 275 bears much fruit (John 15:5), which includes love (Galatians 5:22).
 276 Then, "Do those who claim to be branches of the Living Vine bear
 277 fruit like unto the parent stock? It should come as no surprise to
 278 you that **"...Love... [is] needed in the church"** (Review and Herald, {RH}
 279 February 23, 1897, par 7). **"Many are deceiving themselves; for the principle of love**
 280 **does not dwell in their hearts. They may close their eyes to their**
 281 **own errors and defects; but they cannot deceive God"** (Sons and
 282 Daughters of God, {SD} 49.3). The Ephesus church lost its first love
 283 and was strongly encouraged to repent or risk removal of its
 284 candlestick or lamp (Revelation 2:4-5). In contrast, the Laodicean
 285 church of Revelation 3:14-18 did not have any love to lose so it was
 286 asked to buy gold tried in the fire, which represents all the
 287 heavenly merchandise discussed in 2 Peter 1:5-8, of which love is
 288 chief (1 Corinthians 13:13). Procurement of these heavenly goods
 289 empowers us to love one another and reveal Christ (1 John 4:8 & 12).
 290 "[And] Those who partake of God's love through a reception of the
 291 truth will give evidence of this by making earnest, self-sacrificing

292 efforts to give the message of God's love to others. Thus they
 293 become laborers together with Christ. Love for God and for one
 294 another unites them to Christ by golden links. Their life is bound
 295 up with His life in sanctified, elevated union... This union causes
 296 rich currents of Christ's love to flow continually into the heart and
 297 then flow forth again in love [to] others" (That I May Know Him,
 298 {TMK} 9.4), demonstrating love of a heavenly origin, which destroys
 299 the works of the flesh such as hatred, envy, strife and so on,
 300 whereby we are defiled (Galatians 5:19-21 in SD 49.2).

301

302

303 **CONCLUSIONS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

304

305 **"The love revealed in Christ's life of self-denial and self-sacrifice**
 306 **[must] be seen in the lives of His followers.** We are called ...to walk
 307 even as He walked [1 John 2:6). It is our privilege to stand with
 308 the light of heaven upon us [**for resistance of truth leaves men**
 309 **captive to the will of Satan (The Paulson Collection, {PC} 3.4,** which
 310 ends in baleful consequences (Proverbs 1:30-32, NIV). In contrast,
 311 by yielding to truth, we walk with God as] "...Enoch walked with God.
 312 It was no easier for Enoch to live a righteous life than it is for us
 313 at the present time. **The world in his time was no more favorable to**
 314 **growth in grace and holiness than it is now...** We are living in the
 315 perils of the last days and we must receive our strength from the
 316 same source" (Mind, Character and Personality, Vol. 1 {1MCP} 245.1).

317

318 **"Love is an active principle.** It keeps the good of others
 319 continually before us; thus restraining us from inconsiderate actions
 320 lest we fail of our object in winning souls to Christ. Love seeks
 321 not its own (1 Corinthians 13:5). It will not prompt [people] to
 322 seek their own ease and indulgence of self" (1MCP 240.3). **"Talk,**
 323 **Pharisaism and self-praise are abundant; but these will never win**
 324 **souls to Christ"** (1MCP 242.1). Love vaunted not itself. It is a

325 humble element; it never prompts a man to boast or to exalt himself.
 326 Love for God and for our fellowmen will **NOT** be revealed in acts of
 327 rashness or lead us to be overbearing, faultfinding or dictatorial.
 328 Love is not puffed up" (read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). **The heart where**
 329 **love reigns will be guided to a gentle, courteous, compassionate**
 330 **course of conduct toward others, whether they suit our fancy or not,**
 331 **whether they respect us or treat us ill**" (1MCP 241.1). "As
 332 Christians approach the Christlike model and become pure in spirit
 333 and action..., opposition of the children of disobedience is excited by
 334 a Christianity that is spiritual" (1MCP 244.1), fulfilling the
 335 promise—"...All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer
 336 persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). But do not be discouraged; the wrath
 337 of God will fall on the children of disobedience (Ephesians 5:6 &
 338 Colossians 3:6) but meanwhile, love your enemies (Matthew 5:44 or
 339 Luke 6:35).

340
 341 **Whoever abides in Christ will reveal love** (read 1 John 4:16). **Love**
 342 **is a heavenly attribute. The natural heart cannot originate it.**
 343 This heavenly plant only flourishes where Christ reigns supreme.
 344 ...Those that have love bear fruit unto holiness and in the end
 345 everlasting life (SD 49.4). "If a man says, 'I love God' and hates
 346 his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he
 347 has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20)?
 348 "No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells
 349 in us and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). "...Everyone
 350 that loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7). Therefore,
 351 "Let your love be without dissimulation (Romans 12:9); "...Provide
 352 things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17), "That you
 353 might be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in
 354 the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as
 355 lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). And what do these lofty
 356 sounding Scriptures mean on a practical level? "Christ dwelling in
 357 the heart will be manifested by the love which He enjoins upon His

358 disciples. His true children will prefer others to themselves.
 359 ...When this is indeed the case, the sign will be given in a revelation
 360 of the love which Christ manifested for the souls of men--an
 361 unselfish, unfeigned love, which preferred the welfare of others
 362 before His own" (1MCP 241.2).

363
 364 "...Love [must] abound... more and more in knowledge and in all
 365 judgment" (Philippians 1:9). By this means only we can "...Approve
 366 things that are excellent, that [we] may be sincere and without
 367 offence until the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10). **"God would have
 368 His children realize that in order to glorify Him, their affection
 369 must be given to those who most need it....** No selfishness in look,
 370 word, or deed is to be manifested when dealing with those of like
 371 precious faith ...whether they [are] high or low, rich or poor. **The
 372 love that gives kind words to only a few, while others are treated
 373 with coldness and indifference is not love but selfishness.** ...Our
 374 love is not to be sealed up for special [people], to the neglect of
 375 others" (1MCP 241.4). "The plowshare of truth must plow deep furrows
 376 in our proud hearts and tear up the sod of our unsanctified natures,
 377 that the Spirit and love of Jesus may be planted in our hearts. Time
 378 is fast hastening on and every [person's] work will soon be brought
 379 into judgment. Either our sins or our names will be blotted out of
 380 the Book of Life (Revelation 13:8 & 1 Timothy 5:24 in SD 49.3).

381

382 **CALL TO ACTION: WHAT SHALL WE DO!**

383

384 **Establish a living connection with God to emulate and exemplify His**
 385 **love to one another.** "...The love of God is shed abroad in our
 386 hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5); not
 387 only love, but also joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,
 388 faith, meekness and temperance. These graces abound in the mind
 389 occupied by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Therefore, unless
 390 we live in and walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) we will only talk

391 about love, but never show it. Continue to attend discussion forums
392 and lectures on love. You will feel more knowledgeable when you
393 leave educational or church forums that discuss love, but unless God
394 imparts His love in your heart, then and only then will it flow out
395 in doing **NO** ill to neighbors; thereby fulfilling the law of God
396 (Romans 13:10).

397
398 **"...Love [not] in word... but in deed and truth"** (1 John 3:18). How do
399 we do that? Live in the love of God by the new birth through water,
400 the Holy Spirit and obedience to the Word of God. Read it for
401 yourself in John 3:5-7; Acts 2:38; 1 John 2:5 and Romans 5:5. Then
402 being born of God, we can "...Walk in love..." (Ephesians 5:2) and go on
403 to love one another (1 John 4:7) in sincerity by hating what is evil
404 and clinging to what is good (Romans 12:9 NIV). Then and only then
405 will love work no ill [toward one's] neighbor (Romans 13:10).

406
407 **Disperse the love of God outside your inner-circle!** "If you love
408 those who love you, what reward will you get... (Matthew 5:46 NIV)?
409 Therefore, Christ says, "...Love your enemies, bless them that curse
410 you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them [that]
411 despitefully use... and persecute you that [you] may be the children of
412 your Father... in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45). God is calling us up to
413 the gold standard of love, which is: "...Love one another as I have
414 loved you..." (John 13:34 or 15:12). This reference to us is a
415 reminder that we who are formed in iniquity and conceived in sin
416 (Psalms 51:5), whose natural minds are against God and not subject to
417 His law (Romans 8:7) are the recipients of the unmerited love of God.
418 Since we have freely received God's love; therefore, let us freely
419 dispense it (Matthew 10:8 & 1 Corinthians 2:12). Do not miss
420 opportunities to help those who dislike you (Romans 12:20) because we
421 were created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10).
422

423 **Love even when it is sometimes challenging to do so.** Loving within
424 specific contexts can be burdensome at times. Examine Christ's
425 statement to married people. Husbands love your wives **just as Christ loved**
426 **the church...** (Ephesians 5:25). Christ could have ended the thought with
427 a simple sentence that read, "Husbands, love your wives." The full
428 import of the more complex statement is grasped when one examines the
429 behavior of the church, which Old Testament Scriptures like Hosea 1:2
430 to 2:23 can illuminate. When circumstances challenge our exercise of
431 voluntarily love, remember the promise: "Give and it shall be given
432 unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running
433 over shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that
434 [you give out] it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:38).

435
436 **Love because you are loved!** "...God commended His love toward us..
437 while we were yet sinners..." (Romans 5:8). "...God was in Christ
438 reconciling the world unto [Him], not imputing their trespasses unto
439 them..." (2 Corinthians 5:19). Therefore, we who are the undeserving
440 recipients of God unfailling and marvelous love can share His love
441 with ALL who are around us without regard to creed, race, gender,
442 ethnicity, geographic origin, sexual orientation or any other socio-
443 demographic categorization defined by the U.S. Office of Management
444 and Budget. God demonstrated His love toward us and created us in
445 Christ Jesus unto good works (Ephesians 2:10), then let us who claim
446 to know God, who are recipients of His Holy Spirit love all people
447 even as God loves us.