



loving people

transformation through truth

Loving people

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Lord, help me to love

Introduction

No matter how long you may live, you'll never stop learning. Every minute of every day brings new opportunities to learn something we've never known before. As long as we're open to receive, God will continue to teach us every day. We're all still learning. What God teaches us every day about love continues to change our lives. It is great when we can come to the place where we say, "Lord, eliminate everything in my life that's holding me back. Please take away anything that's keeping me from walking in love and finding true fulfilment in my life. Bring me to a state or condition of walking in love completely."

"Self" is the enemy of love

One of the most important facets you can learn about love, is unselfishness, which is characterised in the Bible as a willingness to sacrifice one's own wishes for those of others. True love will always adapt and adjust to the needs and desires of other people. It's impossible for people who've truly been immersed in love to be selfish. God has taught them how to be totally adaptable and adjustable to others. Selfish people, on the other hand, have hard hearts. It's very difficult for them to learn anything. Especially, if it involves self-sacrifice. They expect everyone else to adjust to them and their needs. They simply don't know how to adjust to others without becoming angry or upset.

Learning to adapt and adjust to the needs and desires of others can be difficult. To be honest, sometimes we want it our way and we get upset when we don't get it. Some people can't stand having to wait on someone else or bending their own wishes to accommodate someone else's timetable. But God can begin to soften hearts, and they can gradually learn to see the needs of others. God can give them compassion and a heartfelt desire to meet the needs of others first before their own.

Start by making a decision

The key is to simply start somewhere. Slowly, become committed to walking in love. Learn to adapt your own needs and desires in order to help meet the needs of others. Learn how to show love in different ways to different people. Not all people need the same thing from us. One of our children, for example, may need more of our personal time than the others. One of our friends may need more encouragement on a regular basis than another.

Don't give up. Ever!

If you ever get weary of always trying to be available to meet the needs of others, remind yourself of all the years you lived in selfishness and how unhappy you were. We all feel overwhelmed from time to time. But remind yourself that God gives you grace for whatever He places in your life, and you're fortunate to be loved and needed by many.

Now you're just making up for lost time, you may think. When you think on this, then adjust your attitude. After all, just telling people "I love you" is not enough. You need to go beyond the words and actually do something to help meet their needs. It may be a little hard in the beginning, but you'll see that it's all worth it in the end.

Once you've been immersed in love, you'll have no trouble establishing and maintaining good, healthy relationships with others. Your primary goal in life will be to put the wishes of others before your own. You'll learn that true love is all about sacrifice and selfishness will be a thing of the past.

What does it mean to be immersed in love?

The love of God is a free gift that we need to accept. You are being offered the gift but it is up to you to accept it and open it. This is easier said than done. Many times we know it in our minds but not in our hearts.

Let's see how Jesus gave unconditional love...

*But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God?" he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."
Luke 23: 40-43*

This man was being crucified next to Jesus and realised that Jesus was the Messiah. Now God had already gifted the man with love but it was only at that moment that he accepted it and opened the gift. That man hanging next to Jesus was a criminal who had committed all the crimes he was being punished for, but Jesus gave him love anyway. He assured him that they would be together in paradise.

Love is a free gift

It doesn't take any effort to accept a gift, does it? We just have to be willing to do it. A gift is something freely given. Strive to be like the man who was hanging on the cross next to Jesus and accept the gift of God's love. Let Jesus into your heart and follow him. Accepting his gift is the first step in learning to love like Jesus Christ. The second step can be a bit tricky.

Sharing God's love with others

*"The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself."
Galatians 5: 14.*

So, if that is the law then who is your neighbor? Everyone. This is very difficult because not everyone lives by this law. When we love our neighbor we are honoring God. When someone is mean to you, then walk away or give them a word of encouragement. Do not strike back and be rude back to them. This one is the one I struggle with the most because I just want to tell people where to stick it when they are rude to me and I can feel my blood pressure rising. When you think about it though, it really wouldn't do any good. What is getting into an argument with them going to accomplish? If someone is heated up then the best way to love them is to stay positive and give them the space they need to cool off. Once they've cooled down, then you can talk to them. Another thing you can do is pray for them.

True love overflows out of you

Sharing God's love is not only giving people space when they are angry but to show the community you live in, that you care. If you have the financial ability to do so, then you could donate to a local charity or to your local church. Tell a friend or co-worker that they look nice. If you see someone looking down on themselves whilst you are out at a restaurant, you could tell the waiter that you will pay for that particular person's meal. You could slip them a note that says "God Loves You." There are so many ways to show people the love of God and shine His light. I suggest making a list of different things that you could do and each week tick a couple of ideas off your list.

Conclusion

There you have it. Accept God's love and share God's love. You cannot have one without the other. If you have not accepted God's love, then how can you share it? You can't share something you don't have and you can't have it, unless you accept the free gift. God is waving it in front of you, so just reach out and take it. Like a child at Christmas, rip that gift open and accept it with all the joy within you. You will be so full of love that you will need to spread it into all areas of your life.

Follow the way of love – 1 Corinthians 13

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, 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. (1 Cor 13:4-8).

Love is the first fruit of the Spirit because it's the key to all the rest. If you do not love, you'll never be joyful, peaceful and patient. It's useless saying, "Lord, make me a kinder person," if you're unloving. Love others and you'll always be kind to them. Follow the way of love and the other fruit will be added too. Paul explains the qualities of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

It's patient, kind and not envious. When people treat us badly, we naturally want to lash out at them. 'I'm really hurt,' we think. 'He/she can't get away with that.' But love doesn't seek revenge and gnash its teeth enviously at the wicked. It holds back and expresses kindness even when that kindness is undeserved.

It doesn't boast, and isn't proud, rude or self-seeking. Sometimes we may be in a senior position to others. It's tempting, then, to think, 'They should look up to me' and to start ordering them around. But love doesn't act arrogantly or selfishly. It's humble and has the interests of others at heart.

It isn't easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs. On occasions, someone in a senior position may be getting the credit for what we're doing. 'It's totally unfair,' we think and feel very angry. Although love recognises injustice, it refuses to be provoked. So instead of gathering ammunition against an individual, it repeatedly overlooks personal offence.

It doesn't delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. When we see someone doing something 'wrong' we're often quick to judge him. 'How terrible,' we think, and then talk about his sin. But love doesn't condemn; it tries hard to interpret the action in a more positive way. It enjoys focusing more on good than on evil.

Note: Don't strive to produce this fruit. Listen to what God says and pray that the Spirit will produce the fruit in you naturally.

To do

Read John 15:13. How do you know that Jesus loves you?

.....

If you find it hard to give and receive love, ask God to help you and, if necessary, talk this through with a Christian friend.

To think about

- Love is the mark of being born again. 'By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another' (John 13:35).
- Dear Friends, 'Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God' (1John 4:7).
- 'Love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again through the living and enduring word of God' (1Peter 1:22,23).

To consider

Read Romans 5:6-8. Did Jesus wait until we were loveable before He died for us?

.....

Read Matthew 5:43-48. Does He want us to wait for others to be loveable before we love them?

.....

Pray for someone you find hard to love. Ask God to bless him/her.

"There is no better fuel for service that burns longer and provides more energy than love." (Donald S. Whitney).

Godly attitudes vs. worldly attitudes?

As you begin to walk in a new freedom to love people, it's important to remind yourself that you are not of this world (Romans 12), but you belong to Jesus. Here is an excellent scripture to help you to think the right thoughts and to have the right attitude.

Phil 4:7-8 - "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is

1. **true**, whatever is
2. **noble**, whatever is
3. **right**, whatever is

4. **pure**, whatever is
5. **lovely**, whatever is
6. **admirable**, if anything is
7. **excellent** or
8. **praiseworthy**, think about such things.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR ALL OF THE COMPARISONS BELOW ARE FOUND IN THE BIBLE:

Below/earthly thinking

Be first.

Get even and hold a grudge.

Seeing is believing.

Love equals sex.

Check your stars.

Jesus Christ was a good man.

Live for the now, eat, drink and be merry.

Live by feelings

Facts are final.

Live for yourself

No absolutes

Tolerance towards

White lies are okay

If nobody sees or knows, it is alright.

Small sins are all right because we are human.

Hell is on earth or non-existent.

Focuses on self, pleasures and comfort.

Sees money, power and position as all important.

vs. Above/godly thinking

Be last.

Forgive and forget.

Believe and then you will see.

Love equals commitment.

Search the scriptures.

Jesus Christ is Lord.

Live for now in the light of eternity.

Live by faith.

Truth is greater than facts.

Living for Jesus and others.

Bible is our guide with absolutes.

Godly acceptance of people, not sin.

All shades of lies are wrong.

God sees and knows all.

We must flee from all sin.

Hell is eternal separation from God.

Focuses on Christ, cost and commitment.

Sees serving God as all important.

Strives for man's acceptance and approval.

Devil is not real or only imaginary.

Good works are enough to get me to heaven.

All roads lead to God / heaven.

Man worships self and creation.

Self-confidence.

Self-image is most important.

Be served.

Store and hoard for self.

External more important than internal.

Find your life.

Seeks God's acceptance and approval

Devil is a real, invisible person.

By faith not works are we saved.

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth..."

We worship the Creator.

God-confidence.

Reflecting God's image.

Serving others.

Sow and give for eternal riches.

Internal is more important.

Lose your life and you will find it.

SCRIPTURES TO HELP YOU TO LOVE THOSE WHO HAVE HURT YOU – FORGIVENESS

Matthew 6:14-15 ESV - For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father and whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Matthew 18:15 ESV - "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

Psalms 34:17-20 ESV - When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.

1 John 1:9 ESV - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

James 4:12 ESV - There is only one law giver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbour?

1 John 2:11 ESV - But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Colossians 3:15 ESV - And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

John 14:6 ESV - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Colossians 3:12-15 ESV - Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

2 Corinthians 2:7-11 ESV - So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

2 John 1:9-11 ESV - Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

John 14:27 ESV - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Luke 6:27 ESV - But I say to you who hear, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

James 1:25 ESV - But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

2 Timothy 3:16 ESV - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Colossians 2:8 ESV - See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Ephesians 4:26-27 ESV - Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

1 Corinthians 13:1- 7 ESV - If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.

Matthew 18:21-22 ESV - Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."

Proverbs 19:11 ESV - Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

Revelation 22:19 ESV - And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV - But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Romans 12:2 ESV - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Loving saints

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour. Romans 12:9-10

Cultivating a love for God and saints

The Bible is God's love story of redemption to us, His fallen creation. In life, His love is what holds us together. There can be no greater joy, on this side of eternity, than to love God, be loved by Him, and to love others and be loved by them. Money, riches, wealth or fleshly pleasures cannot buy the love that is found in a relationship with God and others. Of course, the love of God is greater than all other love. His love makes our love for one another possible. Like in a plug, God is always the third prong in the plug as you love somebody else. He earths everything.

Paul, the great apostle said...

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. Romans 5:6-7

Jesus did NOT die for the righteous, or the holy, or the pure, or the clean, but demonstrated His love for us, dying for us, while we were sinners.

How do we love people?

A relationship with God is the beginning of love. As in a cross, this is a vertical relationship. We then get to know Him as a loving Father who understands His children.

John the apostle said...

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 1 John 3:1

Paul the apostle said...

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2

Paul the apostle said ...

If we see God as our Father, it should compel us to:

1. Love Him with all our body, mind and soul and
2. Love and obey His commands. Our horizontal relationship (as in a cross) which is the relationship with each other is an overflow of our love for God. The depth of our love will filter into your love for His people..

There are two things that will sustain your walk as a Christian from sin:

1. A deep, undying intimate love for God.
2. A sacrificial, deep love for people.

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
Matthew 22:37-40

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and rose again.
2 Corinthians 5:14-15

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. James 2:8-9

Love must be the foundation and root of everything we do

Paul said...

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. Ephesians 4:14-17

Paul the apostle had a real grasp and understanding that everything we do and say must be rooted and established in love. He even goes as far as to say that we are to "know this love that surpasses knowledge." He writes to the Corinthians, when dealing with food sacrificed to idols.

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God (1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

How does love look and act towards others?

Love is prepared to talk straight, to say it as it is and be sincere.

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell.

He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! (Mark 10:21-24).

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Romans 12:9

- Love must be sincere.
- Love hates what is evil and clings to what is good.
- Love is devoted to one another.
- Love honours others above yourself.
- Love is joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer.
- Love shares with God's people who are in need.
- Love practises hospitality.
- Love blesses those who persecute you.
- Love rejoices with those who rejoice and mourns with those who mourn.
- Love is never proud.
- Love is always willing to associate with people of lowly position.
- Love does not repay evil with evil.
- Love does not take revenge.
- Love feeds the hungry.
- Love gives the enemy something to drink.
- Love overcomes evil with good.

How do we express love to others?

Love is a doing word, not just an emotion. Therefore we "do" love. Let's think about the following:

- When we rebuke and confront a person, we speak sincerely, but it must be done in love, as a response, not a reaction...

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2

- Love always (not sometimes, or maybe, but always) forgives.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 4:14-15

- Love always exhorts and encourages.

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:13

- Love covers other people's sins and doesn't expose them, embarrassing people.

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

- Love sees beyond 'the cover of the book' and reaches deep down inside to reveal the heart of the pages.
- Love never rejects those in darkness but reaches out into darkness and pulls them out, revealing the light.
- Love reaches out to:
 - ◆ The prostitute who needs to sell her body at night to feed her children and make a living.
 - ◆ The girl/woman who was raped by her father while growing up and feels worthless.
 - ◆ The drunkard at a bar, who tries to drown his sorrows every night because he grew up with a father who beat him and told him he would amount to nothing.
 - ◆ The drug addicts who pump themselves full of drugs every day. They are in so much pain that they need a fix, but are actually killing themselves every time they get one.
 - ◆ Love sees the widow and the orphan and helps to meet their needs in their time of distress.
 - ◆ Love sees the single mom and her children, then draws them into family.
 - ◆ Love sees the divorcee battling with her children and helps with meals, the lawn, building maintenance, shopping, etc.
 - ◆ Love is prepared to sacrifice time and money, helping others when it's inconvenient.
 - ◆ Love never takes advantage of others.
 - ◆ Love, in relationships, is never lustful, but pure and clean and treats people of the opposite sex with great respect.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. 1 Thes 4:3-8

- Love notices the missing people, when they are not there.
- Love for others is always an action – a greeting, a shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen, a hug when needed, a call or SMS to encourage, a pat on the back to say 'well done.'
- Love sees the world dying in their sin and reaches out to redeem, restore and release them in a new found freedom in Christ.

"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." Matthew 21:31

- Christ's love compels us to love.

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:11-15

A story about love

There was a blind girl who hated herself because she was blind. She hated everyone, except her loving boyfriend. He was always there for her. She told her boyfriend, 'If I could only see the world, I will marry you.' One day, someone donated a pair of eyes to her. When the bandages came off, she was able to see everything, including her boyfriend.

He asked her: "Now that you can see the world, will you marry me?" The girl looked at her boyfriend and saw that he was blind. The sight of his closed eyelids shocked her. She hadn't expected that. The thought of looking at them the rest of her life led her to refuse to marry him. Her boyfriend left her in tears and days later wrote a note to her saying: 'Take good care of your eyes, my dear; for before they were yours, they were mine.'

Tough love like Jesus

Introduction

One of the things that you may hear quite a bit is "I'm not loving like Jesus." Jesus was loving and understanding towards sinners, while still uncompromisingly telling people the truth about their hearts, their lives and their sin. When you and I operate in this same 'Jesus-style,' people may accuse you of failing to be like Jesus. Let's address these allegations against myself and others like me who stand uncompromisingly against the sin, evils and wickedness of our time. Let's look at some Biblical FACTS about the Lord Jesus Christ, certain facts about Him that you've probably never heard before (or have heard, but never wanted to accept). The FACT is that Jesus was NOT always the loving pacifist that so many heathens and immature believers would like to make Him out to be.

Jesus did get angry, sometimes even violent!

The FACT is that Jesus did get angry sometimes, so angry that He actually fabricated a whip of cords, went into the temple, and drove people out. Jesus started flipping their tables over, and hurling everything onto the temple floor. People were fleeing the temple for fear. They probably said, "This guy has gone crazy...we're out of here!" Jesus let their doves go free (costing them a financial loss). He threw their money all over the floor...

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. John 2:15

Can you imagine this? Is this our precious Saviour acting like a mad man? Maybe. Jesus was angry but consumed by zeal. What do you think would happen to someone who did today exactly what Jesus did back then in the temple? The person would immediately be arrested and charged with creating a public disturbance, assault with a deadly weapon, trespassing, vandalism, etc. The judge would force the person into mandatory psychiatric counselling. If an undercover police officer were present at the time of the violent incident, the person would probably have been killed on the spot. So yes, Jesus was more loving than any person who ever lived, but He also hated sin like no other...

"You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." Hebrews 1:9

Jesus never lived in fear of man, He never sacrificed the truth for popularity or to draw larger crowds. Jesus hated sin and preached against it, unashamedly, with love.

Jesus wasn't hesitant to offend people with the truth!

JESUS REMINDS A WOMAN ABOUT HER ADULTEROUS AFFAIRS

People may have accused you of being unloving, failing to be like Jesus, as you've pointed out people's sinful ways. Why? Because of your direct approach? Was Jesus direct? Yes. In John chapter four we read about the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well. In John 4:18, Jesus tells her that she is an adulteress. Wow! Can you imagine meeting someone for the first time and they bring up your adulterous relationships? Fortunately most of the Christian relationships that we have are within the church, with people whom we know. Take heart.

JESUS HURTS SOMEONE'S FEELINGS

Did you ever read that passage of Scripture where Jesus made someone sorrowful?

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Matthew 19:21-22

The truth needed to be spoken! Jesus didn't beat-around-the-bush or 'walk on eggshells.' No, Jesus said what needed to be said. After all He was called to bring a message of salvation. With it comes the responsibility of telling people what they need be saved from. He said it like it is. So should we.

JESUS CALLS A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE "EVIL" SNAKES

It was not uncommon for Jesus to speak harsh words to those whom He felt needed to hear them.

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Matthew 12:34

Wow! Jesus called those religious people "evil." Doesn't sound like a very nice thing to do! The diversity committee wouldn't have liked Jesus' outbursts of contempt and hate speech very much would they? Jesus would have been very unpopular in today's apostate world. Jesus even called them "vipers" (deadly snakes). He was never moved by hierarchy, social status or people in authority. No, He was on a mission to extend an open invitation to sinners, for repentance. However, to hypocrites, He was totally unmerciful.

JESUS CALLS ONE OF HIS OWN DISCIPLES "SATAN"

Jesus didn't discriminate, but He evidently seemed to oppose everyone, even His own disciples. He was in a war against flesh – man's own ideals, without acknowledging help from God. Listen to what Jesus said to the Apostle Peter when Peter showed concern for Christ's well-being...

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Matthew 16:23

Peter was only trying to be a friend. Peter couldn't have been anymore sincere. You'd think Jesus would have been a little more understanding with those closest to Him, especially His disciples. Rather, Jesus called Peter "Satan." Wow! In today's media Jesus would have been accused of hate speech.

JESUS ACCUSES ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES OF BEING "A DEVIL"

Jesus, while at the dinner table with His disciples, called one of them a "devil"...

Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" John 6:70

Jesus' didn't seem to regard His own family either...

Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Matthew 12:47-48

Jesus sure had a different side to Him that most people don't see (and/or don't want to see).

JESUS TAUGHT THAT MANY PEOPLE WILL ONE DAY BURN IN HELL

Everyone likes to think about the "God loves you" Jesus, but no one wants to think about the "You're going to burn in hell" kind of Jesus. Well, here He is saying just that...

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25:41"

Can it be? Is Jesus, the Loving Saviour, actually saying that people will one day burn in the torments of an everlasting fire? Yes, that is exactly true.

JESUS SAID, DO IT MY WAY, MY WAY OR NO WAY!

"Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me." John 14:6

This doesn't sound very inviting, does it? Do it my way or burn in hell! In fact, Jesus was extremely adamant that there is ONLY ONE WAY TO HEAVEN...

Simply put, it's Jesus or hell. Many people are on the wrong path. Hell will be filled with religious people who mocked and scorned the precious name of Jesus Christ, while idolising the mythical Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary didn't remain a virgin folks; she married and had children (Jesus had brothers). The Catholic Mary is a great illusion, a satanic deception. To you my friend, truth is INTOLERANT...it cannot be compromised. If some liar wants to teach people deception and lies, it still doesn't change the truth. If some people are gullible enough to believe the lie, that is their misfortune; but the truth hasn't changed one bit.

Jesus was called the rock of offence. This is because He came to bring the truth and to shine light into dark places. It is our job now to allow Christ to do that through us but we must take care: Jesus is the rock of offence, not us!!

The truth of the matter

You might be wondering about Jesus' character. Well, Jesus was justified in everything He ever said or did while upon the earth. According to God's Word, Jesus never sinned once (2nd Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 4:15). There was a spiritual truth, a heavenly reason, a greater purpose, behind every seemingly unkind thing Jesus ever did or said. Likewise, the truth will offend many people, even appearing as "hateful" or "selfish" from a quick glance. The truth is that there is so much love when you share the truth with someone, that no one apart from God Himself can possibly know your heart. I love people, but I equally love God. You must love the truth of God's Word.

The problem with so many people is that they love people and things, but not God. We are living in a wicked world that speaks and sings of love, while simultaneously sacrificing God and His Word on the altar of sinful compromise. The wicked world wants to achieve unity between the righteous and the wicked, but there can be NO unity. Why? Because God's holiness cannot be compromised...God never changes (Malachi 3:6). The same God that hated homosexuality back in the Old Testament hates the same abominable sin today. Christ-honouring Christians will never stop preaching against the vile sin of homosexuality (or any other sin for that matter). Why? Simply because God never changes.

Jesus expressed His love at times in unconventional manners that made people angry or frustrated at Him. John the Baptist was the greatest man born amongst women the Bible declares (Mathew 11:11). No doubt, Jesus loved John dearly. Yet, John didn't understand why he was rotting in a prison while God incarnate was walking the earth. John had done his very best to prepare the people for the Lord's coming, now he's on death row locked up behind bars. John became discouraged and even questioned Christ's legitimacy...

He sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Luke 7:19

Did Jesus even abandon His friends in time of need? We don't understand the spiritual significance of what was done, but God knows the reasons. We must maintain a complete Biblical perspective of the Saviour. It is a dangerous thing to hold to a lopsided view of the Saviour. Jesus loves people so much that He died upon the cross for all of us (John 3:16). Yet, Jesus shelled the corn (preached hard) and spoke the truth when it needed to be spoken. Jesus was no wimp, no spineless coward; no compromiser...Jesus was a man's man, the Son of God, God incarnate. Jesus cared for others and loved His family and friends. However, love cannot supercede truth. True love occurs within the framework of truth. If love is not based upon truth, then it is not God's love.

Some think that Jesus never spoke a harsh word or never criticised someone else's religion... sorry, but you are very wrong! Jesus was quite outspoken and didn't worry about offending people. Jesus was much rather willing for people to be divided over truth, than to be united by error. Perhaps we need to teach Christians to read the New Testament thoroughly. In so doing, we will discover that the loving Saviour at times flipped over tables, threw people's things on the floor, assaulted them with a whip, and then drove them out of the building. Jesus told some people that they would one day be weeping and gnashing their teeth, after being cast into outer darkness (Matthew 8:12). Jesus was no respecter of persons and spoke the plain truth without apology. That's what you call "tough love." Let's follow in the Saviour's footsteps by doing the same.

Of course we need to remember that we are not "all-knowing" as Jesus was, neither is any of us sinless as He was and this should temper our approach. Likewise Jesus was always aiming to be redemptive - to restore people to right relationship with the Father - and that should be our motivation as well. Yet we cannot have love without truth. As a wise man once said, "truth without love is brutality; love without truth is sentimentality".

THE 'ONE ANOTHERS'

Leviticus 25:14 - If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other.

Leviticus 25:17 - Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

1 Samuel 20:41 - After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together - but David wept the most.

John 13:34 - A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 15:12 - My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:17 - This is my command: Love each other.

Romans 2:15 - Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even are defending them.

Romans 12:10 - Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.

Romans 13:8 - Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

Romans 14:13 - Therefore let us stop passing judgement on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Romans 15:7 - Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:14 - I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

Romans 16:16 - Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

1 Corinthians 16:20 - All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

2 Corinthians 13:12 - Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Galations 5:13 - You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Galations 5:15 - If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Galations 5:26 - Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Ephesians 4:2 - Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Colossians 3:13 - Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 - Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Titus 3:3 - At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Hewbrews 3:13 - But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hewbrews 10:24 - And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hewbrews 10:25 - Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Peter 1:22 - Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 Peter 5:14 - Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

1 John 3:11 - This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

1 John 3:23 - And this is His command: to believe in the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us.

1 John 4:7 - Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:11 - Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:12 - No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God loves us in us and his love is made complete in us.

2 John 1:5 - And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another.

Loving sinners

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

"The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Galatians 5:14

God loves all people

God loves people. One of the hardest things in the world to do is to love unloving people. It is not only possible; it is also commanded by God. We are commanded in the Bible to "love thy neighbour as thyself." God never tells us to do something impossible. If God tells us to do something, it is possible to do. God expects us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves...

"Love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD." Leviticus 19:18

Jesus died for all people. Not just some. There are many different types of personalities in this world and we must learn to let people be people. Everybody is unique. I have met some strange people in my life. I've found them all to be unique people with unique burdens and a need for someone to care about them. People are starving for love. Often, seemingly mean people are nothing more than misunderstood people. They just can't seem to "fit in." It is important that we don't judge people based upon what we think life should be. I am not saying we should compromise our standards or beliefs. I am saying that we need to try to be understanding with people.

What is love?

What is love? Plain and simple, love is treating people the way God wants us to treat them. The world sings and talks about "love," but they have no concept of true love. True love is based on things that do not change. A person's appearance may change, but that will not affect our love for them if it is God's love. If we say we love God, but love not people; then we are liars. We are to love God and to love our fellow man.

The challenge of loving sinners

Some people are hard hearted, or at least seem to be. We just don't know what God may be doing in their heart (1 Samuel 16:7). The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. Our job is to express God's love to people by respecting them and sharing the Word of God with them. Sometimes, love means not sharing the Word of God with them. I worked with a man who didn't like what he termed "Bible-thumpers." I never preached to him and said nothing about the Bible. I did however, place a few small Scriptures discreetly inside my toolbox (but visible to anyone looking at my toolbox). He never heard me take God's name in vain. He saw me look away when the other men flashed pornography in my face. He knew that I placed gospel tracts around the building from time to time. One day he came to me and to my surprise said, "You know what I like about you? You never try to force religion on me. You aren't like those other Bible-thumpers who always talk about religion." Now the other man I mentioned, Moreno...we can talk about the Bible all day.

People are different. I try to let people be people. Arguing with people will only shed more heat than light. As the saying goes, you catch more bears with honey. I do not argue religion with anyone, unless I am challenged in the presence of others; in which case I will use it as an opportunity to witness to the crowd without them even knowing it. People do listen. The most important thing I've learned about witnessing to people is RESPECT. If you care about people and show them the utmost respect, they WILL listen to you at some point. I work with a man who loves to cut out newspaper articles for other people. Anytime he reads an article that he thinks might be of interest to someone, he cuts out the article and brings it to them. That says a lot about him. He's a Catholic without the Lord, but he has as many friends as anyone else in the building. He cares about people, and they listen to him. We need to look for similar opportunities to do good to people because it turns their heart towards us, and hopefully at some point we'll be able to turn their heart towards God. This is what Proverb 11:30 means when it says "...he who wins souls is wise." We must win their hearts before we can win their minds.

Everyone likes a pat on the back. I've turned enemies into friends just by saying one kind word about them in the presence of another person. This is love. We must have mature minds about things like this. Many people have small minds and can't think beyond people's words and criticisms. As believers, we need to grow up and think "bigger." We need to look for root causes in people instead of reacting to their surface feelings.

God loves people and so must we. What will this all matter 10,000 years from now? Or even 100 years from now? Life will be over before we know it. Let's spend our days wisely looking beyond people's anger and maliciousness, and see the evil spiritual forces at work. Our battle is not against people, it is against the devil (and that battle is the Lord's). By loving others, we are doing something that Satan is incapable of doing...loving. No wonder the Bible says, **"Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (John 4:4). For God is love!**

Jesus: our example

Jesus was, and still is, and always will be, the most influential person ever to walk on our planet. What made Him so effective? Why was His life and ministry so powerful and still changes millions of people's lives today? It was because He was a friend of sinners. Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. He was often mocked for eating with sinners and tax collectors and called a wine-bibber. Jesus had the ability to see straight through into a person's heart and discern exactly what was going on.

JESUS USED DIFFERENT STRATEGIES TO REACH OUT AND LOVE PEOPLE

- He was often mocked for eating with sinners and tax collectors. He showed mercy, not judgement.
- He could relate to all people; the poor, rich, sick, needy.
- He set a high standard of living, yet people forsook all to follow Him.
- Jesus had the ability to see straight through to a person's heart and discern exactly what was going on.
- He could use different draw-cards (bait) to bring the message of salvation.
- READ Luke 19:1 Jesus ate at Zaccheus' house and then he ends up repenting and following Him.
- Jesus used the fishing industry to penetrate an 'oikos' in Simon, Andrew, James and John.
- Jesus used healing to win them to salvation.
- Jesus met people's needs, like the feeding of the 5 000, and gained their favour and confidence. (Mark 6:41).

- Jesus spoke into people's lives – woman at the well. (John 4).
- Jesus could associate with the lowly and poor.

Everything we are doing is part of reaching people with love. ALL of it! This is why we exist. Paul 'became' all things to all men to win some.

Note: The Bible determines our message but our target determines when, how and where we communicate it.

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF, WHEN REACHING OUT

- What is my culture like?
- What kind of people do I want to reach?
- What do people like doing here?
- How open are people to the gospel?
- What are the needs in my community?
- To whom do I relate?

Mary's birthday – love

by Tony Capola

Tony Capola tells of a true story of how a group of simple people reached out to some of the hardest sinners in their community. A certain group of believers were reaching out in the streets when they decided to have a quick coffee at a diner. As they drank their coffee they overhear the diner owner talking to some prostitutes who had also popped in for a quick coffee. He heard them speaking about Mary's birthday the next day, not expecting much. They then left the diner. After their coffee, they spoke to the diner owner asking if they can arrange a surprise birthday party for Mary. He agreed. So they planned a surprise birthday party for Mary and organised everything for the next evening. Around midnight they were all ready. Mary walked into her surprise birthday party, to the sound of people who whistled, cheered and wished her well. Well, Mary was floored and amazed at this expression of love, this from people she did not know! Mary and her friends ended up being saved. It gets better. The dinner owner said to himself "where are you from? What church do you go to? If there is a church like this, that throws a surprise party for a prostitute, I'd go to it."

Loving difficult people

Of course, Jesus has already spoken quite plainly on this subject:

"But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:44-48

John Maxwell said, "Are you aware of the tremendous advantage frogs have over humans? They can eat anything that bugs them! Wouldn't it be great if we could consume our relational problems rather than letting them consume us!" .

Perspective

We must first begin with the right view of the love that Jesus commands. Such love is an act of the will more than an emotional feeling. The love that Jesus commands is an undefeatable good will toward others. Consider the following facts as motivation to love people as Jesus commands:

1. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).
2. God desires all people to repent and be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).
3. Every person you ever encounter is made in God's image (Genesis 1:27).
4. As you encounter people, look into their eyes. You will always see someone who has a soul worth more than the entire world (Matthew 16:26). You will never look into the eyes of someone who doesn't need God in their life.
5. If we can't love others whom we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? (1 John 4:20)
6. Every one of us, probably at some time in our lives has been a difficult person to love. Remember, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Look back on your past and remember the times when you were moody, arrogant, selfish or ornery. Did you appreciate the attempts that people made to treat you with kindness and patience?

Their perspective

"Show me a person who sees himself or herself in a negative light and I will show you a person who sees others in a negative way. When you realise that people treat you according to how they see themselves, rather than how you really are, you are less likely to be affected by their behaviour." This is something important to remember about an enemy or a difficult person. If they don't like you, then probably, they don't like themselves much either. "The key to successful relationships really gets down to responsibility. I am responsible for how I treat others. I may not be responsible for how they treat me; but I am responsible for my reaction to those who are difficult. I can't choose how you'll treat me, but I can choose how I will respond to you."

Proverbs 15:1; Romans 12:18. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." 12:21. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good";

"Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Luke 6:27-28

Difficult personality types

First of all, this is just a sample of what we might call difficult people. What each person needs is a relationship with Jesus Christ, they need to be converted, born again. (John 3:3) The good news is that any one of these people can change, for a good number of faithful Christians used to be in one of these categories. Remember, each one of the following categories is a choice and can be removed just like everything else that is associated with the old man (Colossians 3:9 "since you have laid aside the old self with its evil practices"; 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come").

THE SPACE CADET

This person lives in his or her own world and definitely walks to the beat of a different drummer. Many space cadets are extremely brilliant and creative and often this is part of the problem, they know they are extremely brilliant and at times their weird behaviour is nothing more than a manifestation of pride. Like the Pharisees, the space cadet can fall into the trap of viewing everyone else as inferior (Luke 18:11). The good news is that in the gospel there is exactly what this person needs:

- First, they will be humbled at the fact that before God, we are all inferior, and that the ground at the cross is level (Romans 3:23).
- Secondly, the gospel message forces a person to think logically and reasonably. The gospel is very convicting and will force us to get rid of any "off-the-way theories" (1 Timothy 1:3).
- For someone who loves to think and be creative with their mind, the doctrines in the Bible will provide them with all the mental exercise they can handle (Hebrews 5:12-14).
- Space cadets can be irresponsible, superficial, or loners and the gospel is the answer to each one of these character problems.

THE VOLCANO

The Volcano is an explosive, unpredictable type of person who tends to be unapproachable. Those who have to work or live with this person can never relax; they never know what might set him or her off. The good news is that the gospel has the answer for such a person. Anger is a choice; we know it is a choice because God says that it can be removed (Ephesians 4:26, 31). It isn't a pleasant task trying to help a Volcano, but remember if the Volcano doesn't change, he or she will end up lost (Galatians 5:19-21).

- The gospel message can convict an honest heart of the anger they are harbouring. In light of the fact that we have sinned, what right do we have to be angry about anything that has or hasn't happened to us? (Psalm 103:10). If anyone has the "right" to be angry, it is God!
- Such a person needs to be convicted concerning how his or her anger is really hurting the people they claim to love.
- These people need to be held accountable for the things they say and the people they harm.
- Deal with them in a calm, but strong manner (Proverbs 15:1). Remove them from the crowd and remain calm yourself.
- When listening to their venting, don't allow them to exaggerate, remove any hearsay, pin them down on the details, and bring them back to what God has done for them. Often the Volcano is a person who has completely lost sight of all their blessings.

- Don't buy the excuse that this is an inherent part of who they are, for such a person has used anger, because anger up to this point has enabled them to get what they want. Explosive anger is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20), and like every other work of the flesh, selfishness is behind it.

THE THUMB SUCKER

- Thumb suckers tend to pout, are full of self-pity, and try to get people to cater to their own desires. This pouting is used as leverage to manipulate others. "If things are not going their way, they can create a heavy atmosphere that is as oppressive as a rain cloud. They can do this very cleverly. Often they employ the silent treatment to get what they want."
- Such a person needs to be informed that their moodiness is a choice. People become moody to manipulate people and gain control. They are very seldom moody by themselves.
- Everybody in the world has problems, so this person has no right to place their problems at the head of the line.
- Expose such a person to people who have "real problems" and yet who are living faithfully and cheerfully (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5).
- "It is important to never reward or give attention to moody people. If you give them an opportunity to publicly exhibit their negative attitudes, this gives them a sense of recognition."
- Even people who have "real problems", from God's perspective, do not have a right to become moody or wallow in self-pity (Hebrews 10:32-34; 12:1-15).
- Such a person needs to be made aware of how damaging their moodiness really is. The sad fact concerning all these chosen personalities is that the world often tends to excuse them or, even worse, reward them. The fact of the matter is that self-pity can keep us out of heaven (Numbers 13-14). God in times past has been very stern with people who become a discouraging factor among God's people.
 - ◆ If we are focused on our own problems, how are we going to help others? (Matthew 25:35-40; Galatians 6:1)
 - ◆ The command from God is to "encourage" others, not discourage them (Hebrews 3:13; 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:14).

THE GARBAGE COLLECTOR

"Oh, how they love to rehearse and replay the injuries they have suffered at the hands of other people. They nurse their wounds and hold onto their wounded ill spirits. The fact that there is garbage in life is depressing enough, but to collect it and haul it around town in a dump truck for public viewing is downright sick".

- First, never allow these people to generalise. If they say, "There are many others who feel this way also." Demand names! What you will find is that behind the "big deal" is maybe one or two people.
- Remind them that they have committed sins against God! (Matthew 18:21-35).
- Such a person needs to be reminded that they are not unique. Everyone has been sinned against from time to time, everyone has been wronged, and that their situation is not more important than others.
- If they have been truly sinned against, then such a person needs to be encouraged to practise Matthew 18:15.

- The passage in 1 Corinthians 13:5 is very convicting; "Love does not take into account a wrong suffered."
- Garbage collecting, holding on to all the wrongs you have endured, carrying around all the "trash" that has happened in the church, using it as an excuse not to be faithful or involved, is a manifestation of hate, not love.

THE USER

This is the person who manipulates others for his or her own personal gain. Users avoid responsibility themselves, while demanding time and energy from others to benefit their own situations. They often use guilt to get what they want. They might put up a weak front in order to get people to feel sorry for them.

- First, set predetermined limits on how far you will go to help them (2 Thess. 3:10).
- Require responsibility and accountability from such a person (Galatians 6:5; Philippians 2:12). If they need help, then demand that they do something to help themselves.
- Don't feel obligated to such a person, and don't feel guilty for not helping them.
- Be willing to say no to a request. Remember, the church and world is full of people who really do need assistance!
- Give them what they really need, not what they want. For example, food instead of cash, a lift to a job interview, a Bible class, and so on.

Conclusion

Love people as God loves them, that is, do what is best for their eternal interest and not for their, or your comfort. Ask God for wisdom in dealing with others. Stay emotionally and spiritually healthy yourself. Be honest with God, yourself and others.

Loving sinners, while hating sin

It can be difficult to separate our feelings toward a person's sinful behavior and the person himself. But as Christians, trained by God through His Word, we are commanded to abhor sin while loving the person committing sin.

Of course, we must remember that we have all sinned against God and against man. Remembering this will help us approach others with love and humility.

God hates sin

The Bible tells us that God hates sin. The word "hate" denotes a strong dislike or strong aversion toward a particular thing.

There are some things God specifically says He hates:

"There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers"
Pr. 6:16-19.

"For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously" Mal. 2:16.

Christians hate sin

Christians must have a very strong dislike for sin, so strong that we abhor sin.

In Romans 12:9, Paul says:

"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good."

The word "abhor" means to detest or hate something. As a matter of fact, the Revised Standard and New Revised Standard use the word hate in Rom. 12:9 - Christians are commanded to hate evil.

As God's children, we hate sin because we understand God's Word. In Psalms 119:104, David says, "From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way."

Although we teach our children not to say hate as it's used in the world, maybe we should teach them to use the word Biblically and confess their hatred of sin. Perhaps this would help them grow up hating sin as God commands.

God loves sinners

Thankfully, God loves sinners. If He didn't, none of us could be saved, because we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Paul explains God's love for sinners like this: "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8).

And John tells us of God's love to save us while we were sinners: "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" (Jn. 3:16). "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 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" (1 Jn. 4:9-10).

Christians are to love sinners

A lawyer tested Jesus, asking Him which is the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus told him to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. Then he gave him the second greatest command, saying, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:39).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to be like our Father in heaven by loving sinners - even people who persecute us. He says, "You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:43-45).

Paul, summing up our relationship with other people, commands, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10). As Christians, we love our neighbors. Therefore, we love sinners.

Summary

We must separate our attitude toward sin from our attitude toward people who commit sin. Though we work hard to hate sin, we must work equally hard to love the people who commit the sin we hate. When we do this, we are like our Father who loved us when we were sinners.

Ideas for outreaches – How we love sinners

Below are a number of OUTREACH IDEAS. Please tailor-make it for your situation adjust chop and change as you want.

- 1. Praying for the lost Bible bookmark.** Helps people become aware of praying for the lost.
 - ◆ **Monday:** Ask God to reveal His character to them. (Love, Goodness, Mercy etc.)
 - ◆ **Tuesday:** Ask God to frustrate Satan's plan in their lives and to divinely intervene.
 - ◆ **Wednesday:** Ask God to turn their hearts back to Him.
 - ◆ **Thursday:** Ask God to make the pleasures of this world turn sour on them.
 - ◆ **Friday:** Ask God to show them the absolute reasonableness in serving Him.
 - ◆ **Saturday:** Ask God to bring His Word to them in whatever way He chooses.
 - ◆ **Sunday:** Rejoice in faith believing God has heard and is answering your prayers.
- 2. Marriage/Parenting.** Seminars we run in local schools etc. We are scheduled to present at a primary school for girls.
- 3. Prayer walks.** Drop pamphlets in their letter boxes.
- 4. Friendship evangelism.** Every believer ought to have at least three unsaved friends they are endeavouring to win for Christ even if you have to join a sports club, talk to work colleagues, etc.
- 5. Befriend new people** who move into your town or area.
- 6. Invitation card to meetings** with address, map, phone numbers.
- 7. Check local papers for needs** and then respond i.e. like the Good Samaritan.

8. **Loss of a loved one.** Visit the families. Get names from the local police station's deceased register. Funeral parlours are very helpful.
9. Bless your neighbour with a meal, cookies and a note.
10. **Hospitals visits.** Get teams to go to hospitals visiting people specifically who NEVER get visited. ASK the matron for that info.
11. **Prisons visits.** We ended up having Sunday meetings in the prisons. On the funny side of prison ministry the attendance is always 100% and the home cell ministry takes off. (Many got saved).
12. **New babies letter.** Names of new moms we got from the Clinic sister. Try to visit them personally.
13. **Men's breakfasts.**
14. **Business breakfasts.** For each of the above, we had teams doing various tasks depending on where the passion of their heart was leading them. We also issued relevant material with some do's and don'ts.

Additional Notes:

