

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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“Love Is...”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7: *Love is patient and is kind. Love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, is not proud, doesn't behave itself inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.*

The Bible has much to say about love.

Love can be *sinful* if it's directed toward money (1 **Tim. 6:10**), evil, or anything that comes between self and God (cf. 2 **Tim. 3:4**).

Yet, when love is directed toward God and others (**Mark 12:29-31**), truth and that which is right (2 **Thes. 2:10**), love is a wonderful thing.

In **1 Corinthians 13**, the Holy Spirit through Paul speaks to the church at Corinth about the love they should have for one another. The word used for love is *agape*, which involves selflessness and sacrifice. It is a deliberate choice to seek others' highest good, rather than only thinking about oneself. When we direct such love toward others, the fruits listed in **verses 4-7** will result. For instance...

Love is patient: The ASV says “*love suffereth long.*” If we love others as we should, we will not be short-tempered with them, or retaliate when treated poorly. Instead, we will be longsuffering toward others (cf. 2 **Pet. 3:9**).

[Love] is kind: If we love others as we should, we will not be bitter toward them, but will treat others gently and act benevolently.

Love doesn't envy: Envy involves being discontented when good comes to others. Such is the opposite of love's attitude, which seeks others' good.

Love doesn't brag: Boasting seeks to exalt self above others. Love opposes such aims, wanting instead to *help* others.

[Love] is not proud: Boasting is in many ways rooted in pride. While worldly wisdom may promote esteeming and exalting self above others, the wisdom from above doesn't.

[Love] doesn't behave itself inappropriately: The NKJV says that love “*does not behave rudely*” (1 **Cor. 13:5**). Love leads to treating others with respect rather than crudeness.

[Love] doesn't seek its own way: Love is about selflessness. **Philippians 2:4** perhaps gets at the heart of *agape* love. The verse commands, “*each of you not just looking to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.*”

[Love] is not provoked: Love does not lash out in hasty anger at others. It has too great a concern for the well-being of others to be irritable with them.

[Love] takes no account of evil: If we love others as we should, we will not keep a mental list of their wrongs. We will not be bitter or resentful toward others, but *forgiving*.

[Love] doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth: Love leads one to encourage righteous behavior. Love never delights in the faults of others.

[Love] bears all things: This might allude to the fact that if we truly love others, we will not *gossip* about them.

[Love] believes all things: Love is not gullible, but it gives the benefit of the doubt instead of making hasty judgments that assume the worst in others.

[Love] hopes all things: Love also *desires* what is best for others.

[Love] endures all things: Even when faced with hardships, including mistreatment from others, love *endures*.

These fruits of love serve as a measuring stick for self-examination. They also demonstrate that at the root of right treatment toward others is the simple but weighty command, “*love thy neighbor as thyself*” (**Rom. 13:9**).

“Thy Will Be Done”

Scripture teaches that God answers prayer according to *His* will.

There are some things we may be tempted to pray for that we know (through God’s Word) are not in harmony with His will. We shouldn’t pray for these things at all.

There are other things that, as far as we can know, *might* be in accordance with God’s will, but they also might *not* be. Such things are not wrong to pray for, but we should desire God’s will to be done above all.

For example, in **2 Corinthians 12**, the apostle Paul spoke about his thorn in the flesh (**verse 7**). Paul didn’t initially know what the Lord’s will was for him concerning this thorn in the flesh. He prayed three times that it be removed (**verse 8**). He came to find out, though, that it wasn’t God’s will to take this thorn in the flesh away (**verse 9**). Paul accepted God’s answer, and became grateful for what good could come from his thorn in the flesh (**verse 10**).

The point is that prayer’s power should not be confused with God promising to conform His will to ours.

Though we may not always say these words, an *attitude* we should have when praying is, “*not my will, but yours, be done*” (**Luke 22:42**).

“As Christ Forgave You”

Jesus’ love is exemplified by His willingness to forgive (cf. **1 Cor. 13:5**).

Perhaps the most striking verse that demonstrates Jesus’ forgiving attitude is **Luke 23:34**. In this verse, the Son of God and Savior of the world was being crucified because of others’ hatred and envy. Remarkably, He reacted by saying, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*”

Jesus’ statement was not excusing evildoing. It did, though, show that Jesus had no resentment or bitterness toward those who treated Him despicably. He was desirous of their repentance, rather than wanting the worst for those who mistreated Him.

When the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul wrote “*to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae*” (**Col. 1:2**), he commanded, “*bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, if any man has a complaint against any; even as Christ forgave you, so you also do*” (**Col. 3:13**).

No one has ever mistreated us as much as we have mistreated our Lord. If *He* is willing to forgive *us* upon submission to His terms, how much more should we eagerly forgive others?

-Michael Hickox (all articles)