

# Following Christ: Love



## Slice F5

### Love

#### Slice Content

<b>1</b>	<b><i>Memory Verse</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b><i>Love – The Heart of Jesus</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b><i>Four Types of Love</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b><i>The Two Greatest Commandments</i></b>	<b>4</b>
4.1	Love God	5
4.2	Love Our Neighbour	5
<b>5</b>	<b><i>We Will Experience Persecution</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6</b>	<b><i>We Are to Love Our Enemies</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7</b>	<b><i>Love Causes Us to Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Love Is Not a Sign of Weakness, But of Strength</i></b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	<b><i>The Way of Love</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b><i>Proclamation</i></b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b><i>Prayer</i></b>	<b>10</b>

# Following Christ: Love

## 1 Memory Verse

### 1 John 4:7–8 (ESV)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

## 2 Love – The Heart of Jesus

The main distinction between Christianity and all the other religions of the world is that all other religions require the individual to work towards their salvation, while in Christianity it is given freely to all that chose to return God's love:

### John 3:16 (ESV)

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

The greatest demonstration of Love that mankind will ever know took place when Jesus left His throne in heaven, to walk the earth as a humble man, who would die for our salvation. So that we may have eternal life with Him.

While Muslims will describe Allah as the creator of the universe and the source of all good and all evil, Yahweh cannot be the source of evil as He is the source of all Love. Evil and love are incompatible, so, for Christians to have an understanding that God is love has major implications. For if God is love, all who become His children must also have love at the very core of their being:

### 1 John 4:7–8 (ESV)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

God has many traits, he is all-powerful, all-knowing, wise, merciful, and faithful to name a few, but all of those traits are governed by the core characteristic of God which is Love. Because God is the source of love when we truly love Him our own ability to love is empowered.

### 1 John 4:19 (ESV)

19 We love because he first loved us.

# Following Christ: Love

## 3 Four Types of Love

The world today focuses on one type of love and that is romantic love, and in many cases, it is not true romantic love as infatuation is mistaken for love. The Bible records that there are four types of love:

- Storge: Family love.
- Philia: Friendship love.
- Eros: Romantic love.
- Agape: Unconditional love

The first three types of love are natural for the majority of mankind, it is the fourth type of love that mankind struggles with, because it is a love that requires self-sacrifice, receiving nothing in return. *Agape* love is the closest mankind gets to the Love of God. An example would be a mother and father with a child with autism, or severe Downs Syndrome. The agape love these parents have for their children is shown in the extreme devotion and care these parents give to their children, it is, without doubt, a sacrificial love. The selfish nature of mankind is also revealed in this example, as expectant mothers are now able to test for Downs Syndrome and abort the foetus if the test returns positive for the disorder.

The love of God is given to us despite the fact that we do not deserve it. The love God shows us was not because we were worthy of it, on the contrary, we received God's Love despite being rebellious towards Him.

### **Romans 5:8 (ESV)**

**8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

### **Ephesians 2:4–5 (ESV)**

**4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Ultimately Jesus gave us the greatest example of Agape Love, when being innocent He took the guilt of mankind upon himself when He endured the excruciating death by crucifixion.

# Following Christ: Love



It is extremely important to understand that as a believer we did nothing to earn our salvation, it was freely given in Love:

## **Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)**

**8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The James the Apostle makes a very important statement, He reminds us that while our salvation was attained without works: “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). He made this statement to emphasize that the lack of works reveals an unchanged life. The individual is still living a selfish life with a spiritually dead heart. Their love is a love of self, not a love for others. The life a person leads reflect the type of faith the person possesses, a life of self-sacrifice for others is a living faith that will see the believer grow and mature in their relationship with the Lord.

Ultimately there is a judgment of works (1 Corinthians 3:12), where the willingness of believers to give of themselves for the Kingdom will be measured and rewarded. Those who live a temporal life, focused on attaining the rewards of the world will stand before Jesus with a pile of wood, hay, and straw, which when tested by fire will leave them with ash as their eternal reward.

## **4 The Two Greatest Commandments**

After the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon (538 BC), the religious leaders were concerned that they would once more displease the Lord and be punished because of their errors. So, the religious leaders invented laws and rules to prevent the Jews from breaking the already lengthy 613 laws God had instituted as part of the Mosaic Covenant, establishes with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai. So, the Jews at the time of Jesus were burdened with thousands of laws to follow. The message Jesus gave to the Jews was indeed a blessing, as it freed them from the legalist bondage they lived under:

# Following Christ: Love

## **Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV)**

**28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

The yoke of the religious leaders was heavy, and Jesus was offering rest from this hardship. What Did Jesus mean that His burden was light? Out of all the 613 laws and instructions God had given the nation of Israel, Jesus singled out just two!

## **Matthew 22:37–39 (ESV)**

**37** And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment. **39** And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus was telling the people that when they obeyed these two laws, they were obeying all the laws. It was a totally new revelation for the Jews, their relationship with God was based on love, not fear. Let us look at these two commandments:

### **4.1 Love God**

Our love for God should be with all our heart, soul, and mind, in other words, He should take precedence in our life over all things. We should be devoted to Him, putting Him first in our lives and ensuring that our lives are pleasing to Him.

By Loving God, we obey Him and are obedient to His requirements. It is important to remember that an idol is anything that takes precedence over your relationship with God. The Bible makes it clear that idolatry is more than the worship of images and false gods. It is a matter of the heart, associated with pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony (Philippians 3:19), and love for possessions (Matthew 6:24).

### **4.2 Love Our Neighbour**

The second commandment to love thy neighbour ushers up the question “who is my neighbour”? In answer to this question, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). The Samaritans were descendants of the northern Israelite tribes who were not deported by the Assyrian Empire, who intermarried with Gentiles from areas conquered by the Assyrians and forcefully relocated to Israel. The Samaritan half-casts were despised by the Jews, so to be shown by Jesus that the Samaritan showed mercy to a Jew was a great shock. Jesus was saying even those who are our enemies deserve our love. A love that was ultimately given to us at the cross.

If you think about it there is just one commandment we need to follow, as man is created in the image of God, by Loving God we should also be loving our fellow man.

# Following Christ: Love

## 5 We Will Experience Persecution

### 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

**12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Paul explains the reality of living a “godly life” will be persecution, the extent of it will vary though:

- In Western countries believers may only face mild persecution, being mocked and ridiculed by people.
- The tide is changing for believers in the West, as Christian morals are now being classed as hate speech. Recently there have been cases of Christians losing their jobs, and even being jailed for standing firm on God’s Word. Fundamentalist Christians need to realise that the liberal globalist world we are living in is tolerant of everything except intolerance.
- There will be examples where the person’s family rejects them because of their new faith. A Messianic Jew is considered to be no longer Jewish and ostracised by their family because of it. Then there are Palestinian Christians who support Israel, who are continually targeted with physical violence for betraying the Palestinian cause. Also, converts from Islam are disowned by their families and have acid thrown in their faces, which is common in North African countries.
- The last group is those that live in totalitarian societies, such as China, that see Christianity as a threat to the regime and face not only physical violence but also being tortured and martyred because of their faith in Jesus.

### Matthew 24:9–10 (ESV)

**9** “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. **10** And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

Throughout the history of the Church, persecution has been used by God as a means of refining His Church and determining who are the true saints of God and who are the false believers who contaminate His Church with the philosophies of man. To emphasise this point Jesus taught the Parable of the Sower:

### Matthew 13:20–21 (ESV)

**20** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

# Following Christ: Love

## 6 We Are to Love Our Enemies

It is very natural for people to want to be vindicated when persecuted or even to have revenge, an eye for an eye logic. However, this is not what Jesus taught:

### **Matthew 5:44 (ESV)**

**44** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

We are to never forget that we serve a God who is the very essence of Love. In our rebellion against God before our salvation, we were enemies of God. His love for us was able to change us and make new people out of us. This is why we are to commit those that persecute us to God in prayer, for it is only God who is the Supreme and only Judge; the author of Hebrews writes "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:3). So, believers are to "bless those who persecute you" (Romans 12:14), for when we do this God will "heap burning coals on his (their) head" and the Lord will reward you.

Loving others is the core of our faith and conforms us to the image of our Saviour Jesus.

## 7 Love Causes Us to Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us

Pride is at the opposite end of the continuum to agape love; pride is self-love and Agape love is selfless love. Also, a narcissistic personality never feels they have done wrong, but will continually accuse others of doing wrong against them. God hates pride and will punish hubris and reward humility.

The death of Jesus on the cross as recorded by Mark is very revealing: "When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39 [CSB]). The centurion would have been witness to many crucifixions, on the cross all pretences are stripped away, and the real personality is exposed. While the centurion would have heard men weep and cry out over the injustice of their situation, or rant at curse in hate, he had never heard a person pray for those who were responsible for their great suffering. The first words that were spoken by Jesus after being stripped naked and nailed through the hands and feet to the cross were:

### **Luke 23:34a (ESV)**

**34** And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The forgiveness Jesus showed his persecutors revealed that He was, "the Son of God," the centurion had never witnessed a man, who in the process of dying on the cross, only had thoughts for others. Love was at the very core of who Jesus was.

# Following Christ: Love

Our ability to forgive others is determined by whether we are filled with pride and believe we are superior to others, or that we are humble and have a love for other people. We are required by God to forgive other people, Jesus when teaching the disciples to pray required them to say:

## **Matthew 6:12 (ESV)**

**12** and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

The Scriptures indicate that the measure with which we forgive others is used to measure the forgiveness God shows us.

## **Matthew 6:14–15 (ESV)**

**14** For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,  
**15** but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The message is clear, if a believer wants to experience the love of God in their lives, they must show love and forgiveness to others.

In the parable of the unmerciful servant Jesus taught the importance of understanding the great debt that God is willing to let us off, a debt we are unable to repay. So, we are in turn, expected by God to always be ready to forgive others. In the parable, the unmerciful servant was tortured, which alludes to the bitterness and resentment a person holds against those that have in some way offended them. These emotions cause both physical and mental stress to the individual and will remain as long as there is unforgiveness in the person's heart. The point Jesus was making to the disciples was that forgiveness is not to be measured in limited doses but must be freely given to all who offend us, just as God's forgiveness is freely and continually given to us.

Although, where forgiveness is forgetting as if the sin had never existed, it does not mean that you are required to trust that person. You are making a decision not to hold that sin against them ever again, it is as if it never happened. God knows the heart and if you pray to God for help to forgive, He will do so.

## **8 Love Is Not a Sign of Weakness, But of Strength**

Hollywood action movies portray forgiveness in love as a weakness and vengeance as a strength, consequently, it is a belief that the world has adopted. It is because of this that Christianity is perceived as a crutch for weak people. As was clearly shown in the description of Jesus on the cross, His strength in times of great suffering was love, while others would crumble into displays of self-pity.



# Following Christ: Love

It clearly takes strength to resist vengeance, it is easy to allow hatred to overwhelm the emotions and seek gratification by looking to cause harm to another. The Paul the Apostle instructs us on the matter saying:

## **Romans 12:20–21 (ESV)**

**20** To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Vengeance has the motto “do unto them more than what they did to you,” While Jesus gave us the golden rule to refer to in all circumstances:

## **Matthew 7:12 (ESV)**

**12** “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

The second great commandment was to “Love thy neighbour as thy self,” and the golden rule is an extension of that commandment, summing up “the Law and the Prophets,” believers are to treat others in the way they would like others to treat them.

Worldliness and the lack of love for one another was at the heart of most of the problems in the Corinthians' church, resulting in strife and division. Paul deals with this problem by writing a masterpiece of literature on what Christian love should be like:

## **1 Corinthians 13**

### **9 The Way of Love**

#### **1 Corinthians 13:1–13 (ESV)**

**1** If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** 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. **3** If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

**4** Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant **5** or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; **6** it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. **7** Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

**8** Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part, **10** but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. **11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

**13** So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

# Following Christ: Love

## 10 Proclamation

'Thank You Lord that you have placed Your Love in my heart by the Holy Spirit. Today I obey the Law of Christ and walk in Love- Agape. I walk in faith, hope and love but my greatest endeavour is that I walk in Love- Agape'.

## 11 Prayer

'Heavenly Father please take us deeper into the love of Christ and its outworking in our lives. May we be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in the anointing of Your Love. We want to obey You and Your commands and change the world with Your Love. Give a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know this Love and do this Love'.