



Summer of Lies

When Scripture is misunderstood. When Scripture is used to deceive. When Scripture is not studied

LIE#9: I have to earn God's love

Week 1: LIE: God uses shame to correct me and change me.

Week 2: LIE: God is not concerned with my everyday life, only the things I do for Him.

Week 3: LIE: Women are not Created to be Leaders

Week 4: LIE: You MUST be Married to Please God

Week 5: LIE: All I Need is God, Who Needs Friends.

Week 6: LIE: God Doesn't Speak to People Today. It was just for Biblical Times.

Week 7: LIE: A Man is the Priest of His Home and a Covering for His Family. All a Woman Needs to do is be Submissive.

Week 8: LIE: God is angry.

SLIDE 1 – Lie #9: I have to earn God's love

SLIDE 2 - Why do we believe this... Have a distorted view of God... Why?

???Put this on the board???

- The enemy lies to us – John 8:44
- Preaching/Church we grew up in
- Relationships that we had as children – parents/siblings/friends/boyfriend-girlfriend
- Performance based acceptance – school
- Expectations of God that lead to conclusions about Him
- (ask)

SLIDE 3 - How does what we believe impact our lives???

- We end up with distorted thinking... understanding... expectations...

We then have a distorted view of who God is...

We then have a distorted understanding or definition of what REAL love is...

SLIDE 4 - What is real love... what is God's love?

SLIDE 5 - Romans 5:6-8

⁶ For when we were still without strength, in *due time Christ died for the ungodly.

⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

⁸ But God demonstrates His own *love toward us, in that while we were still *sinners, Christ died for us.¹

SLIDE 6 - 5:5 love, agape (ag-ah-pay); Strong's #26: A word to which Christianity gave new meaning.

Outside of the NT, it rarely occurs in existing Greek manuscripts of the period. *Agape* denotes an undefeatable benevolence (*kindness, compassion, generosity*) and unconquerable goodwill that always seeks the highest good of the other person, no matter what he does. It is the self-giving love that gives freely without asking anything in return, and does not consider the worth of its object. *Agape* is more a love by choice than *philos*,

¹ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Ro 5:6–8.



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which is love by chance; and it refers to the will rather than the emotion. *Agape* describes the unconditional love God has for the world.²

The parable of the prodigal son - Through this parable, **Jesus** let everyone know that the God of heaven loves His children no matter what. One kid could be a narcissistic hedonist and the other a narcissistic legalist, but it doesn't matter to God when it comes to loving them. To everyone within earshot, Jesus was boasting that there is a kind of love that comes down from on high unlike anything we experience here on earth. What is this kind of love that God has for us?³

Real love

| | God's Love | Humanity's love |
|--|---|--|
| 1 SLIDE 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No beginning or no end – it is eternal ● God IS love – it is His very being ● God has always loved you – even before you got here | Has a beginning – and sometimes it has an end |
| SLIDE 8- SLIDE 9 SLIDE 10 & 11 | <p>1 John 4:8 He who does not love (G-25/agapao) does not know God, for God is love.⁴ (G-26/agape)</p> <p>Eph 1:4 ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,⁵ (G-26/agape)</p> <p>Psalms 139:13-18:</p> <p>¹³ For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb.⁶</p> <p>¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully <i>and</i> wonderfully made; *Marvelous are Your works, And <i>that</i> my soul knows very well.</p> <p>¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, <i>And</i> skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.</p> <p>¹⁶ Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When <i>as yet there were</i> none of them.</p> <p>¹⁷ How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!</p> <p>¹⁸ <i>If</i> I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.⁷</p> | |

² Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), 1556.

³ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

⁴ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), 1 Jn 4:8.

⁵ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Eph 1:4.

⁶ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Ps 139:13.

⁷ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Ps 139:14–18.



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| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| SLIDE 12- | Jer 31:3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, <i>saying</i> : “Yes, I have *loved you with an everlasting love; (H160- <i>ahăbâ</i>) Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. ⁸ | |
| | God's love for us existed before we got here, and it's going to exist long after we exit. God's love is <i>eternal</i>. ⁹ | |
| 2 SLIDE 13 - | God's Love has no Dimensions or Limitations | Human love has limitations & can be measured – there is a breaking point |
| SLIDE 14- | Ephesians 3:17b-19 Paul praying... ^{17b} that you, being rooted and grounded in love (G-26/agape), ¹⁸ may be able to *comprehend with all the saints what <i>is</i> the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to *know the love (G-26/agape) of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ¹⁰ | EXAMPLE – how much do you love me? Spreading out arms – “This much” |
| | God's love cannot be measured – it is never ending | |
| 3 SLIDE 15 - | God Loves Me/You – personally | Conditional |
| SLIDE 16 & 17- | Ps 139 – He created me exactly as I am & He loves that person – ME! | |
| | I am acceptable - worthy | |
| 4 SLIDE 19 - | His love is emotional | |
| | It isn't factual – it has feeling | |
| SLIDE 19 - | Mark 6:34 – Compassion ³⁴ And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was *moved with compassion for them ¹¹ | |
| | And it's amazing that God deeply cares about us, has empathy for what we are going through, and takes heartfelt delight in us. ¹² | |

⁸ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Je 31:3.

⁹ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

¹⁰ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Eph 3:17–19.

¹¹ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Mk 6:34.

¹² Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).



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| SLIDE 20 - | Luke 15:20 – prodigal coming home ²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when* he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had *compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” ¹³ | |
| SLIDE 21 - | Luke 15:28b – brother of the prodigal Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ¹⁴ | |
| | God's feelings toward you are nothing less than those of a father who loves you with everything in Him, hurts when you hurt, feels compassion when you face difficulties, and is joyful when you return home. ¹⁵ | |
| 5 SLIDE 22 - | His love is costly | |
| SLIDE 23 - | John 3:16 ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes in Him should not *perish but have everlasting life.” ¹⁶ | |
| SLIDE 24 - | John 15:13 ¹³ “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his *friends.” ¹⁷ | |
| 6 SLIDE 25 - | His love is proactive | |
| | He pursued me! He still does! | |
| SLIDE 26 - | Romans 5:8 ⁸ But God demonstrates His own *love toward us, in that while we were still *sinners, Christ died for us. ¹⁸ | |
| 7 SLIDE 27 - | His love is redemptive | |
| | He redeems me! – I do not redeem myself – He does it... | |
| SLIDE 28 - | 1 Corinthians 1:18 ¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are *perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ | |

¹³ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Lk 15:20.

¹⁴ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Lk 15:28.

¹⁵ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

¹⁶ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Jn 3:16.

¹⁷ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Jn 15:13.

¹⁸ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Ro 5:8.

¹⁹ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), 1 Co 1:18.



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| | | |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 8 SLIDE 29 - | His love is restorative | |
| SLIDE 30 - | The Walk of Faith – Jack Hayford Joel 2:25-27 | |
| SLIDE 31 - | <p>²⁵“So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten,²⁰ By faith, we are able to receive all that God has done for us. Joel gives a clear Old Testament picture that we are not saved by our works or by our own effort. God alone has supplied everything we need for salvation, for deliverance, and for a completely restored relationship with Himself.²¹</p> <p>Receive God’s full restoration. Despite a just act of God brought upon His people by their sin, He restored their land and all that was lost. Ask God to restore every place in your life that has been broken or made barren by sin, and praise Him for His righteousness!²²</p> | |
| 9 SLIDE 32 - | His love is unmerited | |
| SLIDE 33 - | Websters 1828 – Not merited; not deserved; obtained without service or equivalent; as <i>unmerited</i> promotion. | |
| SLIDE 34 - | The love of God cannot be earned, merited, or achieved. As <i>C. S. Lewis</i> put it, <i>“The Christian ... does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.”</i> ²³ | |
| SLIDE 35 & 36 | <p>Romans 5:6-11</p> <p>⁶For when we were still without strength, in *due time Christ died for the ungodly.</p> <p>⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.</p> <p>⁸But God demonstrates His own *love toward us, in that while we were still *sinners, Christ died for us.</p> <p>⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His *blood, we shall be *saved from wrath through Him.</p> <p>¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were *reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.</p> | |

²⁰ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Joe 2:25.

²¹ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), 1169.

²² Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), 1169.

²³ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).



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| | | |
|-------------------|--|--|
| | ¹¹ And not only <i>that</i> , but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. ²⁴ | |
| | We live in a world where love oftentimes has to be earned. Put another way, earthly love is conditional. If we act nicely, people “love” us more and treat us kindly, decently, and tenderly. If we act badly, people “love” us less and treat us harshly, unkindly, and rudely. In the world, love has to be merited. ²⁵ | |
| | The love of God cannot be earned, merited, or achieved. As <u><i>C. S. Lewis put it, “The Christian ... does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.”</i></u> ²⁶ | |
| | the <i>pleasure</i> of God is affected by how we act. If we break the commandment “You shall not steal” (Exod. 20:15) by robbing a bank, God is greatly displeased with what we did. And if we obey God by caring for a widowed parent or grandparent, “this is pleasing to God” (1 Tim. 5:4). Our obedience and disobedience certainly affect the pleasure and displeasure of God but never His love. ²⁷ | |
| | Dichotomy of thinking - There are things in life we have to earn: a college degree, a raise at work, a leaner body, and so on. Life won’t hand us any of these things, nor should it. But we are fortunate to have a God who gives us the most incredible gift of all: His love. And even though we keep trying to, there is nothing we can do to earn it. ²⁸ | |
| SLIDE 37 - | <u>The love of God is truly unfathomable and indescribable.</u> ²⁹ | |

SLIDE 38 - The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands. (*Ishmael/Issac*)

—Martin Luther

SLIDE 39 - 4. What now?

SLIDE 40 - Go back to where we started... It is our perception of love that causes us to disbelieve God’s love for us...

²⁴ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Ro 5:6–11.

²⁵ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

²⁶ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

²⁷ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

²⁸ Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

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SLIDE 41 - Have the conversations with God...

What lie am I believing about God?

SLIDE 42 - What lie am I believing about myself?

Who do you say that I am?

- You are My beloved & I died for you...



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SLIDE 43 -

- Relationships that we had as children – parents/siblings/friends/boyfriend-girlfriend
- Performance based acceptance – school – **God's love is not affected by what I do or what I don't do**
- Expectations that lead to conclusions – **learning His character**
- Get my act together to come to God – **Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own *love toward us, in that while we were still *sinners, Christ died for us.**³⁰
- If I sin God won't love me – **Hebrews 12:6-11 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,**³¹

=Verses for The Lie: God's Love Must Be Earned

- How priceless is your unfailing love. (Ps. 36:7)
- You, Lord, are forgiving and good,
- abounding in love to all who call to you. (Ps. 86:5)
- The earth is filled with your love, LORD. (Ps. 119:64)
- His love endures forever. (Ps. 136:1–26)
- God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
- I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:17–19)
- Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)
- This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)³²

³⁰ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Ro 5:8.

³¹ Jack W. Hayford et al., eds., [New Spirit-Filled Life Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 2002), Heb 12:6.

³² Chris Thurman, [The Lies We Believe about God: Knowing God for Who He Really Is](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).



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Love. First and last word in Christian theology and ethics. It is therefore important to understand clearly this exceedingly ambiguous term.

In the Old Testament. Sexual love is frankly recognized in stories of Adam and Eve, Jacob and Rachel, and in the Song of Songs. The Hebrew word can also mean tormenting lust (2 Sm 13:1–15), parental love (Gn 37:4), and both sexual and divine love in one context (Hos 3:1). It is used too of the love of friends (1 Sm 20:17), David's love having some ground in gratitude, Jonathan's in admiration, but with an element of altruistic self-renunciation as the crown prince stepped down for David's sake. For this strong, unselfish love the OT usually employed another word, almost untranslatable, *hesed*, rendered sometimes "loyalty" (2 Sm 22:26 RSV), more often "steadfast love" (Gn 39:21) or "kindness."

The connotation of this significant word is clear in Hosea 2:19, 20: "I will betroth you for ever ... in righteousness ... justice ... steadfast love ... faithfulness"; in Job 6:14, 15, where kindness is compared with treachery; and in 1 Samuel 20:8, which speaks of covenanted kindness. This unshakable, steadfast love of God is contrasted with the unpredictable, capricious moods of heathen deities. *Hesed* is not an emotional response to beauty, merit, or kindness, but a moral attitude dedicated to another's good, whether or not that other is lovable, worthy, or responsive (see Dt 7:7–9).

This enduring loyalty, rooted in an unswerving purpose of good, could be stern, determined to discipline a wayward people, as several prophets warned. But God's love does not change. Through exile and failure it persisted with infinite patience, neither condoning evil nor abandoning the evildoers. It has within it kindness, tenderness, and compassion (Pss 86:15; 103:1–18; 136; Hos 11:1–4), but its chief characteristic is an accepted moral obligation for another's welfare, which no ill-desert or want of gratitude will quench.

Nevertheless response was expected. The Law enjoined wholehearted love and gratitude for God's choosing and redeeming Israel (Dt 6:20–25). This was to be shown in worship, and especially in humane treatment of the poor, the defenseless, the resident alien, slaves, widows, and all suffering oppression and cruelty. Hosea similarly expects steadfast love among men to result from the steadfast love of God toward men (6:6; 7:1–7; 10:12, 13).

Love for God, and for "your neighbor as yourself" (Lv 19:18) are thus linked in Israel's law and prophecy. While much love of another kind lies within the OT, these are the major points: God's loving initiative, the moral quality of love, and the close relation of love for God with love among men.

In the New Testament. Christianity inherited this strongly moral connotation of love, not always remembered by those who sentimentalize the love ethic.

Agapē. Of Greek words available, *eros* (sexual love) does not occur in the NT; *phileō*, spontaneous natural affection, with more feeling than reason, occurs some 25 times, with *philadelphia* (brotherly love) 5 times, and *philia* (friendship) only in James 4:4; *storgē*, natural affection between kinfolk, appears occasionally in compounds. By far the most frequent word is *agapē*, generally assumed to mean moral goodwill which proceeds from esteem, principle, or duty, rather than attraction or charm. *Agapē* means to love the undeserving, despite disappointment and rejection; the difference between *agapaō* and *phileō* is difficult to sustain in all passages. *Agapē* is especially appropriate for religious love. *Agapē* was long believed to be a Christian coinage, but pagan occurrences have recently been claimed. The verb *agapaō* was frequent in the Greek OT. Though *agapē* has more to do with moral principle than with inclination or liking, it never means the cold religious kindness shown from duty alone, as scriptural examples abundantly prove.

The Synoptic Gospels. Jesus embodied the concept of *hesed* in the all-caring, all-inclusive fatherhood of God, shown toward just and unjust, far exceeding the divine concern for ephemeral grass, falling sparrow, or untoiling



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lilies of the field. God's sons are freed, by their confidence in the Father's love, from fretful care about material provision and personal safety to seek first God's will and kingdom. This is the Father's world; the Father knows; the Father loves. For the children of a loving Father, life is no struggle for existence but a serenity born of trust in a basically friendly universe.

In a sinful and suffering world divine love will show itself supremely in compassion and healing for the distressed and in redemptive concern for the alienated and the self-despairing. Hence the kingdom Christ proclaimed offered good news to the poor, to captives, the blind, the oppressed (Mt 11:2–5; Lk 4:18); while the attitude of Jesus toward those ostracized, despised, or grieving over sin in some far country of the soul assured them of forgiveness and a welcome return to the Father's house (Lk 15). Such forgiveness was free, its only precondition being readiness to receive it in repentance and faith. Even here, however, the moral clarity of divine love is not obscured. For the obdurate, the unforgiving, the self-righteous, Jesus has only warning of the consequences of sin and the judgment of God (Lk 13:1–5); for the wavering or impulsive, stern discipline and unrelenting standards (Mt 10:34–39; Mk 10:17–22; Lk 9:23–26, 57–62).

Moreover, the good news of divine love does impose its own obligation: to love God and to love others as God does (Mt 5:44–48). The first and greatest commandment in God's Law is, "You shall love the Lord your God.... And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:35–40, citing Lv 19:18; Dt 6:5).

The first commandment is not identical with, lost in, or only fulfilled through the second; it is separate and primary. What Jesus meant by loving God is indicated by his own habits of public worship, private prayer, absolute obedience; by the requirement "Him only shalt thou serve," not dividing devotion with mammon, hallowing the divine name in daily business by avoiding empty oaths; by his zeal for the Scriptures, his defense of the sabbath, his unshaken trust and frequent thanksgiving (Mt 4:1–11; 5:33–37; 6:1–6, 9, 24; 7:21; 12:50; 23:16–22; Lk 4:16; 22:42).

Love for one's neighbor is nowhere defined but everywhere illustrated. In the parable of the good Samaritan, "neighbor" is shown to mean anyone near enough to help, and love involves whatever service the neighbor's situation demands. The parable of the sheep and goats shows love feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting with kindness the sick and the imprisoned. In the untiring example of Jesus love heals, teaches, adapts instruction to the hearers by parable and symbolic language, defends those criticized or despised, pronounces forgiveness, comforts the bereaved, befriends the lonely. We are to love others as he has loved us and as we love ourselves, which means "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (Mt 7:12). Such imaginative transfer of self-love does good without expecting return, never returns ill treatment, ensures unflinching courtesy even to the lowliest, sustains thoughtful understanding that tempers judgment.

Nevertheless love deals frankly with human weakness and wickedness. Jesus prays for Peter, but not that he shall be spared temptation; he rebukes disciples, warns Jerusalem and Judas, makes Peter painfully retract his denials, accepts that love may have to lay down its life. Christ's love is no timid meekness, no sentimental mildness, inoffensive and ineffectual, helpless in face of the world's evil. It is a strong determination to seek others' highest good in all circumstances, at any cost. On that simple but demanding principle hang all moral obligation and divine law. To love is enough.

But it is also imperative. To Jesus the outstanding sin was lovelessness, the willful omission of any possible good, passing by on the other side while others suffer, ignoring the destitute at one's gate, withholding forgiveness. Lovelessness was made worse by self-righteousness, censoriousness, the religious insensitivity that ignores another's distress to preserve some petty ritual regulation. At the last, obedience to or neglect of the law of love will determine everyone's eternal destiny (Mt 25:31–46).



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Paul. The apostolic church quickly grasped the revolutionary principle that love is enough. Paul's declaration that love fulfills the whole law is almost a quotation from Jesus. His exposition of various commandments against adultery, killing, stealing, and coveting is summarized in loving, because love can do no wrong to a neighbor (Rom 13:8–10). Ephesians 4:25–5:2, where all bitterness, anger, lying, stealing, slander, and malice are to be replaced by tenderness, forgiveness, kindness, among those who by love are made members one of another, makes the same point another way.

Love is, for Paul, "the law of Christ," supreme and sufficient (Gal 5:14; 6:2), and Paul neatly defines what alone "avails" in Christianity as "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). He insists that the supreme manifestation of the Spirit which Christians should covet is "the more excellent way" of love (1 Cor 12:27–13:13; cf. Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22). Here too he contrasts love with five other expressions of religious zeal much prized at Corinth to show that each is profitless without love (1 Cor 13:1–3). He ends the chapter by comparing love with faith and hope, the other enduring elements of religious experience, and declares love to be the greatest.

Paul's description of love in action includes liberality, acts of mercy, and hospitality; avoidance of revenge; sympathy that weeps; rejoicing with others; sharing of weakness, shame, or need; restoring, supporting, and upbuilding others, giving them all honor, kindness, forgiveness, encouragement; restraining criticism, even of the divisive, overscrupulous "weaker brother"—the list is almost endless. More generally, love is revealed as a quality of activity, of thinking, and of suffering (1 Cor 13:4–8). In brief, love does no harm and omits no good; and it is God's Law.

But for motive Paul appeals beyond duty. To love we owe everything in salvation. God shows his love in that Christ died for us; out of his great love he made us alive in Christ; and in that love we live, by it we conquer, and from it nothing shall separate us (Rom 5:8; 8:32, 37–39; 2 Cor 13:14; 2 Thes 2:16; Eph 2:4; Ti 3:4, 5). God's love is almost indistinguishable from Christ's. "The love of Christ controls us" reveals the experiential heart of Paul's thinking (Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:14; Eph 5:2, 25). Our love reflects the love first "poured into our hearts" (Rom 5:5), and is directed toward Christ (1 Cor 7; 16:22; Eph 6:24) and toward others, whom we love for his sake.

The love of God, experienced through Christ, returning in love for God, for Christ, and for his people—such is Christian love as Paul analyzed it.

John. What John later recalled, and reflected upon, forms the crown of biblical teaching about love. For John, love was the foundation of all that had happened—"God so loved the world ..." (Jn 3:16; 16:27; 17:23). This is how we know love at all: Christ laid down his life for us (1 Jn 3:16). The mutual love of Father, Son, and disciples, must be the fundamental fact in Christianity, because God himself is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16).

We know this by the incarnation and by the cross (1 Jn 4:9, 10). Thus we know and believe the love God has for us, and that love itself is divine ("of God"). It follows that "he who loves is born of God." "He who does not love does not know God," nor "the message" of the gospel; "is in the darkness," "is not of God," and "remains in death." No one has ever seen God; nevertheless "if we love, ... God abides in us" and we in God.

God's love is thus prior and original; if we love at all, it is "because he first loved us." Our love is directed first toward God, and John is exceedingly searching in his tests of that Godward love. It demands that we "love not the world," that we "keep his word, ... his commandments," and that we love our brother. This commandment we received from Christ, "that he who loves God should love his brother also," for "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." Twelve times John stresses the duty of mutual loyalty and love. Indeed, if one closes his heart against his brother, "how does God's love abide in him?"

This emphasis upon the mutual love of Christians has been held a serious limitation of the love Jesus required. "Your brother" appears to have supplanted "your neighbor." In this respect the commandment given in the upper room (Jn 13:34) is "new" compared with that in Matthew 22:39 (citing Lv 19:18), and the circumstances explain why. The night on which Jesus was betrayed was shadowed by the surrounding world's



Summer of Lies

When Scripture is misunderstood. When Scripture is used to deceive. When Scripture is not studied
LIE#9: I have to earn God's love

hostility, the imminent crucifixion, and the defection of Judas. All the future depended upon the mutual loyalty of the 11 disciples, standing together under social pressure. By the time of John's letter, new defections had rent the church. A perversion of the gospel called Gnosticism, essentially intellectualist, proud, "giving no heed to love" (Ignatius), had drawn away leaders and adherents (1 Jn 2:19, 26). Once again mutual loyalty was all-important, and John wrote expressly to consolidate and maintain the apostolic fellowship (1 Jn 1:3).

However, love for one's brethren does not exclude, but instead leads on to, a wider love (cf. 2 Pt 1:7). John insists that God loved the whole world (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:14). Moreover, if love fails within the Christian fellowship, it certainly will not flourish beyond it, but evaporate in mere words (1 Jn 3:18).

In countering the loveless conceit of gnostic Christianity, John's concern was with the basic commandment of love to God and man as at once the criterion and the consummation of true Christian life. He does not, therefore, detail the many-sided expressions of love. For description of love in action, his mind recalls Christ's words about "keeping commandments" and "laying down life" in sacrifice (Jn 15:10, 13; 1 Jn 3:16), and he mentions especially love's noticing a brother's need, and so sharing this world's goods (1 Jn 3:17). Terse as these expressions are, they contain the heart of Christian love. John's forthright realism in testing all religious claims ensures that for him love could be no vague sentimentalism.

The Christian ideal can only be socially fulfilled within a disciple band, a divine kingdom, the Father's family, the Christian fellowship. In Scripture love is no abstract idea, conceived to provide a self-explanatory, self-motivating "norm" to resolve the problem in every moral situation. It is rooted in the divine nature, expressed in the coming and death of Christ, experienced in salvation, and so kindled within the saved. Thus it is central, essential, and indispensable, to Christianity. For God is love.

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³³ R.E.O. White, "[Love](#)," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1357–1360.