



Love Sweet Love (Part 2)

The Love Test

Ephesians 4:2 says, “**Be completely humble and gentle, bearing with one another in love.**”

It's so easy to love people who love us back. It's easy to be kind to those who are friendly and generous. These kinds of relationships with people make us feel good inside. We want to give to these people and do things for them automatically. We receive richness back into our lives as we give into theirs. These kinds of relationships with family and friends are true blessings from God. They encourage us and build us up; but this love comes naturally and easily.



Love doesn't seem to come so easily when someone is difficult to get along with or unkind. This is where the challenge comes. This is the true test of love, to love the unlovable; to have the ability to love unconditionally like our heavenly Father does.

I Corinthians 13:4-7 describes what true love is and how it behaves, “**Love suffers long and is kind, love does not envy, love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**”

There are times we will come across people who just make us uncomfortable. They may be very sick or needy. They may not look or smell nice. Love looks beyond these outward things and loves the person. We must show them love and kindness. That's agape, or the God kind of love. So many will never see the love of God unless it comes through us.

It's also very challenging when someone's behavior is "unlovely" or they mistreat us. Our human nature wants to retaliate and set them straight. Deep down on the inside of us we want an "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth!" But what does the Bible say? The word says in **Romans 5:5** that **"...God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit..."**

The moment we think of how to respond to a difficult person we have a choice to act out of our old human nature or act from our new born again nature that is full of the love of God. Our opening verse reminds us to be gentle and humble and "bear with" one another. We might say it this way, to put up with one another and just be nice! Because of the love of God, we must love one another at all times, not just when it's easy. We are encouraged to love to the point that we forgive sins and faults.

I Peter 4:8 says, **"Above all love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins."**

Proverbs 10:12 closely mirrors this when it says, **"Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers all wrongs."**

There will always be someone who tests our love walk, whether it's a family member, church member or co-worker. There will be times the bank teller at the drive thru window seems to take forever to help the customer ahead of us, and it's all we can do to have self control. We will all most likely have the opportunity to let a fellow motorist know how we feel about their driving capabilities! At these moments we can draw on the love of God that is on the inside of us and pass the test!

There is a bonus question to this love test that if we get it right then we can pass this test with flying colors, "How far do we really have to take this love walk?" Is it enough to love the people who are in need or that are hard to get along with? What about the haters? People that hate because of our faith, race, skin color or economic status.

Jesus knew there would be haters. He experienced hate first hand because the religious leaders hated Him. Jesus saw prejudice and hate in the society of His day between different people groups. He also knew people would hate you and me. That's why He told us in **John 15:18**,

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first.”

So here's the answer to the bonus question found in **Luke 6:35-36**,

“But Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be the sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”

Father, thank you for loving me when I was unlovable; for saving me when I was ungrateful and wicked. Help me to love like you love, in Jesus name, amen.