

# LOVE

## THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

John 3:16



**Make me a servant, ... Giving to others, With all  
that I do; In love for my brother, Make me like You.  
(Matthew Bassford)**



**For this is the way God loved the world:  
He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone  
who believes in him will not perish but have  
eternal life. (John 3:16 NET)**



The verbs for a particular African language consistently end with one of three vowels. Almost every verb ends in i, a, or u. But the word for “love” (dv-) was only found with i and a. In an effort to understand the concept of “love” in this African language, an English translator gathered the tribal leaders and asked, “Could you dvi your wife?” “Yes,” they replied, “that would mean that the wife had been loved, but the love was gone.” ...

**“Could you dva your wife?” “Yes,” they replied again, “that kind of love depends on the wife’s actions. She would be loved as long as she remained faithful and took good care of her husband.” “Could you dvu your wife?” All the leaders laughed, “Of course not! If you said that, you would have to keep loving your wife no matter what she did, even if she never got you water and never made your meals. ...**

**“Even if she committed adultery, you would have to keep on loving her. No, we would never say *dvu*. That kind of love does not exist.” The translator sat quietly for a moment, thinking about John 3:16, and then asked, “Could God *dvu* people?” There was complete silence for three or four minutes; then tears started to trickle down the weathered faces of these elderly men. Finally, they responded, “Do you know what this would mean? ...**

**“This would mean that God kept loving us over and over, while all the time we were rejecting his great love. He would be compelled to love us, even though we had sinned more than any people.”**

**“That is the love of God,” noted the translator. God loved us even when we were “unlovable,” even when we were hostile toward him. He loved us first because of who he is and not because of who we are. (Dennis Farthing)**

# The **IMPORTANT** of Love

- **First and foremost, love is important because it is an essential characteristic of God himself (1 John 4:8, 16; cf. v. 7).**
- **The Bible prioritizes love as being of the utmost importance, a quality that if absent negates whatever “good” we are or do (1 Cor 13:1–3, 13; 14:1; Luke 11:42; Mark 12:29–31; John 13:34–35).**
- **If we desire to obey God and pattern our lives after the Lord, we must transform our understanding of love from that of the world to that of Scripture (Gal 5:22–23; cf. Matt 5:43–48; 1 Tim 1:5).**



# The PATTERN of Love

- Though interesting to consider, the various Hebrew and Greek words translated “love” are often just as ambiguous as “love” is in English (John 3:16; Luke 11:43; 2 Sam 13:15 LXX; cf. Mark 14:44).
- The kind of love that God expects us to incorporate into our character and our service of him and others patterns itself after his own love (1 John 4:8; Rom 5:5; cf. 2 Pet 1:5–7).
- The love of God is universal, selfless, sacrificial, and eternal (John 3:16; Rom 5:6–10; 1 John 4:7–11; 1 Cor 13:4–8).

# The PATTERN of Love

If I belittle those whom I am called to serve, talk of their weak points in contrast perhaps with what I think of as my strong points; if I adopt a superior attitude, forgetting “Who made thee to differ? And what has thou that thou has not received?” then I know nothing of Calvary love. If I take offense easily, if I am content to continue in cool unfriendliness, though friendship is possible, then I know nothing of Calvary love. If I feel bitterly towards those who condemn me, as it seems to me, unjustly, forgetting that if they knew me as I know myself they would condemn me much more, then I know nothing of Calvary love. (Amy Carmicheal, “If”)

# The LABOR of Love

- Love is not only a feeling—though it is not less than a feeling—but also a work that requires a decision, effort, and activity (1 Thess 1:3 = Gr. kopos [“work, labor, toil”]; Gal 5:6).
- The labor of love involves service and sacrifice first and foremost toward other Christians (Heb 6:10; Gal 5:13; 6:10).

What does it look like? It has hands to help others, feet that hasten to the poor and needy, eyes to see misery and want, ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like. (Augustine)

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- Without love, this kind of labor is burdensome and vain, but when we love God and people, we will be fervent in our love, doing good to those around us (1 Cor 13:1–3; 1 Pet 4:8–11; 2 Cor 5:11–14a)

# The LABOR of Love

Stay fervent in love. Fervent is a word that speaks of intensity and determination. It is an athletic term for stretching to reach the tape.

Have you watched the fellows and gals who run the dash? When they come around that last turn and they're pressing for the tape, they'll get right to the end and then they'll lunge forward. I've even seen them fall right there on the track, because they're pushing to reach the tape ahead of the one they're competing against. It's the idea of intensity at the tape, stretching yourself.... That's the word fervent. [Stay fervent in love.] (Charles Swindoll)

# The GOAL of Love

- Love ought to characterize everything that we do as Christians—our faith, our work, our commitments (1 Cor 16:14; Gal 5:6).
- The intent of love is to think, feel, and do only what is pleasing to God and to encourage others to adopt the same aim (Eph 3:14–19; 4:14–16; cf. 2 Cor 5:14a; 1 John 2:15–17; Heb 10:24–25).
- We must never assume that we have “arrived” when it pertains to love, for the Bible commands us to grow always in our love for God and others (Phil 1:9–11; 1 Thess 3:11–13; 4:9–10; 2 Thess 1:3).

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