

WORD

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. **EPHESIANS 5:1,2**

Paul wrote this passage in Ephesians to exhort the believers to walk in love by illustrating the example of Christ's self-sacrificial love. The word "therefore" in verse 1 is a signal of a conclusion about *forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you* (Ephesians 4:32). Knowing that Christ forgave us and loved us and *gave himself up for us* will help solidify our understanding of how we can be *imitators of God* and resemble Him, in every way, every aspect of our lives. In this lesson, we will look at what real love is and how we can *walk* in it.

1 Love is not external.

... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **ROMANS 5:8**

Love is not based on looks, age, color, performance, or even on meeting others' expectations. The Bible says that while we were still God's enemies, *sinners*, rebelling and disobeying God, He loved us and *died for us*. While there is no guarantee of us loving Him back, He loves us anyway. Jesus looks past our dirt and sin, and chooses to love us in spite of who we are. What was Christ's supreme act of love? (John 15:13)

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2 Love is not emotional.

²²"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets." **LUKE 6:22,23**

(Read also **1 CORINTHIANS 13:4,5.**)

Love goes beyond affection. The term "love" is thrown around often, but the Bible describes love as something that goes beyond mere emotions. Love is a decision. Whether or not the loving feeling is present, the Bible calls us to act in love, to the extent of loving those who *hate us, exclude us, or revile us*. In fact, the Bible tells us to *rejoice and leap for joy* when that happens, for there is great reward in heaven. How does 1 Corinthians 13:4,5 describe love?

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3 Love is not temporal.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **1 CORINTHIANS 13:7**

(Read also **1 JOHN 3:16.**)

Today, the concept of long-term love has become vague and obscure. Short-lived kinds of relationships are seen everywhere—movies, songs, etc. But the Bible shows us that, in love, we can believe, hope, and endure. The word "endure" has the same root word as "patience." Enduring while grumbling is not the same as enduring patiently. Just as Christ was patient with us, and endured all things for us, we also should reflect this love by emulating Christ's example. What did it take for Christ to display His love for us? As God's children, how should we show love? (1 John 3:18)

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