



Extending the Love of Christ

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The question I ask of you today is this, when did you first experience the extended love of God through Christ Jesus in your life? Many people can point to the time when they accepted Christ in their lives or come to an awareness of the Lord in one's heart; and that may happen at anytime. What I am asking you is when did you truly start showing the love of Christ in your life? It is one thing to accept Christ. It is another thing to live the love of Christ.

Now, some may argue this point with me about loving. No, I am not asking you to give the book, chapter and verse of Christ's love. I am trying to establish how one truly understands the love God extends to each of us through Christ. With God's unconditional love.

Within a body of faith, the love of Christ grows and nourishes relationships. It is important to seek reconciliation and loving ways to bridge the separation that exists between people within a congregation. This is also the way for us to strive for understanding and harmony between people of different cultural backgrounds and different races. So extending Christ's love is a far better way for a caring and loving relationship with others.

We must never forget where the love we have in Christ comes from in the first place. Deep within 1 John 4:19-21 do we find the "God is Love" passage where everything revolves around the relationship that saturates a Christian's life. The recognition of God as the one who initiates this loving relationship with each of us is in the reconciling love of Christ.

This passage can also make some of us flinch because it causes us to rethink who we are as Easter people. The passage says, **¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.** Yes, we can probably look for other words to use or rationalize them until they are palatable but that would be an excuse to absolve one's understanding of what God expects of us. God is love.

The *Got Question Ministries* provides guidance for those seeking Christian answers. It says this about the reconciling love of God: "When Christ died on the

cross, he satisfied God's judgment and made it possible for God's enemies, us, to find peace with him. Our "reconciliation" to God, then, involves the exercise of his grace and the forgiveness of our sin. The result of Jesus' sacrifice is that our relationship has changed from enmity to friendship. As it says in John 15:15, **"I no longer call you servants ... instead, I have called you friends."**

"Christian reconciliation is a glorious truth! We were God's enemies, but are now his friends. We were in a state of condemnation because of our sins, but we are now forgiven. We were at war with God, but now have the peace that transcends all understanding ([Philippians 4:7](#))." [www.gotquestions.org]

God sent his love to us in Christ. Without a doubt, we all recognize that God's love is unconditional. Isn't that the reason God sent Jesus in the first place? John 3:16 says it all, **16"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.** The love of God surpasses all understanding. If Christ's love is absolute in our lives then this same love is to be extended to others without question.

Recently, I saw a picture of Jesus and a young man, who was obviously homeless with a backpack and bedroll, sitting on a park bench. They are deep in conversation. The young man asks Jesus, "So why do you allow things like hate, famine, war, suffering, disease, crime, homelessness, despair, etc, to exist in our world?" Jesus responded, "Interesting that you should ask because I was about to ask you the exact same question." What this exchange tells me is that each of us must commit to following what the reconciling Lord is asking us to do with our lives in the world today. God's love is to be shared.

Extending the love of Christ means to actively be about ministry much like the King at the approaching of the end times said in Matthew 25:40 **"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."** Or as it says in Micah 6:8 about what God is requiring of our lives, **"O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"**

As Christians, you and I can affirm that foundation of our life and faith is truly "rooted and grounded in love" of the Savior. One's core belief and value, our core belief and value, is in Christ's reconciling love. When love is alive and real then a person goes about life serving, caring and tending with a heart of the Lord. Here again is where love is the operative word in one's faith and action.

As one commentary states, **"In Christian Theology, reconciliation is an element of salvation that refers to the results of atonement. In Christian Theology, atonement describes how human beings can be reconciled to God through Christ's sacrificial suffering and death. Reconciliation is the end of the estrangement, caused by original sin, between God and humanity. John Calvin describes reconciliation as the peace between humanity and God."** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/reconciliation_\(theology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/reconciliation_(theology))

Surely, my friends, the love we live goes beyond our limited vision of whom we serve. I believe that Christ's reconciling love needs to be extended to others and not be denied from them. We must always remember that Christ gave his all

for us by dying on the cross because he loved us. To be sure, Christ-like living means Christ-like loving! And God's love continues.

The following illustration about Karl Barth comes from the *Deep Cove Crier* in November 1993 and from Tony Compolo's book *Let Me Tell You a Story*.

"One of the world's best known children's songs is "Jesus Loves Me". The keen insight of this song extends way beyond simplistic childhood faith. Karl Barth was one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century and possessed a brilliant mind and wrote about the interrelation of faith, theology and culture. Towards the end of his life Barth gave a lecture at the University of Chicago Divinity School. At the end of the lecture, he was asked what he considered to be the greatest theological discovery of his life.

"Everyone waited for an extended and complex answer. Karl paused for a moment, then smiled and said "The greatest theological insight that I have ever had is this: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the bible tells me so!" Love wins again!

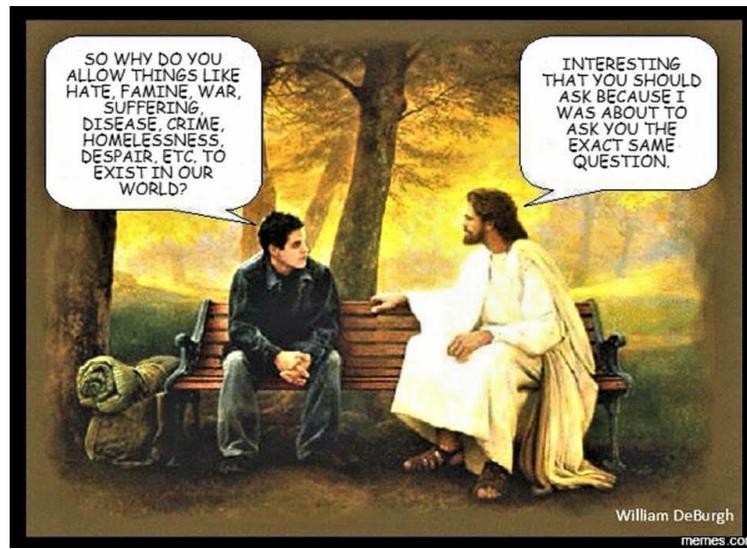
Friends, Jesus told his disciples of every age what a loving and joyful relationship is with him. He speaks to us in the gospel from this morning's reading from John, **⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.** Indeed, this is a relationship of indwelling and abiding love.

The love of Christ is what gives us meaning in the gracious relationship with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit and with one another. He shares this relationship with us in verse 12 thru 16 **¹²'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵i do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.** Love is operative in the passage. We know that Jesus chose his disciples and chooses us today because we are to produce of fruit in the world through the goodness of Christ and the goodness of the reconciling love with him.

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the love our Lord extends to us is a living and reconciling love that must go beyond ourselves. We can't hold it in. You and I are given a great gift of love in Jesus the Savior. So let us move that love from behind carefully protected barriers or personas or well-crafted words and extend this living love to others who are looking for accepting love. This same accepting love is what the Lord freely gave to us by dying on the cross. We accept him as our Lord and Savior. May we follow the command of Christ when he says, **"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."** (John 15:12) God's love is unconditional.

Let us pray: O God, your love is unconditional and full of grace. May we come to fully understand and appreciate the reconciling love you have for us in

the giving of your Son Jesus. He redeems us and shows us the way to share love with others. We thank you for him and how his redeeming love extends to all who believe. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.



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Supporting Scriptures

1 John 5:1-6

Faith Conquers the World

⁵ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

John 15:9-17

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹² This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.