

~Lesson Eight~

God's Love Empowers Us to Love

God is love, so without Him there would be no love. Can you imagine our world without love? Since God created the concept of love, of course He made us with a desire to love and be loved. So we can say without a shadow of doubt, we were created to be in a love relationship with God, as well as to love others as we love ourselves.

God's love lives within us through His Spirit. Since God's love lives within us, we can choose to love God, ourselves and others. We choose to love by allowing the Holy Spirit to control us so He can empower us to love! This week we will look at how to love God as well as others in very practical ways. We will also cover why and how to love ourselves, in the epilogue.

Day One Background on the Greatest Commandment

Loving God is the greatest commandment in the Old Testament!

In Deuteronomy, the nation of Israel was told the greatest act of obedience was to love God. (Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 11:1, 13-22; 13:1-4)

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NASB)

The Jewish people call Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the "shema", which means "hear". For centuries, they have recited Deuteronomy 4 as part of their daily prayer. What this passage did was to instruct the people to love God constantly throughout their life, and to do things to remind themselves to love Him. (They could have used large post-it notes!) They were also to diligently teach the younger generation to do the same.

1. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 tells us we need to be teaching our kids to love God. God wants our lives to be a living example of love, and then our kids can learn from our example. We also need to have a plan or at the very least a few specific ideas, on how to teach our children about loving God. I don't know about you, but if I am ad-libbing, things do not always get done. That's why I would like you to come up with one idea on how to teach your child to love God and then do it. (If you are doing this in a group maybe you can make a list and pass the ideas around. Gee, I would like that list too!) If you don't have any kids this would be a good time to pray for the moms and kids you know. Believe me, we moms need as much prayer as we can get! PS If any society is diligent in teaching their younger generation about God, then that society will be a lot better off!

Loving God is the greatest commandment in the New Testament!

As Christians our greatest act of obedience is to also love God. Yet, we should take it a step further. At all times we should obey God, but it should be out of love for Him. Mark 12:28-30 tells us loving God needs to saturate our personality, emotions and will, and fill our thoughts, words and actions.

And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him (Jesus), "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. Mark 12:28-30 (NASB)

God knew our love for Him needed to fill our heart and mind. This is because whatever is in our heart and mind will generate what comes out of our mouth, and fashion our every action (Mark 7:20-21). So if you love God in your mind then your words and actions will reflect that love. What should you do to increase your love for God in your mind (Romans 12:2)?

When loving God becomes our most important passion, then we will naturally want to rely on Him. When loving God is our first desire, then His Word, and knowing it, will logically become very important to us, because it enables us to know and please the One we love. When you love someone, don't

you want to get to know all the intimate details about them and please them?
(Psalm 13:5 & 119:159)

If we don't obey God from love, there is a danger of developing a mentality of legalism. Legalism simply put is, strict adherence to a list of do's and don'ts (even God's), but not relying on or trusting in His Spirit for the doing (Romans 7:6 & Galatians 3:1-5). If legalism is your way of life, you need to ask yourself, "Am I relying on my own works to save myself instead of believing in Jesus Christ?" If you are relying on your own works then you are not a Christian. Go back and read lesson 3 if you think you might be relying on your works for salvation.

What mindset enables us not be legalistic but to obey God through His Spirit? Having the mindset of being, not doing, in a love relationship with God. This mindset will stop our minds from being in an automatic doing mode, to being in a "how can I love God" mode. This permits the Holy Spirit to control us because our minds and hearts will be on God instead of only on what a task demands.

2. Everyone's life has circumstances and demands that need to be handled, as well as duties that need to be done. It's a part of living. We all have a motivation behind what we do. Take a few quiet moments and ask God to show you your motivations behind your actions. Is it to please other people (your self included), or just simply the need to do or not do a thing? Are you motivated by wanting to look good or spiritual? Maybe your driving force is to be respected or simply to be accepted and liked? If you want to have a strong relationship with God, you need to be working on having the love of God as your primary motivation behind what you do. If loving God is your foremost motivation in life, then the Holy Spirit is leading your life. A great question to ask yourself as you go about your day is, "Am I doing this or not doing this out of my love for God?" Remember the greatest commandment!

Day Two Why should we love God?

First of all, loving God is a command! As you have just learned, it is not merely one of the many instructions in God's Word but the most important one. So that tells me we had better be doing it! God doesn't tell us things just to add information to His Word or for the fun of it. He instructs us in the way we absolutely need to go for our well-being. (Jeremiah 29:11)

1. Have you ever meditated on the knowledge that the God of the universe, your Creator, wants to be loved by you! This is a "Wow" principle for me. How about for you? As Deuteronomy 6 says, as you walk, talk or rest, in reality whatever you do, let the thought that God always wants your love to be ever so strong in your heart. This would be a good time to write out a verse that spoke to you the most from this study about God's love and stick it where you will be reminded of it. I like to put God things on my refrigerator. A creative friend of mine writes Bible verses on her bathroom mirror. My daughter writes reminders on her hand, as God said in Deuteronomy.

The second reason we should love God is, He first loved us.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ... We love, because He first loved us. 1 John 4:10,19 (NASB)

We can get so distressed or hurt when we love someone who doesn't love us! You know, your heart aches, and the emotional hurt seems worse than a physical pain. However I hope so much that this study has shown you God does love you, so you can love Him with no fear of rejection!

The third reason we should love God is because we were created to love Him in an eternal covenant relationship. In other words, God wants to be in a relationship with you that is like a marriage. However this kind of relationship takes you loving Him back. When only one person loves the other, that marriage is not very good to say the least. Unfortunately, some of you may know all too well what it is like to love someone who doesn't love you!

2. My daughter in-law who is one of my editors, thought Titus 3:4-7 would be a good way to end day two. It clearly shows what God's love did for us, so we will want to love God back. **Read Titus 3:4-7 and 1 John 4:19 and then summarize the Titus passage.** Ask God to give you the desire and strength to love Him back through the Holy Spirit within you.

Days Three and Four How to show God you love Him!

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love. Remember, the Holy Spirit is God and God is love, so you are filled with God's love if His Spirit lives in you. As a result, the more you allow God's Spirit to control you, the more you will love God (and others) because the Spirit will be able to love through you. However, if you don't want the Holy Spirit to control you, then you are not loving God. In reality, you are saying to God, "I don't want to be close to You." If you are wrestling with allowing the Holy Spirit to control you, then look back at lesson 4.

Here are 11 ways that I feel would show God we love Him

1. Committing your life to Him
2. Studying His Word
3. Praying
4. Keeping your Faith in Him
5. Confessing your sin
6. Obeying Him
7. Serving others
8. Enduring suffering for Him
9. Making time for Him
10. Loving Him unconditionally
11. Loving others

Each one is defined below:

Committing your life to Him - The first time you truly showed your love for God was when you committed your life to Him. You do this by what I have talked about, which is having faith in Jesus Christ. This faith immediately puts you in a relationship with God, and from then on, you can show your love for God by being committed to your relationship with Him. Remember our relationship with God puts us into His family. And what makes a family great is being committed to each other. God is committed to you! Are you committed to Him? You can be, by fervently loving Him and loving others (Mark 12:30).

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love...Ephesians 5:1-2a (NASB)

Studying God's Word -You are showing your love for God if you read and study His Word as you would an interesting and important book, the kind you want to read over and over again. You are also telling God you love Him when you make His Word your primary instruction manual and you follow it, instead of some other book (may it be Christian or not). It is also God's Word that the Holy Spirit uses to teach us how to love. So if you are not at least reading His Word, logic would say, you are not going to love God or anyone very well. When you love someone, you want to hear what they have to say, don't you? If you love God it will be the same!

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-25 (NASB)

Praying - You are demonstrating your love for God when you pray. You need to understand communication with God or anyone has two characteristics - listening and responding. You listen to God by allowing Him to speak through His Word. You respond to God by talking to Him. So what does praying to God look like? Well, it doesn't mean you need to sit or walk around saying a few words here and there to God so you can feel like you are connected to Him. His desire is for you to pray with your whole heart - being honest and open with Him, truly wanting to talk with Him as you would someone you love and trust (Colossians 4:2). Don't you want people to truly desire to communicate with you, and to do it with honesty? God does too!

1. **Read 2 Chronicles 7:14, John 15:7, Ephesians 6:18-19, Colossians 4:2-3, Philippians 4:6-7, James 4:1-3, 5:16-18.** Write down any insights and applications the Spirit is giving you from these verses about how you should pray.

When you love someone, communicating with them in most cases is a blessing, not a chore. Yet, even if it is a chore because of the circumstances, you still do it because of love. Remember you are in a relationship with God, so you can experience with Him the same struggles you experience with anyone you love. There are just times you will lack good communication with a loved one, but as you know, if it keeps on, your relationship will not be healthy or close. Good communication with God is imperative - because it is the way you will grow and be fruitful as a Christian.

PS - If you are not interested in God's Word and for the most part don't desire to talk to Him, you need to be very concerned about your relationship with God! Remember, it is never God turning His back on you because He always wants a close and vibrant relationship with you. It is you who draws away from Him. Take some time and ask the Holy Spirit what your problem is. It might be you are - too busy, too preoccupied or too lazy, maybe sick, stressed, tired or depressed. Sin could be separating you from wanting to be with God, or maybe you are angry at Him. There also might be a chance you never have truly believed in Jesus, so His Word and prayer would not mean much of anything to you (Ephesians 2:1-3). If you think this is the problem, please go back and read lesson 3 of this study again.

Keeping your faith in God - Your life in God must be a life of faith in Him, if you want to love Him. Hebrews 11:6a tells you "...without faith it is impossible to please Him" Faith in God brings salvation, and then it enables the Holy Spirit to control you. (No wonder without faith it is impossible to please God!) A simple but true concept is: when you are relying on God, you are loving Him too. Another way to radically show your love for God is to trust Him with the unknowns (ie - Will we have another terrorist attack? Will my child get hurt? Will I lose my job?) and your doubts (ie - Am I pretty or smart enough? Is the creation story completely true? Does my friend like me?). Another radical way to love God is to put your trust in what God's Word says when your feelings are telling you not to. This is a hard one for me! How about you?

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit. Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NASB)

Confessing your sin to God - When you agree with God about sin in your life, you are saying to Him, "I love You." Remember, even though God has forgiven your sin through Jesus' death, sin still affects your relationship with God. What agreeing with God does is enable your relationship to return to closeness. Let's think of it from a human perspective - when you do a wrong to someone, there is an unseen but very real feeling of disconnection between you two. When you honestly say, "I am sorry" the wrong should disappear from the relationship if that person forgives you. So when you confess your sin to God, it is like telling Him you are sorry. And He will most definitely forgive you!

2. **Read Psalm 26:2-3 & 32:1-5 & 38:18 & 139:23-24, Lamentations 3:39-40, and 1 John 1:9-10.** Write down any insights, applications, and benefits the Holy Spirit is giving you from these verses about confessing your sins to God. Since you love God, shouldn't you ask His Spirit to examine your heart and mind so there will be nothing between you and Him?

Obedying God -If you love God, you will obey His Word as John 14:23 says to do. God's Word is His will for you. Jesus is our foremost example for doing God's will.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 6:38 (NASB)

At times you might not feel like doing God's will or His Word. I have those times! Yet, no matter what your excuse is for not wanting to obey God, you still need to follow His commands or you are in sin! When you don't feel like doing His will, then you need to earnestly ask the Holy Spirit to make you willing to sacrifice your desires, so you can do God's desires. What helps me to be willing to do this is keeping in mind what Jesus sacrificed for me and knowing that it certainly wasn't fun for Him (Matthew 26:36-50). In fact, it was torture!

Serving Others – Your love for God should compel you to serve Him and others. Jesus told Peter that if he truly loved Him, he would serve God’s children.

...Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon...do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon... do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon...do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord,...You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. John 21:15-17, (NASB)

3. Remember Jesus is your example of how to serve. He served you when you were His enemy by dying for you. **Read Matthew 20:26-28, John 13:3-15 and Philippians 2:1-8.** Prayerfully think up one tangible way you can serve others. Resolve to do it, because of your love for God.

Enduring suffering for God – Loving God is being willing to suffer for Him. In America we don’t usually suffer physically for God, but I know some of you do in other countries. I imagine some of you are persecuted because you do Bible studies like this one. (I want to say, I am humbled beyond words that you would risk suffering to do this study, and that all of you are my encouragement to love God and serve Him more deeply! Thank you dear sisters and brothers in the Lord! Revelations 22:12, 20-21.) I get the magazine “The Voice of the Martyrs”, and the one thing persecuted Christians throughout the world seem to have in common is that they go through the suffering because of their love for God and His love for them. Their lives live out 1 Peter 2:21-24 - Jesus’ example of how to suffer for God.

4. **Read 1 Peter 2:19-25 & 4:12-16.** What does this passage tell you about how and why you should suffer? What are other ways you have suffered for God that are not physical but still very hard?

5. I have seen Christians do and say some mean and destructive things – which cause suffering. The question we need to constantly ask the Holy Spirit is, “Am I causing others to suffer by my sins?” **Read Leviticus 6:1-7 also Numbers 5:6-7.** If you are guilty of hurting another in anyway, then ask God for forgiveness, and ask forgiveness of the person or persons whom you are distressing. Make amends if you need too – such as if you were gossiping, call everyone that heard your gossip, and explain to them the truth about the situation. **Read Matthew 7:12 then summarize and apply it to your life and others.**

Making time for God – If you truly love God you will give Him time, and put effort into your relationship with Him, as you would anyone you really love. In America we like things to be quick and easy. Now this is OK when it comes to having no wait internet and instant dinners. However, I think most of you know that lack of time and effort in a relationship spells disaster. It is the same with God! Yet, there are those Christians that think they can have a close relationship with God without giving Him much time and effort, such as not bothering to talk with Him unless an emergency arises! Are you one of these Christians? If you are, I think you know you need to change.

Loving God unconditionally – You are called to love God with His love, which is called *agape*. This means you need to love God unconditionally, sacrificially and faithfully. Now don't get frantic! I don't mean you will ever love God as perfectly as He loves you because that is humanly impossible! What I mean is, you need to have a *desire* to love Him that way! The desire to love God (and others) starts from salvation, and grows by truly getting to know Him, not just knowing of Him. Do you understand the difference?

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:7-8 (NASB)

6. Sometimes we can treat God like a vendor in the sky; if He gives us what we want then we will love Him. Can you relate? How about this - I have found myself at times having a feeling of resentment towards God, because of the hard things that He has allowed to happen. God said to me not too long ago, "Gini, I give you unconditional love. Why do you put conditions on your love for Me?" Can you relate to this one? To encourage you, God does understand your struggles. He realizes trials can be very confusing, unfair, hurtful, and full of physical and psychological pain. Nevertheless, God gives you and me sacrificial, faithful, and unconditional love through it all, whether we think it or feel it. You and I need to desire to do the same to Him! **Read Isaiah 53:4-6, 54:4-10 and Micah 7:18-20.** Thank Him for His love for you!

Loving others - Last but certainly not least, you demonstrate your love for God by loving others. I will cover this one in day five.

7. I am sure you can come up with other ways to love God, so as you end this day, make a personal list of how you will love God, and do it because you love Him!

Day Five How to love each other with God's love

God's (*agape*) love doesn't depend on what a person does, or who she is, but on the one loving. It is also driven by what is best for the person being loved, not by the one loving. It is a love that is full of unselfish and sacrificial actions. It also has joy in it, but that joy comes from within the one loving, not because the person who is loved is so wonderful. A sobering but very true fact is - we are called to love others, even ourselves, with God's kind of love! When I hear how I need to love, I think, "No way!" Yet, I know from experience, God can empower you and me to love. This is because I have seen myself love people (that I could easily hate), because of God's Spirit empowering me to love them.

We are commanded to love one another with God's love and not with how we think and feel love should be. So of course that means it is paramount that we learn how to love from His Word, and practice what we have learned! We also should not take this command to love one another lightly! This is not something to fool around with because it is so necessary to the well-being of all of us, especially to God's church! I think you understand why, because we have all experienced the psychological and even physical turmoil and damage from lack of love!

Loving God is the most important command but loving others is a close second. In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus is saying, "Loving one another can't be separated from loving God!"

...Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He (Jesus) said to him, " You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'" (NASB)

Yet, the sad reality of this sinful world is, all of us wrestle with loving like God does. This is due to our sinful nature which makes us tend to be self-centered and self-seeking. Our human love can be like Kleenex, which we make a mess of and then throw away. We can be inclined to love only when it benefits us, and when it is convenient. If loving someone gets difficult, most of us want to run, or at the very least hold them at arms length emotionally. Someone can love you for years and then suddenly never love you again.

Something else we do with love is put specific conditions on it. I will love you if you are beautiful or handsome. I will love you if you make me feel good. I will

love you if you do what I want, or meet my needs. Does this type of love sound familiar to you? Well it should, because it is how humans tend to love.

Psychology tells us, we learn to love through the example of our parents and others. And if you haven't had loving experiences, or even worse, if you have been abused by someone who so-called loved you, it just goes with reason you will struggle with love. If you are struggling with loving because of your past and/or your present situation, God understands! He doesn't have a love gauge with a pass or fail line on it. As I have stated, you will never love others as perfectly as God does. What you need to be doing is working on loving others because God loves you and you love Him!" Why don't you let God be your example of how to love!

...Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us...Ephesians 5:1-2 (NASB)

The command to love one another is in the Old Testament, but Jesus' life has literally lived it out for us in the New Testament. God never asks us to do what He has not done in Jesus Christ. Remember what 1 John 4:19 says?

In John 13 and 14, Jesus commands His disciples to love one another. He knew if all of us were willing to love one another as He loves us, it would show the world we are His. It would also greatly help us to survive this hostile and painful world. Jesus said,

Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:33-35 (NASB)

In the Old Testament in Leviticus 19:18 we are told to love one another. So what makes this a new commandment in the New Testament? We are now to love as Jesus Christ has loved us - with a sacrificial, unselfish, unconditional love.

Jesus Christ knew you needed to be loved, because He created you with that need. We know ever so well our need for love, because when we are not loved, we feel very hurt, alone or at the very least out of sorts. This is why God is very emphatic in telling us to love one another in His Word. Below are some scriptures from the New American Standard Bible that tell us to love one another. Feel free to look them up in a different translation.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...Romans 12:10

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law... Romans 13:8

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13

... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, Ephesians 4:2

...and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you... 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another... 1 Thessalonians 4:9

...and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work... 1 Thessalonians 5:13

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater... 2 Thessalonians 1:3

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds... Hebrews 10:24

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 1 Peter 1:22

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... 1 John 3:11

And this is His commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. 1 John 3:23

- 1.** Write down any insights and applications the Holy Spirit is giving you from these verses about how and why you should love one another.

What does God's love look like from a practical sense? The whole Bible is our "how to" book on how to love God's way. His Word paints a beautiful picture of God's love for us from many different angles. (We have studied a large number of these in this Bible study.) His Word also clearly defines how we should love, so we don't have any excuse when it comes to knowing how.

1 Corinthians 13 is one place where God chose to very specifically explain how we should *agape*. It also clearly explains how important love is to God!

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails; ... But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13 (NASB)

1 Corinthians 13 also talks about spiritual gifts. Did you know the Holy Spirit is God's gift giver (1 Corinthians 12)? All Christians are given at least one spiritual gift from the Spirit for the general good and to build up the Body of Christ. Even though spiritual gifts are an important part of a Christian's life, in 1 Corinthians 13 God makes it very apparent that His *agape* is more important than anything else.

- 2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.** These verses define how God loves. Write out verses 4-8a replacing the word love with Jesus. Remember God never asks you to do what He hasn't done and this is how He loves you. So this is how you need to love God and others! He has also given us real-life examples of this kind of love through Jesus' life. (Example: Jesus endured crucifixion because of His love for us. Hebrew 12:2)

3. Summarize **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** in your own words, with emphasis on what each characteristic or quality of love is asking you to do or not do. These 15 qualities of love are attitudes you need to learn, so they can transform your way of loving - starting from your thoughts to your words and actions. (These 15 characteristics of love are defined in the audio devotion to this lesson.) Write out one way you can love God from these characteristics of love. (Example: Am I patient with God when He is seemingly taking His time in answering a prayer?) And one way you can love others. (Example: Am I being kind to my friend even though she can drive me to frustration?) Since you now know many of the basics of God's love - ask the Holy Spirit to keep them in your heart and mind so He can lead you to do them.

What if you are trying to love someone God's way but she doesn't even try to love you? I know I can get my feelings hurt when I am trying to love, and the person or persons are not trying to love me back. How do you respond to the same situation? Did you know Paul was distressed over loveless people (2 Corinthians 12:15)? It seemed to Paul the more he showed love to certain people, the less they seem to love him. Can you relate? What helps me to manage not to get as hurt or frustrated in these loveless situations is to remember that God loved me and died for me when I was His enemy. And that I should love people, because I love God and want to please Him, not because they are returning love to me. As you know, some people will never love you back, no matter what you do or say or even sacrifice for them. But take heart God always returns love!

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. Hebrews 6:10 (NASB)

I have seen and heard of some pretty unloving things, done by Christians. Now, we all can fall short of loving, but when people are characteristically unloving there is something wrong. I think the problem may be that some of

these unloving Christians don't realize how rude and hurtful they are being. This is because we live in a society that can be uncaring and unloving, so they are just acting like society. A warning - if you don't care about loving others, then you need to be very worried. This is because 1 John 4 tells us - if you don't love others you might not know God because God is love, and His love (the Holy Spirit) lives within us.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us...If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. 1 John 4:7-8, 11-12, 20-21 (NASB)

- 4. End of the lesson application:** Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind one thing you learned from this lesson that He wants you to remember and make it a part of your life. Be quiet before God and wait on Him to tell you. Write it down and ask Him to help you to do it!

End this lesson by prayerfully thinking about which behaviors stop us from loving others. Make a list of them, and if you are doing this in a group, brainstorm about them. Some examples would be: selfishness, jealousy, pride, anger, laziness, rudeness and so on. All of us do these sins at times, so a mental list will help the Holy Spirit to convict you when you are doing them. PS - Be alert to the fact that Satan does not want you to love, as God loves, so he will do anything in his power to stop you from loving.

Bibliography

My ideas on the following topic comes from the following sources.

The Greatest Commandment

John F Walvoord & Roy B Zuck, **The Bible Knowledge Commentary - New Testament Edition**, commentary on Mark 12:28-30, pp 163-164.

J. A. Thompson, **Deuteronomy: An Introduction & Commentary**, from the Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman, Editor, pp 121-123.

This Bible study is copyrighted, but it is free for you to copy as many times as you want to for non-commercial group studies. Please see my copyright policy at the above website for more information.

Scriptures quotations identified NASB are from New American Standard Bible, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.