

For the Christian, love is like prayer:
we *know* more than we actually do,
and what we do,
we consider it to be satisfactory.

Jesus has confronted us with three questions:

(1) Do I love God with all of my heart, soul, and effort?

According to his paradigm in John 15 (and elsewhere) the law of spiritual optimization requires loss in one area to gain more in another area. I can only love God more than proportion to the elimination of other things in my life.

“So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.” (Luke 14.33)

(2) Who is my neighbor?

Like the expert in the Law who was questioning Jesus, our neighbors, those we associate with and relate to most in time and engagement, are those who are like us—and the more like us they are, especially in background, race, and culture, the more “neighborly” we are with them. Unfortunately, that is completely at odds with the way of Jesus.

But I say, love your enemies! If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. (Matthew 5.43, 47)

(3) What is my measurement for love?

In the Old Order, God required his followers to love their neighbors, including foreigners and aliens, as themselves—inclusively embracing them and treating them as one of themselves. Jesus has given us two measurements:

(a) In everything we are to do to others as we would want done to us, and (b) we are to love others as Jesus has loved us.

Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12.10)

Let no debt remain outstanding,
except the continuing debt to love one another . . .

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Romans 13.8-9

You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. . . . each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. . . . Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

Romans 14.10, 12-13

If your brother or sister is distressed because of your preferences, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your preferences destroy someone for whom Christ died. . . . Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake your own preferences.

Romans 14.15, 19-20

Do everything in love.

1 Corinthians 16.14

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved
the church and gave himself up for her.

Ephesians 5.25

So in everything, do to others
what you would have them do to you,
for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7.12

- ▶ Are we deeply conscious of the needs, weaknesses, and even the idiosyncrasies of others, and do we respond in consideration and love, honoring them above ourselves?
- ▶ Are our hearts moved with compassion to take action?
Remember: love has no value to God without action.
- ▶ What have we done and who can we say we have included, loved and served among those who could not be more different than ourselves?