

Loving Others Colossians 3:12-15

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

The highest _____ of life is to love God and to love others. How well are you fulfilling that calling? God's way brings _____ and _____. It leads people to _____ each other fairly and kindly. God's way is humble and compassionate. It's never selfish, never callous, and never hateful. God's way _____ up rather than puffs up; it _____ with hope and comfort rather than manipulate with doubt and fear. The more you know about God, the more you'll love Him and His _____. The more you follow His ways, the more _____ you will see. Don't push God out of your life or let others _____ you away from Him. Love Him, serve Him, and lead others to love Him, too.

The Christian _____ can be summed up in two commandments of Jesus found in Mark 12:30-31, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your _____, with all your _____, with all your _____ and with all your _____. The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment _____ than these." In fact, every commandment in Scripture is really an explanation of how to love God and how to love people. You simply can't follow the Lord _____ loving Him and loving others.

The Lord Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, gave us what some call the _____ rule. The Lord said, "In everything, therefore, treat people the _____ you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). Righteous people, who love the Lord, ask the question, "How do _____ want to be treated?" They treat others the way that they would like to be treated. If everyone followed this _____, wouldn't our society be a better place?

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians 3:12-15.

Love is our highest calling. Nothing is more _____ than loving God and loving other people. **Read what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.** Without love we can't fulfill our _____ in life; we become empty; and we gain nothing. If love is that important, then we ought to _____ what love is and how it behaves. Let me make these suggestions:

First, love warms a cold _____. The opposite of love is not _____ but apathy or indifference. A cold heart can _____ on by and never get involved. Negative and hurtful experiences can _____ the heart, can depress the spirit, and can drive away compassion. Love warms your heart, makes you _____, and causes you to feel and to act.

Selfishness and apathy lead people to sit by and do nothing, while others _____. **Read 1 John 3:16-18.** Love starts in the heart, but it doesn't end there. Love doesn't merely _____ about doing something. Love _____!

Many people today live _____, isolated lives. One-fourth of all the households in America have only _____ person in them. Researchers say that 40 percent of people relate _____ with others over a cell phone or a computer than they do in _____ life. Many family gatherings have little conversation and lots of _____. I visited a home recently and the first thing the host did was ban all use of smart phones. He wanted us to talk. I recently read that the number of people who have no one to _____ important matters with has tripled in the last twenty years. Loneliness can _____ to depression and illness. We need each other; we need to love and to be loved. It's essential to life.

Second, love _____ its will and itself for another's best interest. Love is never self-seeking or self-serving. First Corinthians 13:5 says love "does not _____ its own." Another version says "it doesn't insist on its own way." Love puts itself _____ and others _____. Love seeks to _____ more than it seeks to win. Love tries to understand by seeing things through another's _____. **Read what God urges us in Philippians 2:3-4.**

Many years ago, Francis of Assisi prayed a prayer worth remembering; he said, "Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life."

Third, when _____ and _____ arise, love seeks reconciliation. The Bible says, "If possible, so far as it _____ on you, be at peace with all men" (Romans 12:18). God has always wanted His people to have a compassionate and understanding _____. Philippians 4:5 says, "Let your _____ spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." We need a gentle spirit, one that is sweet and reasonable rather than one that stays _____ and grows _____.

Sometimes that means humbly and sincerely apologizing to those whom you have _____. **Read what the Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 5:23-24.** If you know you've offended someone, don't _____ until that person confronts you; go to him or her and get it straightened out.

Sometimes others _____ us. Love moves us to want to remain _____ and to forgive; so it's willing to go privately and humbly to the other to work things out. The Lord Jesus said, "If your brother sins (some versions say, sins against you), you go and show him his fault in _____; and if he listens to you, you have won your brother" (Matthew 18:15). Our world would be a much _____ place if two people at odds with each other would follow this teaching. Instead of trying to _____ an issue, many grumble and gossip. Proverbs 16:28 says, "A perverse man _____ strife, And a slanderer _____ intimate

friends.” Others seek _____ to get even. Instead of making the problem worse, love _____ to get along for reconciliation. Love values talking _____ someone rather than talking _____ someone. Gossip is still gossip no matter who’s doing it or who’s hearing it.

We can solve many problems by simply _____ some questions. People often assume the worst about others and accuse them of wrongdoing before they know the _____. Proverbs 18:17 says, “The first to plead his case seems _____, until another comes and examines him.” We may get hurt or angry when we hear _____ of the story but don’t know all the facts. Sometimes hearing the rest of the story can _____ us to understand what really happened and why. A few more facts can _____ our thinking entirely.

Read the story about the husband pushing his wife as a car was approaching.

Fourth, love knows how to _____. **Read what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:31-32.** Knowing that God had enough love to forgive us of our many, many sins, we should be _____ to forgive others of their few sins. God’s Word simply says, “love _____ a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Love _____ to put offenses behind us and to go on. First Corinthians 13:7-8 says, “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” Love never quits.

Whether you can forgive another is not some small matter; it actually affects your _____. God _____ you to forgive, if you wish to be forgiven. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:14-15.** People who want to experience the _____ of God have obligations to show _____ to others. James 2:13 says, “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” If we wish to be forgiven, we must _____ to forgive.

When God forgives us, He no _____ holds our sins and trespasses against us. Sometimes we _____ forgiving with forgetting. You can forgive a sin, even if you can’t _____ it. Forgiveness is not forgetting; it’s forgetting against. Second Corinthians 5:19 says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses _____ them.” Our sins are a matter of _____. God’s grace touches our hearts because He _____ with our sins rather than because He ignored or denied them. Because Jesus suffered for our sins, God doesn’t _____ them against us. The fact is that our sins have not disappeared; the _____ for our sins has. God has forgiven us.

Fifth, love will tell you what you _____ to hear, not what you _____ to hear. God’s Word says, “Faithful are the wounds of a _____, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy” (Proverbs 27:6). Honesty, even when it _____, from a true friend is far more loving than half-truths and flattery from someone who means to do you harm. The devil will tell you what you want to hear, whether it’s true or not; but the Lord will tell you what you need to hear to _____ your life, even if it hurts your feelings for a short time.

The very best thing you can do for a friend is to _____ him or her to Jesus Christ and the gospel. The gospel is good news of salvation and _____. People _____ the gospel story of Jesus Christ. They need to know that He died on the cross for their sins; He was buried; and He rose again on the third day. They need to know about His loving grace and His call for them to _____ and _____.

Sixth, loving others means _____ others. First Peter 4:10 says, “As each has received a gift, use it to _____ one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” Whatever talent we possess we should use it to bless the _____ of others. Galatians 6:10 says, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do _____ to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Read the story about the two brothers.

Why have we spent this time talking about love? Without love in the heart, we are just _____ beings. Without love, our lives are _____ with loneliness and sadness. Without love, we’ve failed our _____ in life; we have no value, and we make no gains. Oh, we need the love of Jesus in our hearts and in our lives so that we may love others.

God’s Holy Word teaches us how to _____ one another. The Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you love one another. And by this all men will know that you are My _____, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). The Lord wants us to love each other the _____ that He loves us. How has He loved us? Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his _____ for his friends” (John 15:13). The Lord Jesus loved us with a great love; He died for us.

When we love one another the way Jesus loved us, people _____ Christ living in us. Loving others like Jesus did _____ us as Christians. It’s not the only mark of a Christian, but it’s a necessary one. Let me ask you, are you _____ to others? Do you _____ others or hold grudges? Are you compassionate or do you have a closed heart? Do you _____ peace or do you get even? Do you have a sweet spirit of reasonableness or are you constantly grumbling? Do you try to _____ conflicts or do you gossip and slander others? Do you love like Jesus?

When the love of Jesus is in your heart, you’ll make a _____ in your life. I hope that you love the Lord enough to _____ Him. To become a Christian you must _____ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and be willing to _____ Him in the presence of others. You must cease doing evil and follow Christ in _____. You must be _____ into Christ, immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Oh, I pray that you’ll become a Christian today.