

HOW TO LOVE LIKE JESUS

Romans 12:9-10

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 1965 a new song came out by Jackie DeShannon that became an instant classic. It's called "What the World Needs Now Is Love." The chorus goes like this:

*What the world needs now is love, sweet love
It's the only thing that there's just too little of
What the world needs now is love sweet love
Not just for some but for everyone*

2. I think the Bible would agree with that. What the world needs now is love.
3. So, today we are going to learn how to love like Jesus.
4. We are in a sermon series called Be Transformed. We are walking through Romans 12 and learning how to become more like Jesus.
5. And if we want to be like Jesus, then we need to learn how to love, because if Jesus was anything, He was loving.

II. TEXT

1. **Romans 12:9-10** 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. 10 Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.
2. This passage tells us three ways to love like Jesus.

III. THREE WAYS TO LOVE LIKE JESUS

1. Love God.

- i. **Romans 12:9** Let love be without hypocrisy.
- ii. In Romans 12:9 it doesn't say if Paul is speaking about love for God or love for others. He just says, "Let love be without hypocrisy." But couldn't he be speaking about both? Couldn't he be saying, "Love God and others without hypocrisy"? Absolutely. If we are talking about how Christians should behave, then we have to deal with both. So, the first and most important way Christians should behave is to love God.

- iii. Paul says, “Let love be without hypocrisy.” Look at some other translations:
 - 1. ESV Let love be genuine.
 - 2. NLT Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them.
 - 3. AMP [Let your] love be sincere (a real thing);
 - 4. MSG Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it.
 - 5. NCV Your love must be real.
- iv. In other words, let your love for God be real love; genuine love; sincere love. Don’t just pretend to love God; sincerely love God. Don’t just act like you love God when others are watching, sincerely love God.
- v. How do you sincerely love God? **Loving God involves five actions.**
 - 1. Pursue a relationship with God.**
 - a. The command to love God means that God wants you to pursue an intimate love relationship with Him. A friendship with Him.
 - b. As a son, I can do all sorts of nice things for my parents. I can take care of their yard. I can pay their bills. I can wash their cars. I can say nice things about them. But if I don’t spend time with them, and talk with them, and enjoy life with them, then I’m not a loving son. To fully love my parents, I have to have a strong, intimate relationship with them. And that’s what it means to love God. God doesn’t just want you to obey or serve Him. He wants you to know Him; to walk with Him.
 - c. And relationship, of course, requires conversation. God wants you to love Him, and that means talking to Him often through prayer, and listening to what He has said to you through Scripture.
 - 2. Make your relationship with God your top priority.**
 - a. **Matthew 10:37** “The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

- b. Notice that loving God comes before loving others. Your relationship with God should come before all other relationships. Your affection for God should be greater than your affection for anything or anyone else. Your loyalty to God should come before anyone or anything else.
- c. A friend of mine who is not a Christian said that there have been times when he resented his Christian parents because they loved God more than him. That's exactly what Christians are supposed to do. But nonbelievers don't realize that putting God first actually makes us better people; it makes us better parents, husbands, fathers, friends, employees, etc.
- d. The main thing is to keep the main thing the thing. What's the main thing for the Christian? Loving God.

3. Have and express strong feelings of affection for God.

- a. When Jesus says to love your enemy, He isn't saying that you need to like them. He is saying that you need to treat them with kindness. But when the Bible says to love God, it is different. God does want you to like Him. He wants you to have strong feelings of affection for Him.
- b. The Bible commands us to take delight in the Lord (Ps 37:4), to sing to Him (Ps 30:4), to make music to Him (Ps 33:2), to stand in awe of Him (Ps 30:4), to worship Him (Ps 29:2), to revere or have the deepest respect for Him (Heb 12:28), to praise Him (Ps 30:4), to worship Him (Ps 29:2), to thank Him (1 Thess 5:18), to rejoice in Him (Phil 4:4), to boast about Him (Ps 6:11), to proclaim His greatness (Ps 34:3), to taste and see that He is good (Ps 34:8). These are words of great emotion and strong affection. And they are not just emotions that we feel, but that we express with our words and actions.

- c. Think about marriage. My wife doesn't merely want me to be kind to her; to be faithful to her; to provide for her; she deeply wants me to like her. To be in love with her. To desire her above all else. To cherish her. To treasure her. To value her. And I want those same things from her. The Bible says that the church is the bride of Christ. God wants us to have strong feelings of affection for Him, and to express them.
- d. Of course, the best ways to express your affection for God is to tell Him with your words and songs how much you love and adore Him.

4. Love God with every part of your life.

- a. **Mark 12:30** "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."
- b. God wants you to love Him with every part of your life, every arena of your life.
- c. If I'm going to have a healthy marriage, I can't just focus on pleasing my wife with some parts of my life but displease with the rest of my life. I can't please her on five days of the week, but then displease her on two days of the week. I can't please her with my words but not my actions, or vice versa. To have a healthy marriage, I need to love her with every part of my life.
- d. The same is true with God. He wants you to love Him with every part of your life: Your time, your talents, your tongue, your temple (body), your treasure, your thoughts – everything.

5. Obey God's commands.

- a. **John 14:15** "If you love Me, you will keep My commands."
- b. When it comes down to it, the most important way to love God sincerely is to obey His commands.

- c. My wife wants me to have strong feelings of affection for her. She wants me to tell her that I love her. She wants me to pursue a relationship with her; to spend time with her; to communicate often with her. But in the end, none of that matters if I'm not faithful to her. The most important part of loving my wife is faithfulness; loyalty; fidelity.
- d. Loving God is no different. In the end, what really matters is obedience.
- e. Go back to Romans 12:9. **Romans 12:9** Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good.
- f. At the most basic level, loving God means detesting evil and clinging to what is good.
- g. What does it mean to detest evil?
 - i. Some Bible versions say hate or abhor. The Greek literally means to hate or detest with horror (Adam Clarke). In other words, when it comes to sin, turn from it and avoid it at any cost.
 - ii. It's one thing to hate the consequences of sin. But we are to hate sin itself.
 - iii. What does it look like in real life to hate sin? Your hatred of sin is measured by what you are willing to do to turn from it and avoid it.
 - iv. It's one thing to say that you don't want to sin, but what are you willing to do to make sure that you avoid it?
 - v. Early in his career, Billy Graham and three of his friends made came up with a list of rules that they agreed to live by in order to avoid moral failure. It was called the Modesto Manifesto because they were in Modesto, California. But later it came to be known as the Billy Graham Rule. They agreed that they would not travel, meet, or eat along with a woman other than

their spouse. Many men over the years have adopted the rule, like Vice President Mike Pence, and have been criticized for it. They say it's too strict. But Billy Graham and his three friends never had a moral failure.

- h. What does it mean to cling to what is good?
 - i. The word "good" here is a synonym for righteousness, or obedience to God's moral will and conformity to His character.
 - ii. The word "cling" means to glue, or to unite by glueing.
 - iii. In other words, loving God means clinging to God's moral will like glue. Try to stay as close to it as possible.

2. Love others.

- i. The second way to love like Jesus is to love others.
- ii. **Romans 12:9** Let love be without hypocrisy.
- iii. Christians don't just love God; they love others.
- iv. Jesus said next to loving God, the most important thing is to love your neighbor as yourself.
- v. The word for "love" in Romans 12:9 and elsewhere is the Greek word "agape." To understand what it means to love others, you have to understand agape love.
- vi. **Definition:** Agape love is doing what is best for people (not what makes them feel good) and meeting their needs (not their wants).
- vii. Some people think that true love is approval. If you truly love someone, you will not disapprove of their behavior. For example, if you say that abortion is a sin, or homosexuality is a sin, people will say that you are unloving. That's ridiculous. I disapprove of my children's behavior all the time; but I still love them. Disapproving of someone's behavior doesn't mean you don't love them.
- viii. Some people think that love means making people feel good; so, if you make someone feel bad, that means you don't love them. That's crazy. Agape love means doing what is best for people, not

what makes them feel good. What's best for people is not always what makes them feel good. For example, what would make my children feel good is if they never got disciplined. But that's not what is best for them. So, sometimes, in the name of love, I have to discipline them and make them feel bad.

- ix. Some people think that love means giving people what they want. Anytime somebody asks you for something, you're supposed to give it to them. That's not love. Often what people want is not good for them. Think about children. Children often want things that are not good for them. The truly loving parent is not the indulging, permissive parent who gives the child whatever they want, but the parent who gives the child what they need, even if they don't want it.
- x. Let's go deeper with the meaning of agape love.

xi. Eight Truths About Agape Love

1. Agape love is a command. A Christian should never say, "I refuse to love that person." We have to love that person.
2. Agape love is an action. It's not enough to say that you love your neighbor, or to feel love for them. God wants you to act loving toward them. If love doesn't come out in your actions, then it's not agape love.
3. Agape love is a choice. A Christian should never say, "I can't love that person." What they mean is that no matter how hard they try, they don't feel love for the other person. But agape love is not dependent upon your feelings. It is a choice to act loving toward the other person regardless of how you feel.
4. Agape love is unmerited. We don't love people because of their performance, or because they deserve it. We love them unconditionally.
5. Agape love is free. We don't love and expect something in return. We don't expect to be paid back. We love for free.
6. Agape love is obedient to God. Love does not say, "If you love me you will commit this sin for me." Love does not say, "I broke God's commands because I love you." Love

conforms to the character and will of God. If you contract God's character or break His commands, your behavior is not loving. To love someone, you must detest what is evil and cling to what is good (Rm 12:9).

7. Agape love is sacrificial. Agape love is more than just helping someone when it is easy and convenient. Agape love is willing to endure hardship and pain for the benefit of the other. Love is willing to hurt; it is willing to be uncomfortable; it is willing to be inconvenienced for the loved one.
8. Agape love is universal. God commands us to love everyone (1 Thess 3:12). Jesus said to love your neighbor, and then He went on to explain that that means everyone (Lk 10:25-37). In fact, Jesus explicitly commands to us to love our enemies (Mt 5:43-44). This is what makes agape love supernatural – God's kind of love. It's natural to love people who are like you, who are nice to you, who are related to you, who have something you want, who you are attracted to. But agape loves everyone – those who are different, those who are mean, those who are unrelated to us, those who don't have anything we want.

3. Love your church family.

- i. **Romans 12:10** Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.
- ii. To love like Jesus, you must love God, and then others, and then third, love your church family.
- iii. How are we to love our church family?
- iv. We are to love them like family. Love your spiritual family the way you would love your natural family.
- v. The church is a spiritual family. We all have the same Heavenly Father. So the Bible says to love each other like family.
- vi. What would it look like if church members acted like family?
There are three ways to treat church members like family:

1. Acceptance.

- a. Accept one another despite our differences.

- b. We all have weird family members who are very different from us. But we don't reject, abandon, and avoid them. We still love them and associate with them because they are family.
- c. That's what it should be like in the church. In the church you'll find people from all different walks of life. Different ages, different interests, different tastes, different styles, different sizes, different incomes, different education levels, different I.Q.s, different parenting styles, different races, different views and opinions on a host of subjects.
- d. But we shouldn't reject, abandon, and avoid them because they are different.
- e. We should accept each other, and still get together and hang out and associate with each other because we're church family.
- f. **Romans 15:7 (NIV)** "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

2. Patience.

- a. Put up with each other in spite of faults and flaws.
- b. We all have family members who are EGRs – Extra Grace Required. They are selfish, rude, unreliable, needy, they have all kinds of problems, but we put up with them. We don't abandon them. We don't write them off. We don't reject them. We continue to love them and care for them because they are family.
- c. That's what it should be like in the church. When someone in the church fails, or hurts us, or lets us down, we shouldn't reject them; we shouldn't abandon them; we should continue to love and care for them. We should put up with them and forgive them.
- d. **Colossians 3:12-13** 12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,

13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

3. Responsibility.

- a. We would care for each other in times of need.
 - b. When a family member is in need, you make sacrifices to help them. That's what families do.
 - c. That's what it should be like in the church. We should take responsibility for each other. When a church member is in need – emotional, financial, physical, spiritual – we should make sacrifices to help them. When someone is sick, sad, in the hospital, struggling financially – we need to help out.
 - d. **Galatians 6:2** “Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
- vii. Paul gives a very practical way to love your church family in Romans 12:9.
- viii. **Romans 12:10** Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.
- ix. What does it mean to “take the lead in honoring one another”? It means to be eager to show respect for one another (Leon Morris, Pillar NT Commentary). To treat each other with the utmost respect. What does respect look like in real life? It just means treating people like they are important. Just the basics. Be polite. Look at people when they speak to you. Tell people hello or good morning when you see them. When people speak to you, answer them. If someone calls you or texts you, answer the phone, or get back to them as soon as possible. When ask for something ask politely. When someone does something nice for you, be sure to say thank you. Try your best to not be mean, or rude, or offensive. Don't talk about someone behind their back. Don't lie to people. If you say you're going to do something, do it. It's pretty much common sense. Be eager to show respect.

- x. Respect is rare in the world. If we would simply respect one another, the world would take notice and would be much more attracted to Christianity.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Some people want to be unique. They want to be different. They want to stand out. Others want to fit in. They want to blend in. But as a Christian you have a different calling. God doesn't want you to try to stand out and be different; and He doesn't want you to try to fit in. He wants you to be like Jesus. To imitate Christ. To copy Him.
2. What does it mean to live like Jesus? It begins with love. Loving God, loving others, and loving your church family.