

AGAPE LOVE

By HALO Ministry

HALO – Having Agape Love for Others

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HALO Ministry strives to teach people about God's love for us and why it's important to return that love to Him and one another. HALO's desire is to inspire people to surpass human conditions of love and passionately pursue agape love towards God, establishing a strong foundation of love, honor and praise towards Him. This is first and foremost. Then take a step further, extending that deep sense of unconditional love for one another. Becoming shining lights before men in this dark world, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Accomplishing this will serve as an example of the love God has for us, bringing more people to Christ as their Lord and Savior. To increase understanding of and acknowledge the power of the Holy Spirit to love others through the body of the church, fulfilling the greatest commandment.

35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." *Matthew 22:35-40*

HALO produces love focused Bible studies, weekly craft devotionals for children, monthly e-newsletters, and sponsors numerous services projects. We support HALO networks in communities throughout the world who desire to serve needs of others through love by embracing the HUGS (*Honor, Understanding, Giving, Serving*) project. Contact us if you wish to learn more about how you can become involved in the 2009 HALO HUGS mission. Honor God, honor people; understand God, understand people; Give to God, give to people; serve God, serve people.

Outline:

Case for Love

The Kind of Father God Is

Jesus' Ministry

Love is a Commandment

Learning to Love, the Choice is Ours

Conclusion / Prayer

In more detail, we look further into applications and ways to fulfill the following:

How we show we love God: Praise, worship and love God, accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, obey His commandments, pray, read and apply God's Word (Bible), serve Him and others (deeds), and love others.

The greatest act of love ever performed was Jesus' death on the Cross. Even though Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, He willingly laid down His life that we could be reconciled with God. He suffered as our substitute and paid the price for our sins.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. *Romans 3:21-26*

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. *Galatians 2:20*

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. *John 3:16*

With the Redemption plan of God, the Father sacrificed His Son and the Son sacrificed Himself for us, so that we can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life with Them forever. This is how much the Father and the Son love us.

Loving "others"—Friends, family, spouses, neighbors, children, the church, enemies, and the world. Putting on the armor of God to stand firm in obeying the commandments, becoming wise to grow in Christ, being cautious of what we say and do. We, as Christians, represent God by our actions and words.

Serve others— Serve others with love and cheerfulness and meet their needs.

4 Keys: 1) Sacrificial love, 2) Unconditional love, 3) Self-giving to God and others, and 4) Self-less (opposite of selfish).

Jesus' life was one of service and His last act exemplifies this as He washed His disciple's feet at the last supper and then accepted crucifixion.

13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. *John 13:13-15*

Loving ourselves enough to ask, "in light of past experiences, current circumstances, future hopes and dreams, according to God's will and plan for my life, what is the wisest thing to do? For myself, this person, this organization, that I may act in accordance with God's expectations on my life and reflect His love.

Case for Love!

About love or an even deeper love: Agape Love

Love, what a simple, yet powerful word that exuberates complex emotions. When we think of love, we think of popular love songs sung on the radio, about receiving love, or about superficial love fulfilling our wants and desires for the flesh, often selfishly. It is our human nature to love and be loved, sometimes at any expense.

Webster's dictionary defines love as: a deep and tender feeling of affection for, attachment to, or devotion to a person or persons, a strong liking for or interest in something.

Now, let us take it a step further and look at the definition of agape love. Agape is a term believed to be coined by Bible authors from the verb *agapao*— divine, unconditional, self-sacrificing, love that God has for humanity, to be committed to continually reciprocate and practice towards God and among one another. An intentional response to promote well-being when responding to that which has generated ill-being. We are to love others and expect nothing in return. Jesus teaches us about agape love.

27 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. 29 To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. 31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

32 "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. Luke 6:27-34

35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:35-38

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

With Jesus' new commandment, the Christian is to love his neighbor and brother, as much as Jesus loves the Christian. We are to have Christ-like sacrificial agape love for one another.

Webster defines agape as "wide open in surprise and wonder." It further describes agape as God's love for humanity, as spontaneous and altruistic love. Altruism is described as unselfish concern for others. So is the "wonder" of God's selfless, unconditional, generous love surprising? Not at all. Why? Because He is the greatest Creator of all things and all people. He created you and I, and wants us to choose to love Him.

Jesus said, 20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

John 17: 20-23

Jesus said, 24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." *John 17:24-26*

14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble;

I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life I will satisfy him,

And show him My salvation." *Psalms 91:14-16*

So what does the Bible say that love is? Let us look at the "Love Scripture" of the Bible, *Corinthians 13:1-13* defines love thoroughly:

1

The Greatest Gift 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

The entire Bible is laced with love as the hinge for connection to God and people, giving a surplus of wisdom, instruction and inspiration. Let us take another look at what the Bible says about love, it is further emphasized in *Romans 12:9-18*:

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. *Romans 12:9-18*

I'll be there for you. The kind of Father God is.

Our Father is kind and gentle and He wants the best for His children. He chastens us, to teach us. Just as a father has to sometimes punish his child so that the child can learn right from wrong, God the Father does the same to Christians, His children.

Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."
Revelation 3:19

5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? *Hebrews 12:5-7*

“I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the LORD Almighty.” 2 Corinthians 6:18

Why? LOVE. Even we discipline our own children because we love them. The great Creator of the universe, Father of mankind loves us! Yes, us! Regardless of our faults and sins, he sees potential in all of us. His love is sacrificial, unconditional, everlasting— it is agape love.

Just as those of us, who are parents, realize how deep our love for our own children runs. A mother will run to her infant’s bedside seven times a night just to pat her sweet baby on the back to soothe and comfort him, letting him know she is with him. Or a father, who gives limitless piggyback rides, because the precious plea of “Daddy, just one more time!” clenches his heart even when his back is about to give out. A friend who lays down his life for another. The wishing that we could bear or take away the pains our innocent children face during injuries, sickness or heartaches. How many times have you heard a parent say, “I would give anything to take the pain for my child. If I could, I would give my life for them.”

Parents also have the deep desire to be loved by their children, to be wanted and needed by them. We want our children to choose to love us and not force them to love us. We want them to honor and respect us. God wants us to love Him, but He cannot make humans love Him. It must be a free will decision of the believer’s heart.

29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. *Mark 12:29-30*

God our Father says to us in the Bible: I am here for you, I want to teach you, take your pain away and comfort you, and I want you to choose to love, honor and respect Me. God is here for us, waiting for us to submit and receive His only Son, Jesus Christ.

for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. *John 16:27*

Jesus Himself, when He appeared to Peter after His resurrection, asked Peter three times, “Do you love Me?”

15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

16 He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, 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 all things; You know that I love You."
Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. *John 21:15-17*

God the Father and Jesus simply want us to love Them and have a close personal relationship with Them. In the book of Revelation, Jesus urges the believer not to forget the "first love" relationship we have with Him.

4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works -*Revelation 2:4-5*

Did you know that nothing can separate us from the love of God the Father and Jesus the Son?

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written:

"For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:35-39

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 I and My Father are one." *John 10:27-30*

Jesus Ministry

Jesus is love, from conception to death to resurrection.

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. *John 15:9-10*

While dwelling among us, Jesus Christ led a sinless life, serving people, teaching of God's love, bringing hope and the truth of salvation to the lost, healing the sick, performing miracles beyond our understanding to testify of the Father's power. During Jesus' ministry, he pushed the expectation of love to a new standard where behavior and beliefs combine into godly actions. Jesus is the perfect example and model of the child of God. During our Christian walk, we are to mature desiring to model Jesus.

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. *Ephesians 5:1-2*

The same way a child says, “I want to be a superhero, a firefighter or a doctor.” They have found a role model, and obtaining that dream takes perseverance, patience and love. With Jesus, as our role model and God by our side, all things are possible.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. *Philippians 4:13*

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. *Matthew 5:48*

Becoming like Jesus, means that we will do the same works as Jesus did, extending compassion to all people. Never rejecting someone, but welcoming people of all kinds with open arms. Once we are born again, it becomes our desire to please Him as a child desires to please their father. We simply do our best to obey Jesus because we love Him. Upon salvation, the Holy Spirit indwells us and aids us in teaching, reaching and loving.

Jesus said, 15 “If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. *John 14:15-17*

Jesus said, 21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?”

23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”

John 14:21-23

Jesus came to show us what our Father is really like. He came to tell us that God is for us, not against us and that He really does love us deeply and passionately. Not only did He tell us His Father loved us, but He demonstrated it by laying down His own, sinless life, that we might be born again into His wonderful family and become co-heirs with Him inheriting God’s great kingdom.

But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” *1 Corinthians 2:9*

Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. *Galatians 4:7*

May you feel the love of God so deeply that you have a fiery passion to proclaim the truth of who God is. Demonstrating His love, testifying of your faith, and therefore planting seeds of truth so the Holy Spirit can do its work, bringing people to salvation through Jesus Christ.

Love is a Command

Whether a believer in Christ or not, at some point in time you have seen or heard the Ten Commandments, the basic moral code for humanity given to Moses by God.

BIBLE = Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.

What a great Father we have that He gave us a guidebook, where the answers to life's most pressing questions, trials and tribulations, laws, warnings, etc. are addressed as well as a personal Helper, God the Holy Spirit, to see us through and help us understand Scripture.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. *John 14:26*

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. *John 15:26*

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;
John 16:13

God uses the Law to bring a sinner to 1) understand sin against God, 2) sincere repentance from sin and 3) acceptance of Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. *Romans 3:20*

God's First Commandment of the Ten Commandments is:

1 And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. *Exodus 20:1-6*

Jesus gave us a new commandment in the New Testament during His Ministry.

Jesus said, 12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends... These things I command you, that you love one another.” *John 15:12-17*

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

We must love God with all of our being, and love others as God loves us.

Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” *Matthew 22:37-40*

On these two commandments, hang all the Law and the Prophets. Wow, that makes sense. It couldn't be more clear that if we love God with every ounce of our being, and love others as ourselves, then all the other commandments would be honored.

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. *Romans 13:8-10*

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
Galatians 5:13-14

We will all face judgment. The just and the unjust. We must love Jesus and love our neighbors, and forgive our brother. Mercy shown towards others is an act of love, compassion and forgiveness.

32 “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?

For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

37 “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” *Luke 6:32-38*

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. *1 John 4:20-21*

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." *Matthew 6:14-15*

Judgment day is real, Heaven and Hell are real. The choice is ours to learn to love the way God wants us to. Not only does God want us to hear the Word, but He wants us to take action and apply the Word. Be doers of the word and not hearers only.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. *John 13:17*

and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. *James 1:25*

We are not to just hear about love, we are to actively love.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 13:13

But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. *1 Corinthians 8:3*

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.
Colossians 3:12-14

All Scripture is for teaching, and completely inspired by God. The Bible is truth and every word in it is worth our attention.

Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." *John 8:31-32*

159 Consider how I love Your precepts;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.
160 The entirety of Your word is truth *-Psalms 119:159-160*

But He [Jesus] answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" *Matthew 4:4*

15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 *Timothy 3:15-17*

As Christians, we are saved by faith alone, Jesus alone and the finished work of the Cross alone. We are able to learn how to love and become vessels of God's love because once we are born again, Christ is with us.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. *Ephesians 2:4-9*

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God –*Ephesians 2:8*

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." *Galatians 2:20-21*

This means that righteousness does not come from obeying all the Law and commandments. Simply being a "good" person does not automatically give salvation. Salvation is not earned by good works or love. Salvation is obtained by receiving and accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You must receive Jesus into your heart, believe in Him and follow Him.

Jesus said, "he who believes in Me has everlasting life." John 6:47

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." *John 3:36*

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. 1 *John 5:13*

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. 1 *Peter 1:5-9*

Learning to Love, the choice is ours

Life is about learning to love, it is an act of our will that requires determination and practice. Love is vulnerable and it is often difficult. Therefore we must exercise patience and understanding. God says we must decide to love one another, we are to love other believers and non-believers, regardless of how we feel about them or how unlovable they may seem. We simply love them because God created them, and God desires to have a relationship with them. Therefore, we should treat fellow believers as our brothers and sisters, and treat non-believers as future siblings.

Relationships with many different kinds of people are needed in order to practice loving one another. Allowing time for interacting, sharing, questioning and praying for one another. As humans, we all desire attention, love pays attention. We have to retrain ourselves to think and act in loving ways. Relying on prayer and the Holy Spirit to guide us. Learning to love takes effort and obedience, it is life's most important lesson.

We come into this world with nothing materialistic and leave with nothing. Our time on earth is our trial run, practice session, our chance to choose eternal life and learn from this life how to love, praise, worship and serve. We obtain true glorification when we arrive in heaven, praising our Father, loving our co-heirs, and relishing all the promises and glory that awaits us as we celebrate our salvation spending eternity with God. Life is about love, nurturing, building relationships with others and with God. If we fail to recognize this, we will have missed the reason why God put us on this planet. Worldly success may be achieved, but our spiritual success prepares us for eternity. We will soon discover by taking a short journey through the Bible just how important love really is! Refer to Kathy's word under Inspiration, the references to love being a force is true.

“Teach them, show them and they will come. But remember it is not about force, it's by love. There is no greater force than love.” *-Rhema Word from God the Father to Kathy*

We have a choice: to love God or to love worldly things. Which is greater the rewards here on earth, or the rewards in heaven?

You Cannot Serve God and Riches

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” *Matthew 6:24*

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. *1 John 2:15*

Now is the time to make the choice, to start learning to love and practice loving ourselves and others the way Jesus did. We only pass through this world but once. We should strive to do as much good as we can and show any act of kindness and love as deeply as possible to all human beings, for great will be our reward in heaven.

You will not pass through this time again, so practice now and don't defer it. No one knows when their last day on earth will be, so take advantage of the present. If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, start there.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me."

Conclusion

The supreme expression of God's love was Christ's death on the Cross for our sins, through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. God demonstrated His unconditional love for us, to the extent of sacrificing His beloved Son, who paid the ultimate price for our sins so that you and I might have a new eternal life. Today the risen Christ brings a new life of love, joy and peace to those that receive Him. The love produced by God's Spirit is the only way to meaningful existence, human understanding, genuine community, and complete healing.

When you receive the risen Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can never go beyond the reach of His hand. His love will lead you daily through illness, depression, uncertainty, pain, hardships, fear and perplexity. You can stand up to anything because He is always with you. His love never fails.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. *2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 I and My Father are one." *John 10:27-30*

When we yield to Him and trust Him, we can pray whole heartily for ourselves and others happiness, secure in the knowledge of the Holy Bible that God is going to fulfill our needs (not necessarily our wants) and we don't need to depend on a person to do it. We can say with all our heart to someone, "I love you, with no strings attached, without judgment. I just want to be around to support you in whatever way you and the Lord want me to. I want to pray for you, with you. I want to see you happy and fulfilled, whether a friend, spouse, family member, co-worker, child or neighbor." That is the pursuit of agape love. That is truly serving rather than being served and loving rather than demanding to be loved, or expecting anything in return, other than simply pleasing God.

Now I challenge all readers to learn to love one another as Jesus instructed. Choosing to be free from the bondage of self love, and replace it with sacrificial agape love for God and one another. Yielding ourselves as vessels, allowing the Lord to love others through us. We must allow Christ to transform us into His likeness, this is the only way we will be able to love with true agape love. Only when we consciously submit ourselves to Him, allowing Him to love us, will we be able to reciprocate and pay that deep agape love forward.

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 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. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:7-11

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? *James 2:5*

14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble;

I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life I will satisfy him,

And show him My salvation." *Psalms 91:14-16*

And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." *John 14:21*

You may want to ask God to help you take this challenge by praying the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I come before You today to thank You for Your unconditional love, for Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross for redemption of my sins. Praise You Father for Your grace and mercy, which I am undeserving of. Thank You for Your free gift of eternal salvation. I thank You for Your unfailing love and for Your teaching Holy Spirit. Thank You for never giving up on me. I know you are with me.

Please open my heart and mind with understanding of Your love, search my heart and reveal to me how I can better please You and praise You. Father, I desire to love all believers and non-believers just like Jesus did, and to let my actions and my words be a reflection of Your love. For those I find hard to love, let me remember that they are Your creation, and I honor all that You are and all that You reign over. Help me not to judge, condemn, criticize or rebuke others, but to become an example to all people of Your love, forgiveness and concern for their salvation. May my tongue be tamed to speak only with love and kindness, building people up and never causing pain. Sift me and mold me into the person You want me to become and let my spirit be a light reflecting Your great love to all. It is my deep desire to serve You and Your people with a humble and cheerful heart.

Glory be to You Father, thank You, in Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love. *1 Corinthians 16:13-14*