

WHAT LOVE MEANS IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

First Peter 1:22

Becoming a Christian isn't an isolated solitary event. It automatically means that you are related to others who have also done the same. But not as a fellow member of an institution, but as a fellow member of a community. But this community of Christians is more than just an association of like-minded people who deliberately meet with each other. It is a community that stands out from all other communities. *It is the community of the redeemed. It is the community of the forgiven.* Those who don't know Christ are neither redeemed nor forgiven. While most people who accept that there is a God, consider Him to be a forgiving God, they have never sought or received that forgiveness that they instinctively know is available.

1. Why did God redeem us? (Rom. 5:8)

2. Why did God send Jesus into this world? (Jn. 3:16)

Now that we have been forgiven and redeemed, we are called to live differently. In fact, the way we used to live doesn't hold the same attractiveness to us any more. The way we used to treat people no longer seems appropriate now because of the way that God has treated us.

3. What is one of the main principles by which we are to relate to others now?
(Mtt. 6:14-15; 18:21-22)
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BY THIS WE MUST PURIFY OURSELVES

God's Word is the truth. Peter commends these saints for obeying the truth. The result of them obeying the truth was that they were to have sincere love for each other.

4. What other kind of "loves" can we have for others?
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By loving others we take the focus off ourselves and thus purify ourselves of ourselves. We love others by our actions as well as with warm feelings. We listen to what others are saying and respond with kindness. We take an interest in people that goes beyond exchanging greetings.

5. People are funny creatures. They have highs and lows. How are we to relate to our brothers and sisters during such times? (Rom. 12:15)
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In Jesus, we have the perfect example of how to love. Not once did He ever say that He loved! (Although He did say that He had compassion for people [Matt. 15:32]). His love for people was a demonstrated love.)

6. What kind of love does the Scripture command us to have? (1Jn. 3:17-18)



This is a principle: feelings follow actions. This is another principle: you reap what you sow. In both principles the initiative begins with us, not someone else.

7. At what times is it hard for us to love others?

LOVE DISPLAYS UNITY

Christ's love sets the Christian community apart as evidence that there is a God who can intervene in human affairs. Surely this world needs to know that there is God who loves them deeply. Surely we need to be the community of God's people who display this love, firstly to each other then to the world.

8. Is it right to show preference to other Christians over non-Christians? (Gal. 6:10)

10. What promise did Jesus make in reference to believers loving each other? (Jn. 17:22-26)

It's often the little things that we can do for each other that end up meaning a lot. Small acts of kindness can sway even the hardest of hearts.

11. What can heal a relationship, or even prevent damage to one? (Prov. 10:12; 17:9; 1Peter 4:8)
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Perhaps another way of translating the expression love one another from the heart is to say don't just love theoretically, but show your compassion in practical ways. Men, look for opportunities to love the children of single mothers (who may not have a male role model), or perhaps help out with maintenance of a car, house or other machinery. Ladies, look for opportunities to help young mums with new children, who may need a break or a hand. Young people, look for opportunities to help another young person, perhaps in making friends, or in doing some task. Maybe there is an elderly person who would appreciate the friendship of a young person. Whatever we do, may God help us to do it in love.

Amen.