

## BIBLICAL LOVE – What it is and what it is not

**Overarching Reality:** Love is not about us, it is about the character of God. All of the expectations placed upon us concerning love are centered on God, who is love.

**Error:** Love is emotion-based. My love for another, for my country, for God is dependent upon how I feel about them at the time. My love can fluctuate from day to day, even moment to moment. My love is at the mercy of my feelings.

**Consequences:** Love changes with my feelings. Love changes when I am wronged, or when I don't feel loved. I follow my heart: if my heart no longer feels love toward a person, then I am under no obligation to keep up false pretenses. I love God when he is good to me. I love my spouse when he is good to me. I love my neighbor when he loves me. Love changes.

**Truth:** Love is a **CHOICE**, not an emotion.

**Implication:** We do not base our love for a person upon their looks, their actions, or their emotions; but rather upon our own choice to love them. We do not “earn” another's love, and we do not expect others to “earn” our love. We do not love God because of what He does for us or what He gives us, but because we choose to love Him as He has chosen to love us. This is the only way the word: “for better or worse” makes sense to a marriage. You love them for no other reason than you have chosen to do so.

**God's Example:** God **chose** to love Israel, God **chose** to love the world, and it is only the **will of God** that sustains His love. God loved us while we were yet sinners. Why does God love us? **Not** because of what we have done, but because He **chose** to love us. Imagine a world where God's love changed based upon his feelings at the time or upon our actions. Imagine a world where God might just “not feel it” anymore.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

Ezekiel 16

Micah 3:1-6

Romans 5:8

1 John 4:9, 19

**Error:** Love is a two-way street. It is a 50/50 relationship. Each person must hold up their end. Love has to be both ways: we need to meet in the middle.

**Consequences:** My love is now contingent upon their love. If they stop loving, I stop loving. If they stop “holding up their end”, I stop “holding up my end”. Love becomes “give and take”. If you do “this” for me then I will do “this” for you. If you withhold, I will withhold. If you give, I will give. Love now comes with “obligations”.

**Truth:** Love is a **NOT** a 50/50 relationship; it is 100/100 every day, all the time.

**Implication:** Our love does not change based upon the action/lack of action of the other. They do not need to “carry their own weight” in order to receive love from you. You love them regardless of if they are carrying their own weight. You give them 100% of who you are. You sell yourself out to love them, even at the expense of yourself. Sacrificial love is the principle: you give everything that you have, and everything that you are, all the time, regardless of recompense.

**God's Example:** God withheld nothing from us in love. God gives us 100% percent of His love all the time. God so love the world that He gave us His only begotten Son. He withheld nothing, and He still withholds nothing. What does God get in return for His love? God gives His all to us, and He expects our all in return. Aren't you glad that the love between us and God is not 50/50? Aren't you thankful that God does not gauge His love based upon how much we love Him!

Jeremiah 31:3

John 3:16

John 15:13

2 Corinthians 12:15

1 John 4:10

**Error:** Love is my choice. I love who I want to love. I am under no obligation to love anyone.

**Consequences:** Love is now based upon favor, and the door is opened to the emotion-based love as described above. Love is based upon me and my personal benefit in the situation, and it is no longer love at all.

**Truth:** Love is an obligation. God expects us to love our spouse, to love our neighbor, and to love our God.

**Implication:** We love others and we love God because He loves us. Love defines who we are and how we operate. We are driven by a love for God and therefore a love for others. We are commanded to love, so we love.

**God's Example:** God is love. God has commanded us to love.

John 15:12

Romans 13:9-10

1 Corinthians 13

Galatians 5:14

1 John 4:10-11

**Error:** Love means making the other person happy all the time.

**Consequences:** The love loses balance. Instead of doing what is best for that person, you do what you think that person wants. Instead of disciplining a child, you “tolerate” their evil in the name of love. Instead of correcting a person, you “overlook” their faults.

**Truth:** Love is about doing what is best for the one being loved, regardless of self.

**Implication:** The end goal of love is not happiness, it is Christ-likeness. You will do what is best for a person, even if that means discipline, correction, and pain.

**God's Example:** God chastens us as a father chastens that child whom He loves. God refines us in love. God acts in our best interests, even if it means pain and hurt. God's love thinks long-term benefit, not short term happiness.

Deuteronomy 8:1-16

Job 23:8-10

Psalms 94:12-13

Psalms 119:71

Proverbs 3:11-12

**Final Thought:** We have all grown up watching these Disney movies that tell us to follow love, follow our heart, wait for that prince or princess to come along; and so our lives are hit or miss, our marriages are hit or miss. Don't marry based on your heart, don't follow your heart, don't do what you think is best; marry based on God's heart, follow God's heart, marry God's best. Don't base your love on appearance, on personality, and certainly not on compatibility. Find a spouse that loves God, be a spouse that loves God. And all the other things will be added unto you.