

How to Love People Well - Part 2

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This article continues from [How to Love People Well - Part 1](#).

Being secretly pleased when something unfortunate happens to someone we don't like may be normal, but it's not right. It's normal to find some people irritating and focus more on ourselves than on others. It's normal to insist on our own way. But that is not the way love behaves. As we follow Jesus, we must learn a more excellent way to live. In this way, we show we are children of our Father (Matthew 5:45).

What Loving People Looks Like

There are many definitions of love, but we take our understanding of love from the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul tells us what love looks like. Whether we are a saint learning to show the love of Jesus to others, an evangelist attempting to reach the lost with the gospel, or a church leader discipling others and helping them grow, this is the kind of love we need to have.

Love Does Not Insist on Its Own Way

Everyone has a different way of doing things. Love acknowledges and respects this. When we love, we can be flexible and open to new ideas. We won't always follow those ideas; we must still test everything against Scripture. But love considers others above itself, which means that sometimes, for the sake of others, we will do things differently to the way we would prefer (Romans 12:10). Our attitude towards others should be humble. In the world, we submit to leaders and those in authority, and within the church, we submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Romans 13:1-2; Ephesians 5:21).

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Insisting on your own way alienates others. In most situations, building relationship is more

important than 'being right'. Love learns to present an idea humbly, not as 'my way or the highway'. What we want doesn't matter half as much as what God wants. And God wants us to love one another.

Love is Not Irritable or Resentful

Irritability is being wound up by the present. Resentfulness is being wound up by the past. Neither has a place in the followers of Jesus. We can't blame being irritable on our personality or 'that time of the month' if the Bible says being irritable comes from a lack of love. We need to overcome it. Being irritable says, 'My time is more important than your life, your feelings and your growth in the Lord.' The answer to irritability is to let patience have its perfect work in us (James 1:4).

Resentfulness happens when you play a mental highlights reel of everything that ever hurt you and allow it to shape your current mood. A resentful person does not think the best of others. They have let the sun go down on their anger and now live in a twilight world of expecting things to go wrong and others to hurt them. The answer to resentment is forgiveness. Let go of those hurtful memories – forgive and forget. That is the way that God loves us and that is how we should love ourselves and others (Hebrews 8:12; John 13:34).

Love Does Not Rejoice at Wrongdoing but Rejoices with The Truth

It is tempting to rejoice when something unpleasant happens to someone unpleasant. Sometimes we can be glad we spoke rudely or managed to hurt someone who hurt us. But that is not how love behaves. If we love our enemies, there is no room to enjoy wrongdoing, even if it happens to someone we think deserves it. Rather, we must rejoice with the truth. That means only what is God-honouring, what is righteous, what is of the light.

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By God's grace, others' wrongdoing can provide an opportunity for the gospel – God can work everything for our good (Romans 8:28). But while Paul encouraged the Ephesians to make the best use of their time because the days are evil, we don't rejoice that the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16). Jesus said not even to rejoice at having power over the works of the devil. Rather, He told His disciples, rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

Love Bears All Things

People often speak of the need for healthy boundaries to protect ourselves from being burnt out or taken advantage of. People warn against 'performance mode' and doing too much. But we must not shut the door to helping with what weighs others down. Paul says to throw the door open, because '*love bears all things*'. Writing to the Galatians, a church caught up in 'performance mode', Paul says, '*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*' [The law of Christ is to love one another] (Galatians 6:2; John 13:34).

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Paul saw no conflict between the command to bear others' burdens and to find the cure for the culture of dead religious performance that troubled the Galatian church. We too can be confident, as Paul was, that bearing one another's burdens is not a symptom of works-based religion, but rather evidence of love in action and of someone fulfilling the law of Christ.

Love Believes and Hopes All Things

We all hate the feeling when someone doesn't believe us. If you know someone doesn't believe you or hold out much hope for you, you are unlikely to open up to that person. When Paul says, love believes all things, he isn't suggesting we fall for everything or allow ourselves to be manipulated. But he is advocating a caring approach. The old saying is true: 'People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care'.

Love will attempt to see life through someone else's eyes. When helping others, their view of the world is their reality. When they tell you how the world looks to them, don't tell them they are wrong. Believe them. Then show them what God says about a world that looks that way.

Believing people is not the same as believing in them. We know people will let us down, but we can still believe them. People can be hopeless and we can still have hope for them. We can have hope for every troubled marriage, every unsaved relative, every situation of sickness or need, because our hope is not in the people we see, but in the Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

Love Endures All Things and Never Ends

Love doesn't run out. That's why we can endure all things. Because love is from God and so the supply is limitless (1 John 4:7). Sometimes we encounter people like leeches, who seem set on sucking us emotionally and spiritually dry. But no leech can suck fast enough to dry up the well of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised would bubble from within us if we drink the water He gives (John 4:14).

Drink from Jesus and your love will never end.

Drink from Jesus and your love will never end. When Peter came to Jesus and asked how often he should forgive His brother, Jesus said to him, '*I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times*' (Matthew 18:21,22). Only when we are drinking from Jesus can we show that kind of love.

Loving People Well

Jesus said, '*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*' (John 13:35). The authenticity of our witness hinges on the genuineness of our love. '*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*' (Colossians 3:12).