

The Greatest Thing in the World

Part I

by Linda Minnick

*But now faith, hope, love, abide these three;
but the greatest of these is love.*

1 Cor 13:13

*The Love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.*

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

--Frederick M. Lehman



Definition of Love



A deep, tender, ineffable feeling of affection and solicitude (care for the well-being of another) toward a person

~American Heritage Dictionary

agapē: *affection or benevolence; charity, love.*

agapaō: *to love (in a social or moral sense); broader term embracing especially the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety; of the head*

phileō: *to be a friend to (fond of [an individual or an object]), that is, have affection for (denoting personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; specifically to kiss (as a mark of tenderness, not of passion)*

By definition, love is an _____ in combination with _____. True Biblical love cannot have the one without the other. Complete love involves the heart, the mind, and the soul.

1 Cor 13:1-3 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.



A. From what the Bible says how do I know God loves me?

1. I know God loves me because He gave _____!

Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

1 Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (appeasement of His wrath) for our sins.

2. I know God loves me because His Son died for me _____!

Rom 5:7-8 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Eph 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

*As at the cross I humbly bow
And gaze upon Thy thorn-crowned brow,
And view the precious bleeding form
By cruel nails so bruised and torn,
Knowing Thy suffering was for me,
In grief I cry, "How can it be?"
How can it be that God should love a soul like me,
O how can it be?*

*How can it be? How can it be?
Was ever grace so full and free!
From heights of bliss to depths of woe
In loving kindness Thou didst go,
From sin and shame to rescue me—
O Love Divine, How can it be?
How can it be? How can it be?
that God should love a soul like me,
O how can it be?*

--Avis B. Christiansen

©1961 John W. Peterson Music Company, CCLI #2447 Mount Calvary Baptist Church

3. I know God loves me because He _____

2 Th 2:13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

Rom 1:7 To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. He loves me _____.

Jn 16:27 For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

2 Th 2:16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

1 Jn 3:1a See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are.

Heb 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.

Rom 8:17a And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Jn 3:35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.



C. _____, God the Son, the One who died for me, loves me!

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me.

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Rev 1:5-6 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.



*And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

*'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

*He left His Father's throne above—
So free, so infinite His grace—
Humbled Himself in matchless love
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!*

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

*No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.*
--Charles Wesley

God wants me _____.



A. To love God is a _____.

Mat 22:37-38 And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the great and foremost commandment. (Mk 12, Lk 10)

B. _____ to loving God

1. I can choose to love _____ _____ instead of God.

Mat 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

2. I can choose to love _____ _____ instead of God.

Jn 12:25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

3. I can choose to love _____ _____ instead of God.

2 Tim 3:2-4 For men will be lovers of self,... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

4. I can choose to love _____ instead of God.

Mat 10:37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.



C. _____ of loving God

1. He will give me _____ .

Luk 10:25-26 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOUR-SELF." And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."

Rom 6:22-23 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. He will make _____ work for my _____!

Rom 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

3. He has given me certain promises.

Jn 14:23 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 abode with him."

Eph 6:24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

-The Father _____

-The Father and the Son will _____

-I will have the _____

4. He will _____ and know what _____ for Him!

1 Cor 8:3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

Heb 6:10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

5. He has prepared for me in _____!

1 Cor 2:9 But just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

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

*What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
Oh, make me Thine forever; and, should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.*

--Bernard of Clairvaux

D. The _____ of my Love for God

1. The measure of my love for God is whether or not I am keeping His _____.

Jn 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Jn 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.

2. What are His commandments? _____

Jn 14:23-24a Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. He who does not love Me does not keep My words.

3. All His commandments are summarized in the two greatest commandments.

Mat 22:37-40 And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

*Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild, restless sea,
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, "Christian, follow me."*

*Jesus calls us: by Thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,
Serve and love Thee best of all.*

--Cecil F. Alexander



God wants me to _____.



Mat 22:39b “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

A. To love my neighbor is a _____.

Rom 13:8-10 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

1 Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

B. How do I love my neighbor as myself?

Jn 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

–Compare the Old Commandment with the New.

Old—Lev. 19:18b But you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

New—Jn 13:34b Even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

-The way _____.
_____.

-How did He love me? _____.

_____.

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Tit 2:13-14 Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, . . .

1 Pe 2:24 And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

-Must we all die for one another?

*Eph 5:2 And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a **sacrifice** to God as a fragrant aroma.*

*Rom 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy **sacrifice**, . . .*

–Jesus showed us how to do it

Jn 13:4-5 got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

Jn 13:12-16 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

*When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

--Isaac Watts