

The Greatest of These Is Love

By Marilyn LaSrape

Scriptures to Study: Mark 12:28-31; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 4:1-3; Book of 1 John

The love verse: "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 12:30).

To love the Lord your God with all your heart is to love him with all your emotional being. To love God with all your mind is to love him with all your intellectual being. To love God with all your soul is to love him with all your spiritual being. To love God with all your strength is to love him with all your physical being.

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

The ultimate test for us is our love for God and others. If we really want to test ourselves to determine if our love meets God's expectations, we need to put our names every place the word "love" is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13. What a sobering, mind tilting and challenging concept!

The love book: First John. John was known as the apostle of love. The word "love" is mentioned 36 times in the Book of First John. He impresses our minds with the fact we are to "love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Paul told the Christians in Rome that God demonstrated his own love toward us **while we were still sinners**. To borrow a statement made by one of the preachers in the brotherhood: "Have you ever messed up and your 'make-up' never quite measured up to your 'mess up?'" Thanks be to God through his love and mercy, he has taken care of all such "mess ups" when Christ died on the cross!

Biblical love is not an emotion. Biblical love expresses itself in keeping God's commandments. It is a deliberate decision of your will to seek the highest spiritual good of another regardless of how you may feel personally about that person. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

1. Since God demonstrated his love toward us while we were yet sinners, what must our attitude be toward one another?
2. Is it possible to love God whom we have not seen and hate our brother whom we have seen?
3. Is love for one another essential to our right relationship with God? Why?