



True Love is Not Based on Feelings

Friendships and families tend to fragment when the glue holding them together is feeling-based “love.” This type of “love” takes little effort and requires almost no attention, since it is self-oriented and dependent on others for personal gratification. In other words, feeling-oriented love is linked to what we believe others think about us, how others treat us, or how they “make us feel.”

On the other hand, love from God’s point of view is sacrificial. True love, God’s love, is demonstrated in brilliant clarity by Christ’s sacrifice for us (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10). When we respond to His love, we are changed (2 Corinthians 5:17) and, by His grace and power, can learn to love in a Christ-like manner. True love results from our relationship with Christ (1 John 4:19), describes our relationships with other believers (John 13:34), and enables us to respond with Christ-like love no matter how we are treated (Matthew 5:44). In fact, true Christ-like love doesn’t just respond . . . it initiates, just like God’s love for us.

The characteristics of true love are easy to understand. Their simplicity accentuates the difficulty we have in practicing them when we rely on our efforts instead of Christ’s strength (John 15:5). Many of the components of true love are in the Bible’s love chapter—1 Corinthians 13: *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).

When we review the elements of true and authentic love, it is evident that they are not based on feelings. In fact, feelings can often run counter to the expressions of true love. Yet, Christ-like love can be expressed in spite of feelings, not because of them.

True love—that which is constant and dependable—is demonstrated to others because of our loving commitment to Christ, not because of what we may think or “feel” about others. Out of our relationship with Christ, we can provide gracious responses to others (remember 1 Corinthians 13), no matter how mean or obnoxious they may seem to be. Never forget: What we think others deserve is often impacted by “how we feel,” a state which is typically fickle and notoriously unpredictable.

When we express true love, we show the difference Jesus makes in our lives. Following the example of Christ, true love can give others what they need rather than what they may deserve. Isn’t that what Christ’s love did for us? When we respond to others in true love, we learn to love them as Jesus loves us. As we mature in His love, we will recognize that true love has little to do with feelings but everything to do with our response of faith and loving commitment to Christ (Ephesians 5:2).

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Romans 5:8, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:10, In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

1 John 4:19, We love because he first loved us.

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

Matthew 5:44, “But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...’”

John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Ephesians 5:2, And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.