

Love: The Basis Of Life

Romans 13:8-10 [NIV] *“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.”*

The commandments given by God through Moses as part of the Old Covenant are fulfilled within the New Covenant that Jesus Christ brought to all humanity and ratified by His death on the cross, by one word “love.”

Matthew 22:35-40 [NIV] *“One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

The loving of our Creator God and Saviour is linked to loving our neighbour as much as we love ourselves.

The Greek word translated “love” in the above is “agapé” – a spontaneous love, irrespective of the rights or response of the person receiving this love.

A love that involves sacrifice on our part to show and fulfil this love.

In this article I wish to consider the application of this love in two specific areas.

- a) The training of our children [our nearest neighbours].
- b) Understanding how God deals with us as His children.

John 1:1-2, 14 [NIV] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” ... “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

One of the reasons the Word, Jesus Christ became a human being was for us to fully understand that He knows what it is like to be human. [**Hebrews 4:14-16**]

How do we apply this to the relationship we have with our children?

Try to consider every situation from the child’s viewpoint.

At birth a child is –

- a) Thrust suddenly into a strange, completely new world, with a total and complete loss of the security experienced in the womb.

Thus the first and greatest need the child has is to regain the feeling of security, in other words to know they are loved.

The child needs to be held close, feel covers tucked in all around them.

The child needs to hear once again the reassuring heartbeat of the parent.

The child needs to recognise the reassuring tones of the calm voices of both parents.

The child needs to feel the warmth of the surroundings they experienced in the womb.

All these physical experiences of love have to be unconditional, as they were in the womb.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 [NIV] *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”*

Note that there are **no** conditions added to these aspects of love.

1 John 4:8-16 [NIV] *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”*

This is the sacrificial love that God has for us, expressed in the giving of His Son, Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.

Romans 5:6-8 [NIV] *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

This shows how unconditional is the love that God has for us as His potential spiritual children.

This unconditional love is the ideal we should aim for.

The nearer we come to this unconditional love, in our approach to our children and all other people, the more effective will be our relationships.

The more we explore the world of a child, the more we will understand the relationship that our Creator God desires to have with us as His created children.

Unconditional love is the major factor in the relationship we have with our Creator God and with our children.

Unconditional love is the key to any success we are to have in giving our children a good start in their future lives to obtain their full future potential.

Our own future potential as a created child of God is the unconditional love that God has for us individually.

This unconditional love means continuing to love our children no matter what.

Even when we find their behaviour abhorrent.

Proverbs 6:16-19 [NIV] *“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes,*

feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”

Remember that there are many things that too often we find ourselves doing that are detestable to our Creator God.

How do we have this unconditional love?

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Out of gratitude for what our Creator God has done through our Saviour Jesus Christ, submit ourselves to His direction of our lives.

Become a *“living sacrifice”* offered to our Creator God.

Then allow the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to re-educate our hearts and minds.

Through this re-education the *“fruits”* of this intimate relationship will be implanted in us.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Note that the first and foremost *“fruit”* is *“love”*, the Greek word *“agapé”* referring to unconditional love, the same as our Creator God is.

In dealing with our children we need to constantly remind ourselves certain things.

a) **Children are just that, children.**

Psalms 103:13-14 [NIV] *“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.”*

This is the basis from which our Heavenly Father works, we are children in His sight.

b) **Children tend to act like children.**

1 Corinthians 13:11 [NIV] *“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.”*

Note this statement by Paul, inspired by God is within the context of scriptures describing unconditional love. [**1 Corinthians 13:4-8**]

We are all child-like in the eyes of our Heavenly Father.

c) **Much of childish behaviour is unpleasant from our viewpoint.**

Isaiah 55:8-9 [NIV] *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

Just as most of our thoughts are **not** on the same plane as our Heavenly Father, so our children’s thoughts are **not** on our level of thinking.

The thoughts that guide a child’s behaviour are not mature adult thoughts.

The way that seems right to a child does **not** measure up to being right in our mature eyes.

d) If we do our part to love unconditionally our children, despite often unpleasant childish behaviour, gradually they will mature and give up their childish ways.

1 John 4:19 [NIV] *“We love because he first loved us.”*

This is the way our Heavenly Father seeks to bring about maturity in our childish lives.

e) If we **only** express our love for our children when they please us, [that is conditional love] they will **not** feel genuinely loved by us.

Such a limitation in our love for them will hinder their maturing in behaviour.

Romans 5:8-10 [NIV] *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”*

Not only did our Heavenly Father express His unconditional love for us through Jesus Christ, He also gave to us the Holy Spirit to work in and through us to bring about mature love within our childish nature.

God knew it was His responsibility to express His love for His children, unconditionally, to encourage and make possible the maturing in love of His children by giving a perfect example.

f) A child comes into the world with an amazing ability to perceive things emotionally.

Since a child’s fund of knowledge by experience is very limited, their way of communicating is primarily on the “*feelings*” level.

Likewise our love for them can only be received by them on this emotional level.

It is what we do, not what we say, that is understood.

Our Creator God knows that we often react on an emotional level and therefore responds to us on that level.

Hebrews 4:15-16 [NIV] *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knows exactly what it’s like to experience the emotions that we have as limited human beings.

1 John 3:18 [NIV] *“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”*

God our Father knew that we as immature beings would need to actually see our Saviour, Jesus Christ, in action, **not** just read the words telling us that God loves us.

Children, to know that we love them unconditionally, must see us act as if we love them unconditionally.

Children have what I call by way of illustration, figuratively by very real, an “emotional tank” and this tank needs to be continually “topped up” as day-to-day living drains it.

Only when this “*emotional tank*” is full can a child be expected to do their best to respond to our guidance and requests.

We as God’s children also need our “*emotional tank*” to be “*topped up*” by our Heavenly Father.

Philippians 4:19 [Amplified Bible] “*And my God will liberally supply [fill to the full] your every need...*”

This includes our emotional needs.

How does God do this for us?

Malachi 3:16 [NIV] “*Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.*”

This scripture refers to two situations:

- a) Meeting with other Christians as often as possible.
- b) But perhaps more important, having often conversations with our Creator God and Spiritual Father.

We do this through study and meditation on God’s Word, the Christian Bible, opened up to us by the Holy Spirit. [**John 16:13**]

Also our personal and detailed prayer, praise and thanksgiving directed towards our Heavenly Father. [**1 Thessalonians 5:17-21**]

John 14:16 [NIV] “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever,*”

“*Another Counsellor,*” this was the role that Jesus Christ played when physically on earth, but now the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word translated “*counsellor*” is “*paraklētōs*” meaning one who walks beside us to comfort us and act as our advocate.

John 7:38-39 [NIV] “*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*” *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*”

The flow of the Holy Spirit through one true Christian will bring comfort and encouragement to other Christians or non-Christians, by acts of unconditional love.

The importance of eye contact –

Have you noticed that as soon as a baby’s eyes focus, they will seek another pair of eyes to lock on to.

Notice the baby’s joy when they succeed in making this contact.

If we only have eye contact with a child when we are making a strong corrective point.

Or deliberately avoid eye contact as a form of correction.

This can be very negative and disastrous to a loving relationship, also will always be a painful memory.

Eye contact is a powerful love-giving route to another human being.

2 Chronicles 16:9 [NIV] *“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.”*

God our Heavenly Father watches over us constantly for a very important reason.

Proverbs 5:21 [NIV] *“For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.”*

God constantly watches what decisions we make as we live our day-to-day life.

Good eye contact makes another human being feel special and loved.

Physical contact is also a pathway for love –

Not just hugging and kissing but a gentle touch on the shoulder, hand holding or “give me five” hand slapping.

Mark 10:16 [NIV] *“And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”*

Jesus Christ’s personal example of making a simple physical contact to show His love for these children. [**Matthew 19:14-15**]

Mark 1:40-42 [NIV] *“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.”*

Jesus touched the “untouchable” leper for he needed that physical contact.

Matthew 8:14-15 [NIV] *“When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.”*

Peter’s mother-in-law could have been a widow, if so Jesus Christ knew she would be missing the comforting physical contact of her husband.

Matthew 9:6-7 [NIV] *“‘But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....’ Then he said to the paralytic, ‘Get up, take your mat and go home.’ And the man got up and went home.”*

No mention of touching this man.

Touching was an extra given to His healing when Jesus Christ felt it was needed.

We all as human beings need this physical contact, handshakes and hugs, especially at the beginning and end of this physical life.

I personally feel and have personal experience to back this up, that the future success of a woman’s marriage relationship is partly dependent on her relationship with her father as a young child and teenager.

Likewise every young boy needs the role model of a father who shows love, respect and care for the wife, mother and any other female that the father comes in contact with.

Focussed attention –

Giving our full undivided attention to one person will make them feel without any doubt that they are special, precious and loved.

That they are the most important thing in our lives at that moment.

This takes what I call “open ended time,” the other person must be assured that we are willing to give whatever time it takes.

Mark 10:13-16 [NIV] *“People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”*

People had top priority in Jesus Christ’s world.

Jesus Christ gave children and other people in need top priority, far above any personal needs or desires.

The only rebuke was for the disciples who tried to prevent Jesus Christ giving His time and love to these children and their mothers.

The Amplified Bible picks up the full meaning of the Greek by adding “one by one.”

How many children were there?

How long did it take to give personal attention to each child and mother?

Focussed attention demands we must be willing to sacrifice our time lovingly to be effective.

John 15:13 [NIV] *“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

Our life is our time.

John 13:34-38 [NIV] *“‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’ Simon Peter asked him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus replied, ‘Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.’ Peter asked, ‘Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.’ Then Jesus answered, ‘Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times!’”*

This is something we cannot do without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which at that time Peter had **not** received.

Peter responded verbally but Jesus Christ knew the physical follow-through would **not** happen.

Notice the dramatic change in Peter’s life once the Holy Spirit was working in and through him. [**Acts 2:14-41**]

We cannot always choose when we should give our focussed attention.

We have to be constantly aware of the need and grasp at any fleeting moment as it arises, giving focussed attention top priority.

That practical opportunity to give much needed focussed attention may never arise again.

There are special times that need our focussed attention that we need to be aware of –

- a) When a child is sick, the need is greater than normal and there will be more response.
- b) When the child has accomplished something new.

c) When the child has been hurt emotionally.

Discipline [or disciple-ing] –

The application of “*behavioural control techniques*” without the foundation of unconditional love is barbaric and unscriptural.

The correct goal of all discipline is to train the child to become self-disciplined.

How do we do this?

- a) By our own example.
- b) By modelling. [**2 Thessalonians 3:7-9**]
- c) By verbal instruction, or written requests.
- d) By teaching in a formal situation, especially from God’s Word, the Christian Bible.
- e) By teaching through fun experiences.
- f) By physical correction which **must** always be directly followed by verbal reassurance that we still love them in spite of their misdemeanour.

In every situation the child must be listened to with focussed attention so that they know we understand what they are trying to communicate to us.

We reinforce the child’s understanding that we know what they are trying to communicate to us by repeating the child’s words and thoughts back to them.

Ephesians 6:4 [NIV] “*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*”

If we use the above procedure we will not fall foul of what our Heavenly Father has commanded us in this scripture.

Appropriate correction –

A child is very sensitively aware of fairness and consistency.

We must follow the example of our Heavenly Father by learning to forgive and be merciful in our relationship with our children.

When we sense that a child is genuinely sorrowful for what they have done, it shows that their conscience is alive and well and that they have learnt personally from their mistake.

Hebrews 10:22 [NIV] “*let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*”

A cleansed conscience is the goal that we are aiming for.

When the child shows they truly learnt from their mistake, to add correction to such a situation would be counter productive.

It could produce a feeling of hurt and anger.

Forgiveness does **not** mean the child should **not** assume some responsibility for the circumstances and restitution may be needed.

Work to restore what was broken, physical or mental, such as broken relationships, is an essential part of a child's learning process.

Forgiveness and mercy –

A child will only learn to forgive and show mercy if we have dealt with their failures in a merciful and forgiving way.

Matthew 6:12 [Phillips Translation] *“For if you forgive other people their failures, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive other people, your Heavenly Father will not forgive your failures.”*

Through such experiences of mercy and forgiveness a child, when they become an adult, will find it easier to accept their Heavenly Father's mercy and forgiveness when they repent.

1 John 4:8-12 [NIV] *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”*

Our Creator God is love because that is the way He lives and deals with His created children.

Love as the basis of life is what our Creator God wants us to learn and express in our lives right now.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Our Creator God wants us to be living examples of the way He lives.

For others through personal contact with us come to know the Creator God, worship Him and eventually come to love Him the same way He loves us His created children.

Love cannot be detached from any area of our lives, for love is the basis of life.