



Characterized by Love

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WHEN
HAVE YOU
DONE
SOMETHING
CRAZY
FOR LOVE?

The
POINT ➤

Ground everything you do in love for Christ.

➤ REVELATION 2:1-7

¹“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

²“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your

lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Have you ever had a friend who is in “love” with a crush after only a week or two. Psychologists say the infatuation and idealization associated with a crush lasts four months.¹ But if it lasts longer, maybe it is love.



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CHURCH

The church isn't a place or a building, but is made up of the people who belong to the family of God, and whereas under the Old Covenant, God dwelled in the temple or the tabernacle, today God dwells in His people and works through them to advance His kingdom.

Almost everyone will have a first-love experience. It may be a childhood crush or a teen infatuation. For some it happens very early in life, and for others, you may wonder if it's ever going to happen at all. Many people work really hard—maybe even doing crazy things—to convince the person they love to declare their affections.

When you first came to faith in Christ, do you remember how you loved Him? It's likely the affection was very strong. However, this was no childhood crush. You knew you didn't have to work to receive His love in return. But over time, many Christians get busy trying to do all the right things and may begin to think our work for Him is the most important part of our relationship. As we will see in Jesus' message in Revelation to the church at Ephesus, works can never replace genuine love for Jesus. If we lack affection for our Savior, we need to return to our first love.

REVELATION 2:1-3

1 In your own words, how would you describe the church in Ephesus?

2 When have others acknowledged the good works you do for Jesus?



*Failure to listen
well often brings
about negative
consequences.
#BSFLtheChurch*

REVELATION 2:4-6

3 How can we keep love for Christ as our highest priority?

4 How would you describe the connection between love and serving others?

5 Why do we sometimes lose our passion for Christ?

REVELATION 2:7

6 List some ways your church is like the church at Ephesus.

7 What practices have helped you hear and follow the Holy Spirit?

8 How does the promise of eternal life motivate you to love and serve Jesus?



LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CHURCH

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The church in Ephesus didn't tolerate evil, and this is certainly a good thing. However, their actions weren't driven by love, and the church is to be characterized, above all, by love for one another and for Jesus. The church is a family, and we are to love each other in real ways.

➤ CHRIST

The greatest way Jesus demonstrated His love for us is through His dying on the cross.

9 List a few ways Christ has shown His love to you specifically.

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10 How does your life show that you love Jesus?

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

> COMMUNITY

Read 1 John 4:19-21.

11 Why is it so important that we show love to other people?

12 How are you actively showing love to others in your life?

13 List three specific things you will do to improve in showing love to others.

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> CULTURE

John 13:35 teaches that the world knows that we are followers of Jesus by the ways we love others.

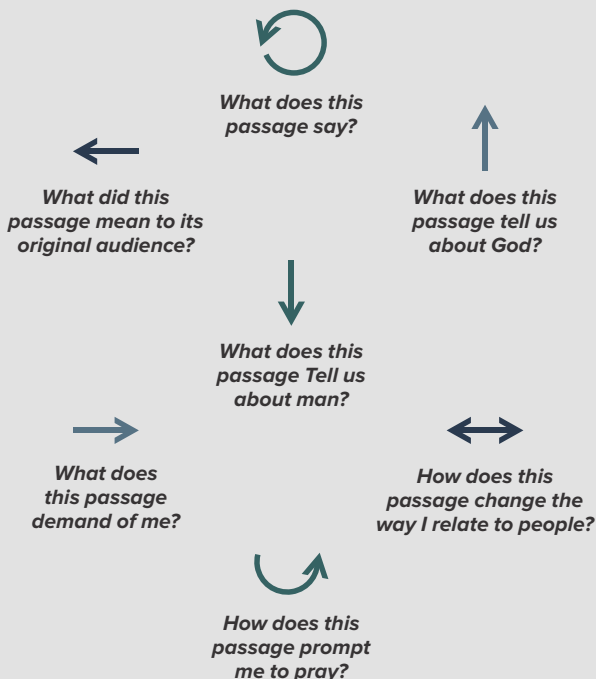
14 How do your good works point others to Jesus?

15 How will you intentionally show love to a lost person in order to help them come to know Christ?

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One 1 JOHN 4:7

When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, He said that, above all, we are to love God with all we are, and we are to love others as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40). Love is specifically genuine care and affection for others that leads to our seeking their good, even when it involves sacrifice. According to our fallen, human nature, we are naturally inclined to focusing on ourselves and seeking what's in our own best interest. However, for followers of Jesus, God changes our hearts, creating a desire in us to love and serve others. Love is from God, and for those who are born again into God's family, He places godly love in our hearts that we would serve others and glorify Him.

➤ **How would you define or describe godly love?**

➤ **What does it mean that love is from God?**

Day Two

1 JOHN 4:8



There are many people who claim to know God, but who don't demonstrate it in the ways they live. You probably have friends who claim to be Christians, but their words might say something different, or their romantic relationships don't align with the Bible's standards, or they tend to be selfish instead of generous. Love always leads us to speak kindly, treat members of the opposite sex with respect and dignity, and to share what God has given us with others. Those who claim to know God, but fail to demonstrate love as the overwhelming pattern of their lives, might be mistaken. God is love, and for God's children, we will reflect His goodness through loving and serving others.

➤ **How do we know that we're God's children?**

➤ **Why is it a problem to claim to know God, but to fail to live lovingly?**

Day Three

1 JOHN 4:9-10

Love is not only a feeling, but is always expressed. God went to great lengths to prove His love for us. Even when we were His enemies, living in disobedience and rebellion, God chose to express His love in the greatest way possible—when we couldn't pay the price for our sins, He sent Jesus, His only Son, to pay the price on our behalf. Before receiving His gift of grace, we didn't love God. We were selfish and sinful, but He chose to pour out His love upon us anyway. The clearest picture we have of God's love is found in Jesus' death on the cross. If we want to know what love is and the ways we are to love others, we need to look to Jesus, and similarly be willing to make real sacrifices that others would experience the love of God in their lives.

➤ **How is the cross the clearest picture of God's love?**

➤ **How can you show God's love to others?**

Day Four

1 JOHN 4:11

God loved us by sending Jesus to die on the cross in our place. The fact that Jesus is not only fully God, but also fully man means that He experienced suffering in the same ways that we would when He was tried, beaten, and crucified. Further, the Father, who loves His Son perfectly, willingly watched as His Son suffered. This whole incident was excruciatingly painful. Still, because of His love for us, God endured the pain as an expression of His love for us. As God's children, called to live by faith in obedience and to reflect His nature and character in the ways we live, we are to show love to other people in the same ways. This is not simply a suggestion—we must love one another.

➤ **How would you describe God's love for us?**

➤ **Why must we love one another?**

Day Five

1 JOHN 4:12



God is spirit (John 4:24). This means that He is immaterial and invisible to the eyes. Because of this, no one has physically seen God. However, God wants to put His love on display that the world would know Him. When Jesus was on earth, He lived as the perfect picture of God's love. However, because Jesus is no longer with us in a physical sense, it is the responsibility of the church to live continually as demonstrations of God's love. The world may not see God, but when we live in ways that reflect God's kindness and love, others will see God's goodness in us.

➤ **What does it mean that God is spirit?**

➤ **How do people today "see" God?**