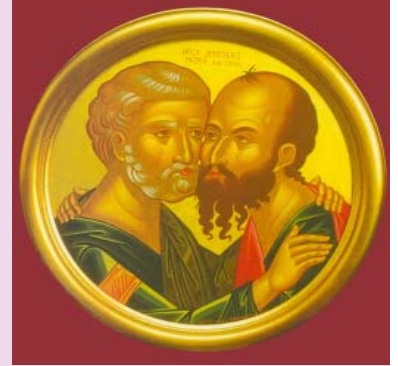


10 • WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT LOVE FOR GOD AND OTHERS

No other aspect of God is so clearly seen in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as love. Love is so central to the divine nature, as revealed in and by Jesus, that Saint John states that “God is Love.”

Love is a broad term, with many levels of meaning. In fact, in Greek there are multiple words for “love,” each having a specific context and meaning. But **divine love is the highest of all**. And while we so often experience love in purely human terms, it is possible for us to **receive, experience, and share God’s divine love**, thereby **partaking in His very nature**. It is this divine love – **love that transcends every human concept of love** – in which Jesus urged His followers to participate in their relationships with God and one another.



The love of which Jesus spoke is down-to-earth **real love for one and all**. Jesus said that, while even the hypocrites were capable of loving those from whom they received love, **the real challenge is to love as He loved** – without reservation, without conditions, without judgment, without expecting something in return, and without distinction. In **Matthew 25**, He reveals that the true test of our love for God lies in our willingness to **recognize His image and presence** in “the least of the brethren” and to **love them, even as He loves us**. Hence, **we love because He loved us first**.

So central is love to Christian life that Jesus, when asked which of the commandments was the greatest, revealed that **the entire Law and all that the prophets proclaimed “hinges”** on our desire to **love God and others**. In other words, **what we do** is somewhat secondary to **why we do it**: If we do not love as God loves us, then we are merely attempting, like the pharisees, to fulfill a law with no reference to the **divine Spirit that enlivens it and gives it meaning**.

The whole man, given in love, was Jesus’ understanding of goodness. This goodness, essential to God’s Kingdom, is a light shining from within and reflecting outward through our behavior, through our acts toward God, ourselves, and other people. This love is the key that unlocks the door to the eternal Kingdom of the God Who is Love Itself.

Look up each of the following passages and write down what Jesus Christ says about love.

MATTHEW 5:21-26, 38-48; LUKE 6:27-36

MATTHEW 7:1-2; LUKE 6:37-38

MATTHEW 18:15-17

LUKE 10:26-37

MATTHEW 22:37-40

MARK 12:29-31

JOHN 13:33-35

JOHN 14:27-31

JOHN 15:9-17

JOHN 17:20-26

JOHN 3:16