



HOW TO LOVE BY FAITH • Bill Bright

The beautiful ballroom of the Marriott Hotel in Chicago was crowded to capacity with more than thirteen hundred college students and Campus Crusade staff. They seemed to hang on to every word as I explained one of the most exciting spiritual discoveries that I had ever made - how to love by faith.

For years I had spoken on the subject of love. I had a simple four-point outline:

God loves you unconditionally.

You are commanded to love others - God, your neighbors, your enemies.

You are incapable of loving others in your own strength.

You can love others with God's love.

But, as in the case of most sermons on love, something was missing. Then some years ago, in an early hour of the morning, I was awakened from a deep sleep. I knew that God had something to say to me. I felt impressed to get up, open my Bible and kneel to read and pray. What I discovered during the next two hours has since enriched my life and the lives of tens of thousands of others. I had learned how to love.

With this discovery, God gave me the command to share this wonderful truth with Christians around the world. In that life-changing time of fellowship with the Lord, I was given a fifth point for my sermon on love - we love by faith. Love is the greatest thing in the world - the greatest privilege and power known to man. Its emphasis in life and word changed the course of history as the first-century Christians demonstrated a quality of life never before witnessed on this earth. The Greeks, Romans, and Jews hated one another. The very idea of love and self-sacrifice was foreign to their thinking. When they observed Christians from many nations, with different languages and cultures, actually loving one another and sacrificing to help each other, they responded in amazement, "Behold, how these people love one another!"

Revolution of Love

I challenged the students at the conference to become part of a revolution of love. I suggested that they make a list of all the individuals they did not like and begin to love them by faith.

Early the next morning, a young woman with sparkling eyes and face aglow said to me, "My life was changed last night. For many years I have hated my parents. I haven't seen them since I was seventeen, and now I am twenty-two. I left home as a result of a quarrel five years ago and haven't written or talked to them since, though they have tried repeatedly to encourage me to return home. I determined that I would never see them again. I hated them.

"Before becoming a Christian a few months ago," she continued, "I had become a drug addict, a dope pusher and a prostitute. Last night you told me how to love my parents, and I could hardly wait to get out of that meeting and call them. Can you believe it? I now really love them with God's kind of love and can hardly wait to see them."



Everybody wants to be loved. Most psychologists agree that man's greatest need is to love and be loved. No barrier can withstand the mighty force of love.

There are three Greek words translated into the one English word "love"; eros, which suggests sensual desire - it does not appear in the New Testament; phileo, which is used for friendship or love of one's friends or relatives - it conveys a sense of loving someone because he is worthy of love; and agape, which is God's love: the purest, deepest kind of love - it is expressed not through mere emotions but as an act of one's will.

Agape is God's supernatural, unconditional love for you revealed supremely through our Lord's death on the cross for our sins. It is the supernatural love He wants to produce in you and through you to others, by His Holy Spirit. Agape love is given because of the character of the person loving rather than because of the worthiness of the object of that love. Sometimes it is love "in spite of" rather than "because of."

God underscores the importance of this kind of love through the inspired pen of the apostle Paul, as recorded in I Corinthians 13. In this beautiful and remarkable passage of Scripture, Paul writes that, apart from love, anything that you might do for God or others is of no value. Consider these words:

If I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without learning them, and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making noise. If I had the gift of prophecy and knew all about what is going to happen in the future, knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would it do? Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love. If I gave everything I have to poor people, and if I were burned alive for preaching the Gospel but didn't love others, it would be of no value whatever. I Cor 13:1-3

In other words, no matter what you do for God and for others, it is of no value unless you are motivated by God's love.

Explaining Agape

But what is agape? How does this kind of love express itself? Paul gives us an excellent description:

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him. All the special gifts and powers from God will someday come to an end, but love goes on forever...There are three things that remain - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love. I Cor 13:4-8, 13

In the next chapter the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, admonishes: "Let love be your greatest aim."

Let me share with you five vital truths about love that will help you understand the basis for loving by faith.

1. God Loves you Unconditionally

God loves with agape, the love described in I Corinthians 13. He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross for you, that you might have everlasting life. His love is not based on performance. Christ loves you so much that while you were yet a sinner, He died for you. God's love for you is unconditional and undeserved. He loves you in spite of your disobedience, your weakness, your sin and your selfishness. He loves you enough to provide a way to abundant, eternal life. From the cross Christ cried out, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing." If God loved those who are sinners that much, can you imagine how much He loves you - His child through faith in Christ and who seeks to please Him?



2. You Are Commanded to Love

A certain lawyer asked Jesus, “Sir, which is the most important command in the laws of Moses?”

Jesus replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: ‘Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.’ All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the others.”

The one who has not yet learned to love God and to seek Him above all else and all others is to be pitied, for that person is missing the blessings that await all who love God with all their heart, soul and mind. It is natural for you to fulfill the command to love your neighbors as yourself if you truly love God with all your heart, soul and mind. If you are properly related to God on the vertical plane, you will be properly related to others on the horizontal plane.

3. You Cannot Love in Your Own Strength

Just as surely as “those who are in the flesh (the worldly, carnal person) cannot please God,” so in your own strength you cannot love as you ought.

You cannot demonstrate agape, God’s unconditional love for others, through your own efforts. How many times have you resolved to love someone? How often have you tried to manufacture some kind of positive, loving emotion toward another person for whom you felt nothing? It is impossible, isn’t it? In your own strength it is not possible to love with God’s kind of love.

By nature, people are not patient and kind. We are jealous, envious and boastful. We are proud, haughty, selfish and rude, and we demand our own way. We could never love others the way God loves us!

4. You Can Love With God’s Love

It was God’s kind of love that brought you to Christ. It is this kind of love that is able to sustain and encourage you each day. Through His love in you, you can bring others to Christ and minister to fellow believers as God has commanded. God’s love was supremely expressed in the life of Jesus Christ. You have a perfect, complete picture of God’s kind of love in the birth, character, teachings, life, death and resurrection of His Son.

How does this love enter your life? It becomes yours the moment you receive Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit comes to indwell your life. The Scripture says, “We feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.” God is Spirit and the “fruit of the Spirit is love...” When you are controlled by the Spirit, you can love with God’s love. When Christ comes into your life and you become a Christian, God gives you the resources to be a different kind of person. With the motivation, He also gives you the ability. He provides you with a new kind of love.

But how do you make love a practical reality in your life? How do you love? By resolutions? By self-imposed discipline? No. The only way to love is explained in my final point.

5. You Love By Faith

Everything about the Christian life is based on faith. You love by faith just as you received Christ by faith, just as you are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith, and just as you walk by faith.

If the fruit of the Spirit is love, you may logically ask, “Is it not enough to be filled with the Spirit?” This will be true from God’s point of view, but it will not always be true in your actual experience. Many Christians have loved with God’s love and have demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit in their lives without consciously or specifically claiming His love by faith. Yet, without being aware of the fact, they were indeed loving by faith; therefore, they did not find it necessary to claim God’s love by faith as a specific act. Hebrews 11:6 says, “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Obviously there will be no demonstration of God’s love where there is no faith.



If you have difficulty in loving others, remember that Jesus has commanded, “Love each other as much as I love you.” It is God’s will for you to love. He would not command you to do something that He will not enable you to do. In 1 John 5:14,15, God promises that if you ask anything according to His will, He hears and answers you. Relating this promise to God’s command, you can claim by faith the privilege of loving with His love.

God has an unending supply of His divine, supernatural, agape love for you. It is for you to claim, to grow on, to spread to others, and thus to reach hundreds and thousands with the love that counts, the love that will bring them to Jesus Christ.

In order to experience and share this love, you must claim it by faith; that is, trust His promise that He will give you all that you need to do His will on the basis of His command and promise.

An Ancient Truth

This truth is not new. It has been recorded in God’s Word for two thousand years. But it was a new discovery to me that early morning some years ago and, since that time, to many thousands of other Christians with whom I have shared it. When I began to practice loving by faith, I found that problems of tension with other individuals seemed to disappear, often miraculously.

In one instance, I was having a problem loving a fellow staff member. It troubled me. I wanted to love him. I knew that I was commanded to love him; yet, because of certain areas of inconsistency and personality differences, it was difficult for me to love him. But the Lord reminded me of 1 Peter 5:7, “Let him have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.” I decided to give this problem to Him and love this man by faith. When I claimed God’s love for the man by faith, my concern lifted. I knew the matter was in God’s hands.

An hour later, I found under my door a letter from that very man, who had no possible way of knowing what I had just experienced. In fact, his letter had been written the day before. The Lord has foreseen the change in me. This friend and I met together that afternoon and had the most wonderful time of prayer and fellowship we had ever experienced together. Loving with God’s love by faith had changed our relationship.

In the first century there was a wedding of love and faith resulting in a great spiritual revolution throughout the known world. Then both were lost during the Dark Ages. The realization of Martin Luther and his colleagues that the “just shall live by faith” ushered in the Reformation and another mighty movement of God’s Spirit. But there was little love. In fact, there was often great conflict.

Today, God is bringing back to our remembrance the biblical wedding of the two - faith and love. Through faith, that supernatural, divine love of God will reach out where nothing else can go to capture men and women for Christ. The love which results from that faith will captivate people everywhere so that, as we live and love by faith, we will spread God’s love throughout the world. This love is contagious, attractive and aggressive. It creates hunger for God. It is active - constantly looking for loving things to do, people to uplift, and lives to change.

Agape in Action

Agape love frequently expresses itself as a flow of compassion. Jesus said, “Rivers of living water shall flow from the inmost being of anyone who believes in me.” Compassion is one of these rivers. It is a gentle stream of tenderness and concern for another person’s need. Such love compelled Jesus to feed the hungry, comfort the sorrowing, heal the sick, teach the multitude, and raise the dead.

Most of us at some time in our lives have experienced this flow of love toward someone. Perhaps you felt it while washing the dishes, or while working on the job, or driving down the freeway, or sitting in a classroom. You couldn’t explain it, but your impulse was to do something special for that person.



I encourage you to take the first step; start loving by faith and follow that flow. It is God's compassion streaming toward the one in need. The tug of love within you means that He is filling you with godly compassion and that He has chosen you to minister to that individual.

Ask God to manifest His tender compassion through you in some way today. As you pray, ask Him to lay someone on your heart. When you sense God's love flowing through you to that individual, find out his need and begin ministering to that need. By following the leading of God's Spirit, you can help those whom the Lord has prepared for His transforming touch, and you will become part of His miraculous provision. When God leads you to help someone, He will enable you to do what He leads you to do.

A Japanese magazine has a picture of a butterfly on one of its pages. Its color is a dull gray until warmed by one's hand. The touch of a hand causes the special inks in the printing to react, and the dull gray is transformed into a flashing rainbow of color.

What other things can be thus changed by the warmth of your interest and agape love? Your family? Your church? Your city? This hurting world is hungry for the touch of someone who cares - who really cares! Through God's agape kind of love, you can be that someone.

Adapted from *How You Can Love By Faith*, Bill Bright. Copyright 1971, 1998 New Life Publications, Campus Crusade for Christ. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

End

The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org

©2007 Cru Press, Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc. All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be digitally reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, without the prior permission of Cru Press.