

## Taking the Actions of Love

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### Introduction:

There are 7958 verses in the New Testament. 87 of them mention baptism; that's 1.09% or about 1 out of 100. 52 verses mention repentance; that's .65% or about 1 out of 150. 16 verses mention singing; that's .2% or about 1 out of 500. 45 verses talk about the Lord's Supper; that's .56% or about 1 out of 175. Sin is mentioned in 175 verses; that's 2.2% or about 1 out of every 45. However, love is mentioned in 233 verses; that's 2.9% or about 1 out of every 33 verses that mention love. Certainly, the Bible only has to mention something once for it to be important, but when one out of every 33 verses mentions something, we need to stand up and take notice. The Bible commands love, defines love, exemplifies love, tells us who to love and what not to love. The Bible talks about God's love for us and our love for God. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God and the second is to love our neighbor (**Matthew 22:37-39**). **I Timothy 1:5** says the goal of our teaching is love. **Galatians 5:22-23** starts the list of the Spirit's fruit in our lives with love. **II Peter 1:5-10** caps off the list of characteristics that make us fruitful, effective, and guarantees we won't fall with love. If we listed the most important things we must do, love would surely top the list. However, we need to notice that love is not simply something we are supposed to feel. Love is something we are supposed to do. We mustn't simply be satisfied with feeling the feelings of love and saying the words of love, we need learn to take the actions of love as **I John 3:18** says, we must love in deed and in truth.

### Discussion:

- I. Love is an action, not just an attitude.
  - A. We often go to **I Corinthians 13:4-7** to define love. Interestingly, Paul didn't say, "Love feels sympathy, love feels compassion, love feels empathy..." When Paul defined love, he didn't tell us about what kind of feelings we should have. Instead, he defined love based upon what it does and what it does not do. Certainly, **I Corinthians 13:3** demonstrates love is not simply about action. We can take what seem to be loving actions and not have love. But we cannot claim to have love at all if we don't have the action.
  - B. In **Luke 7:36-50**, we see a great contrast of this. We see Simon the Pharisee and a sinful woman. One of them loved Jesus a great deal and one did not. How can we tell the difference? In their actions. The woman anointed Jesus feet and washed them. Simon did the bare minimum in his hospitality.
  - C. In **John 13:1**, the text tells us Jesus loved His disciples to the end. But this wasn't simply about what He felt. This was about what He did. The text goes on to demonstrate that love by Jesus' action of washing the disciples feet.
  - D. In **Matthew 5:44**, Jesus didn't simply say to love our enemies, He added the action that would go along with that. We are to pray for those who persecute us. In the parallel account of **Luke 6:27-28**, Jesus adds that loving our enemies means doing good to them and blessing them.
  - E. As Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to talk about loving our neighbors in **Luke 10:30-37**, the decision about who was the neighbor who loved was not about feelings. We don't know what kind of sympathy or sadness any of the men felt. But we do know the Samaritan proved to be the neighbor who loved because of what he did.
  - F. We could look at example after example after example of this. Love is not simply an attitude but an action. Perhaps the greatest example of this is seen in **John 3:16**. God didn't simply feel sorry for us. He didn't simply feel sadness at our plight. He didn't simply feel joy when good things happen to us. No. God loved us and He acted. He loved us and therefore gave His only begotten Son so that we would not perish but would have everlasting life.
- II. We must take the actions of love.
  - A. Since we are commanded to love, we must learn to take the actions of love. In fact, in one sense, that is all God has asked us to do today...take the actions of love.
  - B. Taking the actions of love is sometimes hard for us. Often we want to take the actions of vengeance or we want to take the actions of vindication. We don't want to show love, we want what is fair. We want what's coming to us and we want others to get what's coming to them. We fear

that loving them is rewarding them for their bad behavior so we want to take the actions of bitterness and resentment, but God has asked us to take the actions of love.

- C. The Bible describes all kinds of people with whom we need to take the actions of love.
  - 1. When we see someone hurting, **Luke 10:30-37** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 2. When someone is a brother or sister in Christ, **Romans 12:10** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 3. When someone is asking questions about serving God, **Mark 10:21** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 4. When people let us down, **John 13:1ff** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 5. When someone is a sinner, **Romans 5:8** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 6. When our brother or sister is weak, **Romans 14:15** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 7. When someone can do absolutely nothing for us, **Luke 6:35** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 8. When someone is a leader in the congregation, **I Thessalonians 5:12-13** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 9. When someone is our wife, **Ephesians 5:25** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 10. When someone is your husband, **Titus 2:4** says you need to take the actions of love.
  - 11. When someone is our child, **Titus 2:4** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 12. When someone is our parent, **I Timothy 5:4** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 13. When someone is our enemy, **Matthew 5:44** says we need to take the actions of love.
  - 14. When someone doesn't love us, **Matthew 5:46** says we need to take the actions of love.
- D. The reality is, no matter what we are feeling, we need to take the actions of love. We must not wait until we feel like loving someone to take these actions. In fact, it has been my experience that taking the actions will often lead to the feelings.
- E. I can't help but think of passages like **Ephesians 4:31**. It says we must put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice. These are hard feelings to deal with. When resentment rears its ugly head, the last thing we want to do is love someone. But I have learned that when I follow **Matthew 5:44** and love my enemies, that is, take the actions of love toward those who have hurt me, angered me, even betrayed me, then I am much more likely to put off the malice, anger, wrath, and slander. That is when I'm able to put on compassion, tender-heartedness, forgiveness.
- F. When things are going our way and when they aren't, when people are going along with us and when they aren't, when we feel like it and when we don't, the best course of action is simply to take the actions of love. As someone once told me, when I don't feel like it, just fake it, 'til you make it. Or act as if. That is, how would I act if I really did love that person? Act like that. We need to take the actions of love.

### III. What are the actions of love?

- A. **I Corinthians 13:4-7** gives a great summary of the actions of love. No matter what someone has done to you or can do for you take these actions.
  - 1. *Patience*: The people you love are going to make huge mistakes. Haven't you done the same? Take the actions of love, take the actions of patience.
  - 2. *Kindness*: Don't just have nice feelings for people; actually do kind things for them. Don't wait until you will get credit, just do nice things for them: prayers, notes, cards, acts of service, kind words, encouragements, hospitality, generosity. Take the actions of love; take the actions of kindness.
  - 3. *Support*: Love doesn't envy. It doesn't want to take from others or push others down. Instead, love is happy to support others and lift them up. Love is content with itself and generous to others. Love is happy when things go well for others. Take the actions of love; take the actions of support.
  - 4. *Humility and Honor*: Love doesn't boast and is not arrogant. Demonstrate humility. Do what you can to honor others. Lift them up instead of yourself. Point others to look at them and show how great they are. Take the actions of love; take the actions of humility and honor.

5. *Propriety*: Love is not rude, or as some translations say, unseemly. Behave properly towards others. Don't make those off-color flirtatious comments that push the bounds of propriety. Take the actions of love; take the actions of propriety.
  6. *Sacrifice*: Love does not insist upon its own way. Love doesn't say, "My way or the highway." Love does what is best for others and puts others first. Take the actions of love; take the actions of sacrifice.
  7. *Peace*: Love is not irritable or easily provoked. Love will therefore take the actions of peace. It will not respond in kind when faced with provocation but will give soft answers to turn away wrath. Take the actions of love; take the actions of peace.
  8. *Forgiveness*: Love does not hold a grudge, bear resentment, or keep account of wrongs suffered. Love will put the past in the past and work to move into a positive future. Take the actions of love; take the actions of forgiveness.
  9. *Rejoice at the right things*: Love does not rejoice when someone is pursuing unrighteousness. Love rejoices with truth. Love rejoices with righteousness. Love doesn't try to be happy when someone is pursuing ungodliness. That wouldn't be love. Certainly, in some relationships, parenting for example, when someone pursues unrighteousness there will be time for discipline. In the proper relationships, discipline is not opposed to love. But love does rejoice with those living by God's standards. Take the actions of love; take the actions of proper rejoicing.
  10. *Forbearance*: The folks you are to love are going to face all kinds of struggles, just like you and I do. They need someone to bear and endure with them, to lift them up, support them, and help carry them on. Take the actions of love; take the actions of forbearance.
  11. *Trust*: Give the folks you love the benefit of the doubt. Don't assume the worst. Don't assume they'll pursue the worst. Show them you believe in them. Show them your hope for them. Take the actions of love; take the actions of trust.
- B. These things are not always easy. No doubt it is tough to take the actions of love when someone is not taking the actions of love toward us. But God has not asked us to treat others the way they treated us. He has asked us to treat them the way we want to be treated (**Matthew 7:12**). I have no doubt that we want others to take the actions of love with us even when we've messed up. We need to take the actions of love with them.

### **Conclusion:**

**Romans 13:8-10** says the only thing we should owe is to love others. When we love our neighbors we will do them no wrong. **Galatians 5:14** says the whole law is fulfilled when we love our neighbors. **James 2:8** says we are fulfilling the royal law when we love our neighbors as ourselves. Think about what this means. If what we are most concerned about today is pleasing God and doing His will, it will start and end with taking the actions of love. Look around you today and this week. No matter what someone else does, take the actions of love with them.