



Part 2: Lesson 7

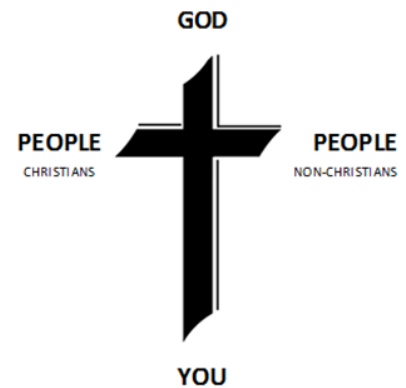
# Cultivating the Good Soil: The Great Commandments: Loving People

Fertile Soil: Starting Your New Life with Jesus

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In our last lesson, we learned that God loves us with a great love and that He invites us into a **relationship with Him based upon love**. Growing in your spiritual life means that **you grow in your love for God**. As Jesus stated, the greatest commandment is to, *“love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30)*.

There is a second part to the greatest commandment—**loving people**. Jesus said, *“love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12: 31)*. This is the horizontal dimension of your spiritual growth, growing outward. So, growing in faith also means that **we grow in our love for others**. Just as God loves you, He loves the entire world and desires that you love others as well. When you love people, you are demonstrating God’s love; therefore, love becomes the central motivation of your Christian faith—in what you do and say. Jesus said that the way we love identifies us as His followers (John 13:34-35).



## YOUR GROWTH GOAL



In this lesson will focus on the second part of the most important commandment for living the Christian life. You will learn:

- 1) Loving people begins when you know how much God loves everyone
- 2) Loving people is an obligation requiring our obedience
- 3) Jesus is our role model for loving people
- 4) How to love difficult people.



Before you go any further, stop and ask God to help you understand His word, to help you experience His presence, and to become the person He wants you to be.

## A STORY ABOUT LOVING PEOPLE: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37)



Loving people, it sounds so simple—be nice, do not hurt anyone, do something good every once in a while. But love is hard work. God’s requirement to love others as much as we love ourselves means so much more. In the following story, Jesus explains what it really means to love people as we should.

*\* Background information- the Samaritans were a race of people that the Jews hated for generations and avoided all contact with them. They were a mixed-race people and considered impure and unholy.*

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

*“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”*

*He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

*“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”*

*But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

*In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’*

*“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”*

*The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”*

*Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”*

***How is this story an example of loving your neighbor?***

***Who in your culture could be called a Samaritan?***

***So, who is your neighbor?***

***Who has been a Good Samaritan to you? What did they do?***

***How can you be a Good Samaritan to someone, this week?***



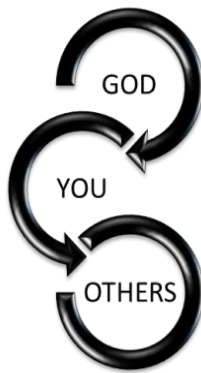
## DIGGING DEEPER: THE GREAT COMMANDMENT: LOVE OTHERS



God's love is huge. He loves you very deeply, and His love is also without boundaries. He loves the entire world—every man, woman, and child. No one is excluded. He loves every race—black, white, mulatto. God wants you to be a part of His mission in loving the world too. In this section, you will learn some ways to start loving others:

### HOW TO LOVE PEOPLE

#### I. LOVING PEOPLE BEGINS WHEN YOU KNOW HOW MUCH GOD LOVES EVERYONE



*“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.” (John 3:16)*

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 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 love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 John 4:7-12, 19-21)*

*How big is God's love?*

*How does God show His love?*

*How should God's love affect your relationship with others?*

*What is God's promise when you love others?*

*If you do not love people, what are the implications?*

What you just read are two of the greatest Scriptures written about God and the Christian life. You are never closer to God than when you love someone else. Before you move forward, take some more time and consider what your relationship to other people means to your relationship with God, and the implications and consequences of loving people and not loving them.

## 2. LOVING PEOPLE IS AN OBLIGATION REQUIRING YOUR OBEDIENCE

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

***What is Jesus’ new commandment for His followers? What is the example of how you are to love others?***

***When you love people, what does it say about your faith?***

*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. . . . This is my command: Love each other (John 15:12-14, 17).*

***How do these verses help you understand what Jesus means by loving others?***

***What does Jesus say about your relationship with Him when you obey His command? What does this mean to you?***

## 3. JESUS IS YOUR ROLE MODEL FOR LOVING PEOPLE

These next verses were written by Jesus’ disciple, John. He was known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” They will help you understand more about why and how we must love others?



*This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. . . . We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. . . . This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth (1 John 3:10-11, 14, 16-18).*

***How do you know what love is?***

***What example are you given to show how you must love others?***

#### 4. HOW TO LOVE DIFFICULT PEOPLE

If we are honest, loving other people might be the most difficult requirement of living the Christian life. It is not easy because not everyone is lovable. Each of us have experienced hurt, pain, and harm from others. Sometimes the people we trust the most can cause us the deepest hurt and pain.



But loving people is not a suggestion; it is a commandment that you must learn to live every day. Love is more than a word. It is more than an emotion; it is an action. Love is a choice and a decision that you make with your will. You make choices about who you decide to love and how you will love them. Loving everyone is not easy.

These next Scriptures will teach you that God's expectations for love greatly exceed what most people believe and do. As you read them, carefully and consider some people that you know and how you can show them God's love.

##### Loving people means that you:

- **Love as You Want to Be Loved**

*“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:9-12).*

- **Love Your Enemies**

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:43-48).*

- **Forgive People**

*For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:14-15).*

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Colossians 3:12-14).*

- **Do Not Judge People**

*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye (Matthew 7:1-5).*

- **Return Evil with Good**

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you (Matthew 5:38-42).*

- **Do Good to Those in Need**

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:9-21).*

*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10).*

## GROWING OUTWARD: LOVING PEOPLE



Love is the essence of the Christian faith. Loving God and loving people cannot be separated; they are related to each other as sun and rain are necessary to make a plant grow. When we put the love that God has shown us through His Son Jesus Christ into action and love others, then we love as God wants us to love. As our love for God increases, our love for people will increase as well. The inner dimension and the outward dimensions of our spiritual lives work in harmony with the Holy Spirit to love as God desires, even those who are not very loveable. Since the world will recognize that we are Jesus' disciples by the way we demonstrate our love for them, wouldn't it be astonishing if people recognized that you are a follower of Jesus because you love them in such an engaging manner?

### I. REFLECTING ON THESE TRUTHS

**Reflection Exercise-** Take a few minutes and observe some birds flying in the air. Notice that they have two wings that work together so they fly and glide. No bird can fly with only a single wing; it requires both wings. In the same way, we must love both ways, and not in isolation, to grow spiritually. Our love for God and love people is a natural expression of our faith.



The Apostle Paul wrote about the supremacy of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Slowly read these beautiful verses and think about how love is described.

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It [love] does not envy, it [love] does not boast, it [love] is not proud. It [love] does not dishonor others, it [love] is not self-seeking, it [love] is not easily angered, it [love] keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It [love] 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. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 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 the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).*

Now, re-read the middle section of this Scripture and in the place of the word 'love', substitute your personal name. (Example- Mario is patient. . . ) Where are the places in your life that fall short of God's description of love? Write out one thing that you can do to grow in this area of loving others.

**2. APPLYING THESE TRUTHS**

Carefully and prayerfully consider people that you know. Consider how you can demonstrate God's love to them. Write the names of someone who:

you need to love as you want to be loved.	
you need to forgive.	
you should stop judging.	
mistreats you.	
you should do something good to.	

Now, pray for each one of these people asking God to help you with your feelings toward them and how you should demonstrate your love for them.

**3. COMMITTING TO THESE TRUTHS**

Take some time with your mentor to discuss how you will apply these truths in your daily life. **Write these commitments below.**



**With your mentor and other followers, pray together, asking God to guide to your growth, to strengthen and protect you, and to provide for your daily needs.**

