



For the Love of God

For the love of God, stop shouting!

For the love of God, clean your room!

For the love of God, will you please go and take a shower!

We all have idiomatic phrases that we use for effect. To sound dramatic and funny, we spout off phrases we've heard elsewhere. We use them to express surprise, exasperation, or annoyance. Yet we don't often think deeply about their meaning.

For instance, when we say, "For crying out loud," we're not really talking about audible sobbing and lamenting. And when we say, "For the love of God," we don't really have in mind the endless, unconditional, eternal love of our Father. Sometimes, we don't consider how the phrases we use could bring offense to God or others.

How would our lives look different if we used this idiomatic phrase, "for the love of God," in its best sense? How would our daily actions be transformed if every behavior were motivated by and performed "for the love of God"?

Think about the best and most accurate way to use these words:

Christ died because of God's love for us: he died *for the love of God*.

"For God so loved the world that He gave his only son." John 3:16

Jesus obeyed the Father *for the love of God*.

"I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father." John 14:31 NLT

We show love to God and others *for the love of God*.

"Christ's love controls us." 2 Corinthians 5:14 NLT

"Let all that you do be done in love." 1 Corinthians 16:14 ESV

If it weren't *for the love of God*—we would be hopeless.

Let's learn more about God's amazing love.

In Greek, "the Love of God" is called "agape." The common word "agape" comes from the Greek verb "agapao." According to Strong's concordance, the verb denotes "affection, goodwill, love, benevolence." Morlove explains that the word signifies a love that is not given to "the worthy, and it is not a love that desires to possess. On the contrary, it is a love given quite *irrespective of merit*, and it is a love that *seeks to give*."

God's love is a generous, self-giving love.

As humans, our love for others is often motivated by a desire to possess. We not only act possessive in our friendships and relationships, but we also want to get something back. However subconsciously, we are often asking, "What's in it for me?" We humans give to get, even when we are unaware. In his book, *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer talks about this kind of self-serving love: "Human love desires the other person, his company, his answering love, but it does not serve him. On the contrary, it continues to desire even when it seems to be serving" (34).

True, God-given love serves others without ulterior motives. Often, we fall short of God's standard of love.

We've each heard the love chapter dozens of times. "Love is patient, love is kind, love does not boast, not selfish, love is not rude..." As we repeatedly hear these words, they become mental wallpaper. We stop paying attention.

What would happen if we inserted our own names in this list instead of the word "love"?

It would sound a lot different. Try it out:

“_____ does not dishonor others, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrong.” (adapted from 1 Corinthians 13:5)

That hits home differently, doesn't it? We ask ourselves, "Is this really true of me?"

When you say this out loud, you can't help but think of your sin. You remember your arguments with a girlfriend/boyfriend, spouse, parent, child or sibling--dare I add coworker? For example, just today I had an argument with my husband. What I said was not honoring to him; I just wanted my own way. Often, I'm so easily angered. I fly off of the handle, and even when I don't argue out loud, my thoughts often depart from the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

Inserting your name into the "Love Chapter" is important to do—not because it inspires you, but because it shows you who you really are and your current state or level of Christlikeness. Like the 10 commandments, this exercise helps you see that apart from God, you cannot truly love.

Now, try the exercise again. Instead of putting your name into the passage, insert God's name. "God does not dishonor others, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs." That sounds so much better because it is the truth! The love of God is deep, strong, and amazing. God's love has selfless motives and endless expression.

Let's insert God's name in 1 Corinthians 13 so we can gain a beautiful picture of his love towards us.

“God never gives up.
God cares more for others than for self.
God doesn't want what it doesn't have.
God doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force himself on others,
Isn't always “me first,”
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts ALWAYS,
ALWAYS looks for the best,
NEVER looks back,
But keeps going to the end.”

For the love of God!! What an amazing and hope-filled expression of love God has given us. We are spiritually bankrupt without God's love. God IS love, and when we don't get to know his love personally, we are spiritually bankrupt. I don't mean know ABOUT Him or even intellectually believe everything that he did on the cross. I mean KNOW HIM EXPERIENTIALLY.

If you know Jesus, you have a relationship with Him. You talk to him often, spend time with Him, and listen to him in prayer. Of course you believe he took your place on the cross, took the punishment for your sin and rose again from the dead. When you trusted in him, he made you a new creation—meaning HE gave you a new heart and a new Spirit. If His HOLY SPIRIT lives in you, then you are not Spiritually bankrupt. Praise God! You are rich in love!

You have the capacity to allow God's love to transform you from the inside out, sanctify you, and flow through you like rivers of living water to others. The Holy Spirit helps you love God back by giving you faith in every season. You have God's Holy Spirit living in you—the power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead is alive inside you. Ephesians 1:19-20 says, “I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.”
NLT

We experience God's love through faith in Christ, and it is poured out in our hearts through His Holy Spirit. We are completely unable to truly love someone—according to God's definition of love---without his help!!

Romans 5:5-8 says, “And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (NIV)

God’s love is completely opposite to human love—His love is sacrificial.

Jesus abandoned heaven’s glories to come to earth for us. He demonstrated his great love in the most powerful way possible. He left his ego at home, ditching his desire for respect, admiration, honor. He is God--but he became human so he could die one of the most painful, horrible, humiliating deaths imaginable. He did this out of love for us. Listen to God’s description in Philippians 2:1-11:

So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant by being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, THEN he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” ESV

As humans, we resist this kind of self-emptying humility. When Eve ate the fruit in the garden of Eden, she wanted to be like God, knowing good and evil. Ever since, we’ve tried to play God and control everything.

But Jesus did the opposite. He gave up control and honor so that he could die a humiliating death. His life shows a powerful principle: If you humble yourself, God will exalt you. God’s willingness to be humbled for our sake came from His fierce parental love. Like a father or mother who would jump in front of a truck to try to save their child, the Son of God was willing to give his life to rescue us from sin, Satan, and death.

2 Cor. 8:9 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (NIV)

THIS IS GRACE--God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense--the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God. God’s love is pure grace and generosity.

The love of God is precious and limitless. It is available at all times. People often mistreat us, betray us, or hurt us. Human love is imperfect, and it never feels like it is enough—never enough to heal your wounded heart, to give you peace, to take away your loneliness, or to make you a better person; God loves you with a perfect love, the love that your whole being craves. God’s love fills in the God-shaped hole we all have in our hearts; he designed us so that only He could fill it! Nothing else ever truly satisfies us for long, except for his eternal love that makes us whole.

You have heard that God’s love is unconditional, but to receive His love, there is a condition. “For the Love of God,” you must have faith. You must know Jesus as your Savior. He forgave you all your sins at the cross, even when you didn’t know him. When you rejected him, didn’t want him, persecuted him, laughed at him or had no faith in him, he desired you and gave his life for you.

Maybe you don’t know him or feel like you have fallen away from Him. Would you like a closer relationship with him? It doesn’t matter what you have done, or what has happened to you. God loves you. He delights in you. He knows everything about you and just wants to lavish His love on you, heal your heart and change you from the inside out.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NIV)

If you want more of the love of God, close your eyes and pray with me right now.

God of Infinite Love,

Thank you that you love me more than I can even understand. Thank you for sending your son—fully God and fully man--to die for my sins. I believe that you raised him from the dead to give me a new life. I receive that life now. Thank you for forgiving me, restoring me and healing me from the bondage of my past. Fill me with your Holy Spirit Lord. I receive your love today. Overwhelm me with your goodness and love God and help me to love you.

In Jesus’ Mighty Name. Amen.