

these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14

Again, we are to walk in love. The Greek work for 'walk' is *peripateo*, literally 'to tread our way around' in love.

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:2

The greatest gift of love

In his great little book, *Where I love I live*, Geoffrey Bingham has said,

Love is caring enough for another to discern that one's needs, and then caring enough to go through to try to supply them...Love is the deed that meets the need.

James gives us an example of how that should, but often doesn't, work.

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? James 2:16-17

Taking this further we can see that for human beings, who have been created in the image of the relational God, our greatest need is for the other person, i.e. someone who, in relating to us, gives *themselves* to us in love-relationship. As fallen human beings our self-life includes loneliness, isolation, guilt, self-deprecation, fear, and doubt. There is, therefore, another person who is pure gold to our bruised and fragile personhood and that is the one who sees us, cares for us, understands us, affirms us, helps us, and gives *themselves* to us in secure and affirming relationship. What a healing and what a blessing that person is to us!

How wonderful that God has met that need by giving us that other person in Jesus. And how wonderful that in him we can be that Jesus-person to others in their need. And this is exactly what he tells us to do:

... just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. John 13:34

Where I love, I live

In his short life from 1561 to 1595 Robert Southwell was able to encapsulate our theme for this series, and indeed, to express how it is in the Kingdom of God.

Not where I breathe, but where I love, I live.

Rod James
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Five Commandments to Love

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Here are five commandments we find in the New Testament. These five commandments to love interrelate and instruct one another, and the believer will delight to meditate upon them and obey them.

1. **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.** Deuteronomy 6:5
2. **You shall love your neighbour as yourself.**
3. **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.** John 13:34
4. **But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.** Luke 6:27-28
5. **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.** 1 John 3:18

STUDY FIVE

To conclude our series we come to the fifth of these commandments: 'let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth'. The context of this fifth commandment is as follows.

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:16-18

Let us love in deed

The Greek word for 'deed' is *orge*, meaning 'work', or if you like, 'action'. As Eliza Doolittle put it, "Don't talk of love, show me!" We sometimes speak of someone 'walking the talk'.

The idea of work or works has, in evangelical circles, tended to be associated mainly with St Paul's assertion that we justified by faith and not by works.

And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, Romans 4:5

While this is absolutely true in relation to our reconciliation to God, it is not meant to imply that a believer is to be anything other than 'full of good works and acts of charity' as Tabitha of Joppa was (Acts 9:36). Indeed what is important, says Paul, is 'faith working through love' (Galatians 5:6).

Christian women are to 'profess godliness—with good works' (1 Timothy 2:10), and are to have a reputation for good works, bringing up children, showing hospitality, caring for the afflicted and devoting themselves to every good work (1 Timothy 5:10). The believers 'are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share' (1 Timothy 6:18). Paul instructed Titus, who was leading the church in Crete, to 'show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works' (Titus 2:7). He instructed Titus that all the believers are 'to devote themselves to good works' which is 'excellent and profitable' (Titus 3:8).

Jesus himself made it very clear that neither hearing nor speaking are adequate without doing.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21

When the risen Lord is speaking through John to the churches of Asia he says to several of the churches, "I know your works" (Revelation 2:2, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8, 3:15). Then he says something about that church's works.

"I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first." Revelation 2:19

To each of the churches his exhortation is for them to live out their faith practically and consistently. Couch-potato Christianity is not an option!

Love in truth

John addresses his second and third letters to believers 'whom I love in truth' (2 John 1:1, 3 John 1:1). What does it mean to 'love in truth'? The Greek word for truth is *aletheia*, which has the sense of 'the reality behind the appearance'. Consequentially it has the meaning of genuineness and integrity of character. This is in contrast to 'the hypocrites' that Jesus spoke of.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Matthew 23:25

The Greek word *hypokrisis* means 'wearing a mask and acting a part'. So the hypocrite is someone who pretends to be someone or something that they are really not. I often say that the first law of Adam is 'Do your own will rather than God's', and closely following it is the second law of Adam, 'If you can't be good, the next best thing is to look good'. Sadly, then, hypocrisy is a great burden to the witness even of God's people.

For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Romans 2:24

By contrast Jesus faithfully demonstrated the character, genuineness and integrity of true love. We see his love in action on the cross. He interceded for those who crucified him by praying, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). He then ministered grace to the penitent thief and said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.' (Luke 23:43). And finally he made provision for his mother to be looked after by his beloved disciple John (John 19:26,27). The character of God so shone through Jesus in his death that 'when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"' (Mark 15:39).

In Australia we might say that Jesus was absolutely 'fair dinkum' or 'true blue'. Both Paul and Peter encourage the believers to love in a way that is genuine and sincere.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Romans 12:9-10

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,
1 Peter 1:22

The word 'sincere' here is *anhypocrisis*, literally 'without hypocrisy'. We are commanded then to love in deed (works) and truth (genuineness).

We are to put on love and walk in love

God's creation is a place of action and reality, and His commandments are the living ways of the living God in His living creation. True love is incarnate or embodied. Our living, then, is to be clothed with love.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all