

# A Biblical perspective on Love

(Low Furness CE Primary School, April 2025)

***love self, love others, love of learning, love the world***



## The Greatest Commandment

*Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law ?' \* see notes below*

Jesus replied: "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**" This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "**Love your neighbour as yourself.**" All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.' (Mark 12:31) \* see notes below

## Love

Love in the Bible (Old Testament)	Love in Christian teaching	Possible questions / implications for school
Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. (Deuteronomy 7 v. 8).	God's love is spontaneous, not evoked by any intrinsic worth in its object but rather creating that worth.	How is the Christian God presented in school ? How consistent are we in presenting the Christian God ? What are the pupils' / adults' ideas about God ?

	We do not, and cannot, earn God's love; God chooses to love us.	What opportunities do we give to pupils and adults to explore their ideas about God or the transcendent ?
'I have loved you with an everlasting love,' (Jeremiah 31 v.3).	God's love is everlasting and never changes. He cannot love us more than he does, neither can he love us less.	What are the implications of this Christian teaching for pupils' and adults' well-being, self-esteem and sense of personal worth ?
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6 v. 5).	Love for God with the whole personality is God's demand.	As a school with a Christian foundation, what could the response be to this command ?
The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19 v. 18).	From the beginning of the story of God's chosen people, they were expected to love everyone, equally.	How hospitable is the school ? How welcoming and inclusive is it to those who may feel different or excluded ?
Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19 v.18).	Love is ordained by God to be the normal, ideal human relationship.  Effective love for others must come from first loving yourself.	How loving are the relationships in and across school and with the wider community ? How could they be improved ? How are pupils and adults encouraged to accept and love themselves ?
And Jonathan made David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself. (1 Samuel 20 v.17).	We should love others in the same way that we love ourselves.	How could this Christian teaching impact on the behaviour principles set by the GB and the policy and practice in school ?
I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. (Psalm 116 v.1).	God's love consists of the simple joyful experience of communion (loving relationship) with God.	How could pupils and adults be encouraged to explore the joy that is possible from knowing they are loved, unconditionally, by God (whatever that may mean to them) ?

<p>But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Joshua 22 v.5).</p>	<p>This relationship is worked out in daily obedience to his commands. This obedience is more fundamental to the nature of love for God than any feeling. It is a decision and a discipline.</p>	<p>How could /should these expectations in Christian teaching, to take seriously God's commands, impact on relationships, behaviour and decision making in all aspects of the school's activity ?</p>
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## Love

<b>Love in the Bible (New Testament)</b>	<b>Love in Christian teaching</b>	<b>Possible implications / questions for school</b>
<p>The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. (John 3 v. 35). 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. (John 15 v. 9). While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!' (Matthew 17 v.5). I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. (John 14 v. 31).</p>	<p>The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is one of love.</p>	<p>How does daily Christian worship reflect the joy and love in the relationship between the three parts of the trinity ? Some see it as a divine dance to which we are all invited . . .</p>
<p>Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. (John 17 v. 24)</p>	<p>This love between the Father and the Son, within the trinity, started before the world was made.</p>	<p>How are the various ways we could look at the concept of time explored with pupils ? Could the idea of eternity feed into the schools' understanding of spirituality ?</p>
<p>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4 v.8). And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.</p>	<p>This love is the very nature of the Godhead (the trinity).</p>	

<p>God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. (1 John 4 v.16).</p>		
<p>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. (1 John 3 v.16).</p>	<p>We know about this love because it was revealed in the life (death and resurrection), actions and words of Jesus.</p>	<p>How well is the full narrative and purpose of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus explored and understood by pupils and adults in school ?</p>
<p>A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'          Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. (Mark 1 v. 41 – 42). <i>This is just one example of many times in the gospels when we read of Jesus healing and acting out of compassion.</i>          Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son. (Luke 15).          As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes.'          (Luke 19 v.41-42).          For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.          (John 3 v. 16 – 17).</p>	<p>Jesus demonstrated God's love in his:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● healings (acts of compassion),</li> <li>● story-telling and teaching (explaining the need for and means of forgiveness)</li> <li>● deep concern for mankind (compelling him to his role in God's plan for salvation through death on the cross and ultimate resurrection).</li> </ul>	<p>How are the character and actions of Jesus – motivated by love – presented, explored and modelled in school ?</p> <p>How are the school's adopted Christian values related to accounts and words of Jesus in the Bible ?</p> <p>How do examples from the life of Jesus impact on pupils' opportunities to act for the benefit of other people ?</p>
<p>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5 v.8).</p>	<p>By sending Jesus, God demonstrated, in the ultimate way possible, what his divine love was like in action.</p>	<p>How is the core purpose and narrative of the Bible presented to pupils and adults, in collective worship, RE and other ways ?</p>

<p>Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' (Matthew 28 v.18 – 20). <i>Known as 'The Great Commission'</i></p> <p>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1 v.8).</p>	<p>Jesus' message of love and forgiveness is for everyone, everywhere. The work of Christians and the Church today is the same today as it was when Jesus first gave this instruction and promise to his disciples.</p> <p>God gives power, through the Holy Spirit, for his people to be able to share the message of love.</p>	<p>How are pupils encouraged to explore and understand the ongoing impact of Jesus' instruction to his disciples – in the way the church was established and now operates around the globe ?</p> <p>What do pupils and adults understand about the Holy Spirit (as part of the trinity and essential to the ability of Christians to share God's love) ?</p>
<p>So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here ! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5 v.16 – 20).</p>	<p>To receive, live in and share God's love is to see people and the world through God's eyes.</p>	<p>How does seeing people through God's eyes impact on school policy, practice and decision making ?</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Loving others, with God's love, is the duty of those who choose to follow Jesus.</p>	<p>How could Christians from a variety of different backgrounds and denominations, help pupils and adults in school to better understand God's love in action ?</p>

<p>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. (1 John 4 v.7 -12).</p>	<p>However, this duty flows from the joy of having experienced God's loving kindness themselves.</p>	
<p>'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour 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 v.43 - 48).</p>	<p>This love is very challenging, as it includes everyone, even those who are our enemies and persecutors.</p>	<p>What implications does this teaching have for the development of approaches to behaviour and the way the humanities are taught in the curriculum ?</p>
<p>'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 v. 38 - 42).</p>	<p>God's love is shown to others through selfless actions.</p>	<p>How is this modelled by the adults in school ?</p>
<p>But a Samaritan, as he travelled, 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. (Luke 10 v.33 &amp; 34).</p>	<p>The story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, is one of the most powerful examples of the love of God being shown in selfless, practical ways to an enemy.</p>	<p>What implications could be drawn from this parable for the way pupils and adults would be expected to behave in and beyond school ?</p>

<p>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.</p> <p>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13).</p>	<p>God's love, shown to others, is not a superficial virtue or simply one of a number of 'Christian values' but rather a fundamental response of the heart.</p>	<p>How could the many facets of Godly love be explored, celebrated and taught in the worship life of the school ?</p>
<p>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5 v. 22 – 25).</p>	<p>This love is part of the fruit of the spirit working from the depths of someone who follows Jesus.</p>	<p>How could the image of the fruit of the spirit be used to support the development of relationships across the school ?</p>

<p>Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5 v.1 &amp; 2).</p> <p>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. (John 15 v.12 &amp; 13).</p> <p>Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4 v.8 -10).</p>	<p>This love for others is self-sacrificial and is to be demonstrated in the daily life of Christians (those who follow Jesus).</p>	
<p>'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25 v.40).</p>	<p>Actions towards others motivated by God's love are also acts of devotion and love offered back to God.</p>	<p>How could Jesus' teaching prompt pupils to take actions to make a difference to others in and beyond school ?</p>
<p>'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 v.34 - 35).</p>	<p>These actions shown by followers of Jesus to each other are the most effective way to demonstrate God's love to the world. This is the work of the Kingdom of God – the part of God's Big Story that is not found in the Bible – it is being written now and in the future.</p>	<p>To what degree is the school demonstrating God's love to pupils, parents, staff and the wider community ?</p>
<p>For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. (Romans 8 v.19).</p>	<p>The future of the earth depends on God's self-sacrificial love being demonstrated by those who follow Jesus.</p>	<p>What are the implications of this teaching for the way pupils and adults treat the environment ?</p>

## Notes:

- The Sadducees and Pharisees were two different groups of Jewish religious leaders in Jesus' time;
  - the Sadducees were more rural and conservative, serving the more well-to-do members of society. They had little regard for the lives and needs of the majority of people.
  - the Pharisees were usually from more humble, mainly urban origins and better understood the lives and needs of the majority of common people.
- Jesus was quoting from two Old Testament scriptures:
  - **Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.** (Deuteronomy 6 v. 5).
  - **Love your neighbour as yourself.** (Leviticus 19 v.18).
- The Hebrew word translated most often as 'love' in the Old Testament is '*āhēb*'
  - the deepest possible expression of the personality and of the closeness in personal relations;
  - an inner force which impels to perform the action which gives pleasure; obtain the object which awakens desire; self-sacrifice for the good of the one who is loved.
- The Greek word translated most often as 'love' in the New Testament is '*agapē*'
  - expresses the highest and noblest form of love, which sees something infinitely precious in its object;
  - used in reference to love between God and people, people and God and people to their neighbours.