



# ARE YOU A LOVING PERSON?

## *The Love Test*

If you had to choose one character trait that is the most beneficial to yourself and others, what would it be? If you would choose “love,” you would agree with God’s perspective. Jesus addressed this subject in response to a lawyer’s question almost 2,000 years ago.

*Matthew 22:35-40, And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Probably, most of us consider ourselves loving persons, but let’s take a test that will help us be more *accurate* in determining how loving we *really* are.

### THE LOVE TEST

#### • Step 1

Based on a scale of one to ten, with “10” being the most loving and “1” being the least loving person on the planet, rate yourself on your level of love to others. Write the number here \_\_\_\_.

No matter what number you chose, what did you use as your definition of love? Was it brotherly love, family love, erotic (sexual) love, and/or being “nice” to others? In a few words, write your definition on the line below:

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#### • Step 2

If you want to have an *accurate* perspective on your level of love, you should compare it to God’s definition of love found in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13.

*1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends (fails).*

#### • Step 3

Using God’s definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, evaluate your own level of love as best you can. Substitute your name in place of the words “love” and “it” in the above passage. For example:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> is patient                           | ▪ <u>Your name</u> is not resentful               |
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> is kind                              | ▪ <u>Your name</u> does not rejoice at wrongdoing |
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> does not envy                        | ▪ <u>Your name</u> rejoices with the truth        |
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> does not boast                       | ▪ <u>Your name</u> bears all things               |
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> is not arrogant                      | ▪ <u>Your name</u> believes all things            |
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> is not rude                          | ▪ <u>Your name</u> hopes all things               |
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> does not insist on your own way      | ▪ <u>Your name</u> endures all things             |
| ▪ <u>Your name</u> is not irritable (or easily angered) | ▪ <u>Your name</u> never fails                    |

Using the characteristics of biblical love above as the standard for your evaluation, now rate your level of love from “1” (the worst) to “10” (the best). Write that number here \_\_\_\_\_. Did your number decrease from what you originally recorded in *Step 1*?

To make this self-evaluation more meaningful (perhaps even more measurable), add the name of a person whom you love after each of the above characteristics that you will personalize. For example:

- I am patient with name of your loved one
- I am kind with name of your loved one
- I do not envy any aspect of name of your loved one
- I do not boast to name of your loved one
- I am not arrogant with name of your loved one
- I am not rude to name of your loved one
- I do not insist on my own way with name of your loved one
- I do not get irritated (easily angered) with name of your loved one
- I am not resentful toward name of your loved one
- I do not rejoice when the wrongdoing of name of your loved one is revealed
- I rejoice when the truth is told about or by name of your loved one
- I bear all things with name of your loved one
- I believe all things in my interaction with name of your loved one until facts prove otherwise
- I hope for the best concerning name of your loved one
- I endure all things with name of your loved one
- I never fail name of your loved one

With regard to your loved one, how loving are you? Write that number here \_\_\_\_\_. Did that number decrease from your previous evaluations? Would that number decrease if you were to rate yourself on your level of love from “1” (the worst) to “10” (the best) after each description above?

#### • Step 4

Now take the test with Jesus as the standard of biblical love. Again, evaluate yourself using the description of biblical love in 1 Corinthians 13 and place Jesus as the defining point of comparison. For example:

- I am as patient as Jesus.
- I am as kind as Jesus.
- Jesus was never envious, and neither am I.
- Jesus was not boastful, and neither am I.
- Jesus was not arrogant, and neither am I.
- Jesus was never rude, and neither am I.
- Jesus never insisted on his own way, disregarding others, and neither do I.
- I endure all things as Jesus did.
- Jesus does not get irritated (easily angered), and neither do I.
- Jesus is not resentful and neither am I.
- Jesus never rejoices over wrongdoing, and neither do I.
- Jesus rejoices over truth as I do.
- I bear all things just like Jesus.
- I believe all things in the same manner as Jesus exemplified.
- My hope is like that of Jesus.
- Jesus never fails, and I don't either.

Using the standard of Jesus Christ with regard to authentic love, now rate yourself on a scale of “1” to “10” on how loving you are. Write your number here \_\_\_\_\_.

#### TEST RESULTS

If you are like the vast majority of believers, your rating number decreased the further you went into the test. Why is that so? Actually, the answer is simple. When most of us evaluated ourselves with regard to love in *Step 1*, we chose our own standard of comparison. However, the closer we came to evaluating ourselves by God's standard (His Word and His Son), then our rating fell and, actually, became more accurate. As one person stated who took the test, “I need to record myself in negative numbers.”

What's the point in recognizing that we are not as loving as we thought we were? First, our declining self-evaluation

in the various steps of the “love test” demonstrates how easy it is for each of us to “give ourselves the benefit of the doubt.” That should illustrate how much we all love ourselves. Jesus said that if one “loved others as you *already* love yourself” (Matthew 22:39), each of us would fulfill the divine law of love. As a practical application of biblical love, we could start giving others “the benefit of the doubt” just like we *already* do for ourselves.

Second, when we truly recognize the standard of biblical love that God uses to evaluate our lives, we will realize that this standard (His Word and His Son) is perfect. Recognizing that standard, none of us will ever reach God’s perfect standard of love in our lifetimes. That may sound a bit hopeless; but it isn’t, since we have a constant goal for which we can strive in loving others. That goal should motivate us to be alert to the many opportunities that we have to love others in a variety of ways. (Review love’s description in 1 Corinthians 13.)

Third, since the standard for biblical love is one of perfection, we should realize that we would not be able to progress toward that goal without an on-going reliance on God’s Spirit. Biblical love is *not* possible when based on personal feelings or power or viewpoints. Biblical love is possible *only* when we are being obedient to the Word of God, continually being filled with (controlled by) the Spirit, and remaining focused on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Finally, growing in biblical love is a process. We don’t arrive overnight. In other words, each day is a journey in which biblical love can grow in our lives. Now, that is hopeful.

## THE PRACTICE

Knowing about biblical love brings responsibility. It will be tempting to “judge” others concerning our perception that they lack biblical love and, as a result, fail to keep the searchlight of biblical examination on our own lives. Actually, we cannot see others’ deficiencies accurately unless we first examine ourselves.

*Matthew 7:1-5, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”*

We have a full-time job dealing with our own lives before the Lord. We will soon discover that when we focus on the supposed “unloving” actions or attitudes of others, we often stop evaluating our own lack of love in everyday life.

What would happen if believers practiced biblical love consistently? What kind of impact could we have among our friends and family if we were known as “loving” people? No wonder Jesus said that others would know we are His disciples by the love we have for one another!

*John 13:35, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

All of us are in a personal “love test” every day, although many of us seldom think about it. Tomorrow, think about the “love test” in your dealings with others, and may Jesus be glorified by your response!

## ORIGIN OF THE LOVE TEST

In the late 1980’s, a teacher taught a nine-month course in one of Costa Mesa’s Calvary Chapel evening Bible classes. The class focused on personal discipleship and biblical counseling. The teacher was from out of town and drove 140 miles to teach the class each week. The teacher wrote the class session notes in the days between classes and would fax his work to the church office in Costa Mesa immediately before driving there. The notes would then be duplicated for use in that evening’s session.

One evening, the class subject was “biblical love.” While teaching the class, the teacher realized there needed to be a better way of defining and applying biblical love than simply reading a definition from the class notes. The teacher silently asked the Lord for a “spur of the moment” illustration to better present the subject. In answer to that rather desperate prayer, the Lord gave the teacher insight (The Love Test) to present a way for believers to determine the level of biblical love in their lives.

Since that time, the “test” and its variations have been introduced to thousands of believers in dozens of countries to help them better ascertain their understanding and practice of biblical love.