

The Greatest Law: Love!

In Matthew 22:37–40, Jesus summarized the Law of Love in general terms. He expressed it again in His famous “Golden Rule” in Matthew 7:12. Saint Paul echoed this when he said: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14).

If we as Christians love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind, and if we love others as we love ourselves, we will by nature fulfill the spirit of the Ten Commandments. For example, we won’t put other gods before Him or take His name in vain. To love our neighbor as ourselves precludes murdering, stealing, lying to our neighbor, or coveting what he or she has. The motivation for Christians to obey these commandments is not out of fear of divine judgment, but rather because they are compelled to exhibit godly love and consideration for their neighbor. We refrain from such activities because doing so would not be in accordance with God’s Law of Love.

If a person’s actions are motivated by unselfish, sacrificial love—the love of God for our fellow man—and are not intentionally hurtful to others, such actions are in accordance with Scripture and are thus lawful in the eyes of God. “The fruit of the Spirit is love; ... against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23).

Saint John wrote in his Gospel: “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Jesus further emphasized this in saying, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another” (John 13:34).

In some ways, God’s Law of Love is a stricter code of ethics than the old Mosaic Laws. The Ten Commandments stated that man was expected to act justly and righteously. Under Jesus’ Law of Love, much more is required of humankind—love and mercy. You do not attain salvation by “being good,” but rather by inviting Jesus Christ to come and live in your heart, take over your life, and therefore let Him love others through you.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5). “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

This godly love is a much higher ideal to aspire to than mere religious righteousness. In the Mosaic Law, there was little forgiveness or mercy. It was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20).

Jesus, to the contrary, said, “Do unto others what you want them to do unto you” (Matthew 7:12). Jesus even went so far as to say that we should love our enemies, pray for them and forgive them! (Matthew 5:38–44). This ultimate application of the Law of Love renders it much greater and more profound than the old Mosaic Law.

In fact, Jesus’ law is so much more difficult to keep that it’s humanly impossible. This prompted Jesus to tell His disciples, “Without Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). But the Bible also tells us “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

It’s no easy task to live Jesus’ commandments of love. To love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind, to love others as ourselves, and to give our lives to others through daily loving sacrifice requires a life of self-sacrifice. To have this kind of love is only possible through the supernatural love of God!

Mountain Streams: Our Declaration of Love!

By David Berg

We believe in Love!—Love for God and others, for “*God is love!*” (1 John 4:8). That’s our religion—love!

Love is everything, for without love there is nothing!—No friends, no families, no fathers or mothers or children or sex or health or happiness or Heaven. There could be none of these without love! And none of these is possible without God, for God is love!

This is the solution to all of man's problems of today as well as to his problems of the past: love, true love, the love of God and the love of fellow man! The Spirit of God's divine love which helps us all to fulfill His great commandment to love one another!—This is still God's solution, even in such a complex and confused and highly complicated society as that of the world today!

For it is man's rejection of the love of God and His loving laws that causes him to be selfish and unloving and vicious and cruel and unkind to his neighbor—man's inhumanity to man, which is so apparent in today's world with all of its enslavement by oppression, tyranny and exploitation, robbery by the rich, with people suffering from hunger and malnutrition, disease and ill health, poverty and homelessness, overwork and evil abuse, the tortures of war and nightmares of perpetual fearful insecurity.

All of these evils are caused by man's lack of love for God and each other and his defiance of God's laws of love and faith and peace and harmony with Him, each other and His whole creation. "For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

It's really just that simple: If we love God, we can love each other! We can then follow His rules of life, liberty and the possession of happiness, and all will be well and happy in Him!

This is why Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to love—to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ... And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37–39).

A lawyer Jesus was speaking to then asked Him, "Who is my neighbor?" And with the story of the Good Samaritan, He tried to show them that it is anyone who needs our help, regardless of their race, creed, color, nationality, or condition:

"Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:31,33–34).

For if we have real love, we can't face a needy situation without doing something about it. We can't just pass by the poor man on the road to Jericho! We must take action like the Samaritan did! (Luke 10:25–35).

Many people today say of those who need help, "Oh, I'm so sorry, how sad!" But compassion must be put into action! That's the difference between pity and compassion: Pity just feels sorry; compassion does something about it!

Who were the Samaritans?

Although the term "Good Samaritan" is fairly common, most people don't know exactly who the Samaritans were and how much the Jews despised and looked down on them. To the Jews of Jesus' day, the very word "Samaritan" was an insult (John 8:48). Why did the Jews so hate the Samaritans?

In the year 720 B.C., Shalmanesser, king of the Assyrian Empire, invaded Israel and carried the 10 northern tribes away as captives to the land of Assyria. He then brought in peoples from Babylon and other distant conquered lands to inhabit the cities of northern Israel where the Israelites had once lived. This region then became known as Samaria (2 Kings 17:22–29).

These people were heathen at first, but were forcibly converted to Judaism approximately 200 years before Christ. They believed only in the five books of Moses. As Moses had made no mention of Jerusalem being a holy city, the Samaritans didn't worship in the Jewish temple there. To them, Mount Gerizim in Samaria was the holiest spot where God was to be worshipped, and they built a temple atop it. So, because the Samaritans were a mixed race, and their customs and religious worship were different, the Jews considered them inferior and didn't associate with them at all.

We must demonstrate our faith by our works, and love can seldom be proven without tangible manifestation in action. To say you love someone and yet not try to help them physically in

whatever way they may need—food, clothing, shelter and so on—this is not love! True, the need for real love is a spiritual need, but it must be manifested physically in works—“faith working through love!” (Galatians 5:6).

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:17–18).

However, we feel that the greatest manifestation of our love is not the mere sharing of our material things and personal possessions, but the sharing of ourselves and our personal services for others, which is the expression of our faith, and results in our works and the sharing of our material possessions. Jesus Himself had nothing material to share with His disciples, only His Love and His life, which He gave for them and for us, that we, too, might have life and love forever!

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). So we consider that the sharing of ourselves, our love and our life with others, is the greatest of all sharing and our ultimate goal, as well as our present means to that end.

In fact, this is why God created Man to begin with: To love!—To love and enjoy Him forever and to try to help others to do the same! It was God Who created Love and gave Man the need to love and be loved, and it is He alone Who can satisfy the deepest yearning of every human soul for total love and complete understanding.

So although the temporal things of this Earth can satisfy the body, only God and His Eternal Love can ever fill that aching spiritual void of every man’s heart which He created for Himself alone! The human spirit, that intangible personality of the real you that dwells within that body, can never be completely satisfied with anything less than utter union with the great and loving Spirit that created it!

He is the very Spirit of Love itself, true Love, everlasting Love, real Love, genuine Love that never ends from a Lover Who never leaves, the Lover of all lovers, God Himself!

He’s pictured in His Son Christ Jesus, Who came for love and lived in love and died for love that we might live and love forever! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

To receive God’s Love in Jesus, all you have to do is open your heart, pray and ask Him to come in. Jesus promised, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20). He waits lovingly and meekly at your heart’s door, not forcing Himself upon you, not pushing the door open, but waiting for you to simply ask Him in. Will you?

When you have done this, your whole life will be changed, like a newborn baby born into a whole new world with a new spirit as a new child of God! His Spirit within you will then enable you to do the humanly impossible: Love God and Man!

You will discover true happiness, not in your personal pursuit of selfish pleasure and satisfaction, but in finding God and giving His life to others and bringing them happiness! Then happiness pursues, overtakes, and overwhelms you personally, without you even seeking it for yourself!

“For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). If you sow love, you’re going to reap love. If you sow friendship, you’re going to reap friendship. So obey God’s Law of love, unselfish love, love for Him and others, and give others that love which is their due, and so shall you also receive. “For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

Find out what wonders love can do! You’ll find a whole new world of love you have only dreamed of! There are wonders of love that you can enjoy along with some other lonely soul—if you will only try! If you give love, you’ll get love!

Love wasn’t put in your heart to stay,

Love isn’t love till you give it away!

Meditation Moments: Boomerang

By Virginia Brandt Berg

I would like to talk about something that interested me many years ago when just a child. I attended the circus and before my eyes there were three rings in full action. I can remember it so well! The acrobats swinging and flying, leaping through the air! But more than anything there was something that interested me in the third ring.

I saw a girl and boy flinging out across the ring brightly colored missiles, and they would go a little way in space and then they would return and come back again, straight back into the very hands that had flung them out. No matter which direction they were thrown, back they came swiftly, and the young actors would catch them as they curved back.

The child watched in amazement! What made those things come back again? What made them curve in their courses and circle right back to where they began? They left that girl's hands, and back to her hands they came! Then I heard someone beside me say—and it was the first time I had ever heard the word—“They are boomerangs!

Well, I've heard the word many times since then, after I tucked it away in my childish mind. I had to have it explained to me when I got home! But as I say, I've seen it so many times in life since then, because life is itself a boomerang. Everything you do comes back some time, somewhere. God's Word says, “Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” Every word you fling out comes back some day.

I believe that even my thoughts come back upon me, for thoughts are things after all. It's just an uncanny way the boomerang has of describing a circle, that of returning back to the very one that threw it out.

And that is the way it is with the law of spiritual gravity, the law of retribution, just as fixed as life itself: That whatever a man casts out in the world shall return again on his own life.

He throws out to the world the bread of kindness and it returns after many years, such a blessing on his own life! He casts forth a curse and there curves back to him a greater curse in the later years. You say, “I don't know about my boomerang. Yours strikes one way and mine another.” But as sure as you live, God's Word is true.

God's Word never fails, and whatever you do will come back to you. I know that kind words spoken years ago gathered momentum and I've reaped great blessings for them just in these later years of my life.

And it is the same for you today. You're reaping love and gratitude from some far-flung boomerang that years ago you flung out. It's just the same. You take a parent—the other day I was noticing—who lives near me; irritable and impatient. And then I heard the child railing back in irritability and impatience and I thought, “It's just the boomerang coming back to that parent.”

Some time ago I met a young man who had lost faith in God, and in our conversation you could hear the whirl of the boomerang, for years ago he began reading the type of literature in his own home—that was there by his own parents' hands—which leads only to loss of faith in everything.

Some time ago at an altar—and this surely I can never forget—was a dear one kneeling there and praying, a mother. She told how it was really a boomerang that a boy of hers had gone so wrong, because she had not brought him up in the way in which he should go.

And the child's life, like metal when it's hot, had flown into the mold and hardened there, and now that he was a man she couldn't seem to deal with him. But it had been because of her own life in those early years, her indifference towards God, and no prayer in the home.

Now the boomerang had come back and she said, “Oh, at that time it was so different! I thought it would never come back to me, and I wasn't afraid, and I thought I was just having a good time, and I used to say it was nonsense about these things coming back.” But she said, “I'm hearing now the clink of handcuffs, the shutting of prison doors over my boy, and I couldn't help but think, as I sat in the deputy's office, that I heard in the distance just the return on my own life and what I had sowed in that boy's life.”

Some time ago in a hospital in Miami, Florida, I called one morning in two different sick rooms. One room was where Marie Smith was lying sick. There were flowers in abundance, and all sorts of cards and beautiful little gifts that had been sent into her room, and she was just surrounded by those thoughtful little offers of kindness.

But that had been her life, for she had sown love and thoughtfulness through the years in the lives of these others, and now it was coming back to her in her hour of need and desperate sickness in that hospital.

In the other room was a woman lying alone, bitter, suspicion on every feature of her face. Selfishness had ruined her life. Selfish, suspicious, critical, and there she was lying with her face turned to the wall. She had built around her life a friendlessness, a coldness, a hardness of heart and selfishness, and now she was shut in alone in the time of her death.

Oh, what a difference in those two rooms, where the boomerang came back in different ways! In Proverbs 26:27 God's Word says, "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him." And then in Ecclesiastes 11:1, God's Word says, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days."

Oh, the one that lives unselfishly, caring for the needy and lifting the burdens, easing the pain, supplying the need, you surely will see that boomerang come back in blessing upon them some day!

If you will turn to God's Word and read it, and live in it, what a boomerang it will be upon your own life! What a blessing it will be! Lay up your treasure in Heaven now, and what a glorious boomerang it will be!

Kindness

"Be kind and merciful. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness—kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting. In the slums we are the light of God's kindness to the poor. To children, to the poor, to all who suffer and are lonely, give always a happy smile. Give them not only your care but also your heart. Because of God's goodness and love every moment of our life can be the beginning of great things. Be open, ready to receive and you will find Him everywhere. Every work of love brings a person face to face with God."

—By Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *In the Silence of the Heart*