

# Expressing Love for Neighbors

For a follower of Jesus, love is not an "option," but a lifestyle.

If you have genuine love for Jesus, you will obey him... and one of his commands is to love your "neighbor."

The "neighbor" in this command includes anyone you may meet - even your enemies. It can even include people you *haven't* met (such as someone you may pray for).

The "love" mentioned in this command is defined by the Bible. (We don't invent our own definitions.) It includes not only the "pleasant" things that people may *like*, but the "unpleasant" things that they may *need*. (Example: Speaking the truth, when people would rather hear a lie.)

There is a "hierarchy" in love. Love for neighbor takes precedence over love for self (or love for what this world offers). Love for God takes precedence over *all*. Within this framework, love can be expressed in a multitude of ways... and it *will* express itself, if it is really present. It is not mere talk or emotions.

Love is not defined solely as the "doing" of things for others, but by the sum total of the attitudes and actions we have toward the other person. Sometimes *not* doing something will be a greater expression of love. But even when something *is* done, motives will play an important part in love. (Something that is done for the wrong reasons can result in nothing more than a counterfeit - a fake form of "love.")