

Known For Love

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By this all people will know that you are my disciples. That you will have love for one another. (English Standard Version, John 13:35)

Intro

Sports fans are known by the colors they flaunt and their beloved mascots. Fraternities and sororities are known by the Greek letters they display, or the hand signs they throw. Certain companies are recognized instantly by their logos and branding.

As Christians, we are commanded to be known by our love for one another.



What does it mean to love one another?

Scripture points us to a multitude of ways we are to love one another. Forgive (Colossians 3:13). Serve (Galatians 5:13). Bear with (Ephesians 4:2). Weep with (Romans 12:15). Rejoice with (Romans 12:15). Be kind (1 Corinthians 13). Show compassion (1 Peter 3:8). Lend without expectation (Luke 6:35). Even enemies (Luke 6:35). I'll say it again. Even our enemies.

Notice these are all actions. They are all things we must do. If we are called to show who we are by love, and God tells us exactly how to do that, then why is it so hard to love our enemies, our neighbors, and even our friends and family?

God REALLY loves us, but do we believe it?

We believe but we don't, like the father with a demon-possessed son (Mark 9:24). We have faith but our faith is fallible. It's hard for our minds to fathom God's unfailing, unconditional love. He loves us no matter what. And when we can't wrap our heads around that kind of love; when we doubt it, it's even harder for us to love others so radically. Hard becomes impossible apart from Him.

But with him all things are possible, even radical, unconditional love (Matthew 19:26).

But what if they don't deserve it?

You know the ones. They insult. They offend. They annoy. They lie. They are thoughtless. They are rude. They divulge secrets. They never apologize. They do it repeatedly. They cannot be trusted.

So do you. So do I. Neither can you. Neither can I. We cannot be trusted to follow Christ unfailingly. We hurt and we offend. Even still, He forgives us. Repeatedly. Forgiveness is not a suggestion or a request. It is a mandate (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13). And forgiveness is an action of love.

So what's the Cheat Code?

1 John 4:19 says we love because He first loved us. We are called to be initiators because He is. He loved us first. We should do the same—love first. Initiate. Over and over again. We forgive first. Serve first. We're kind first. Even with difficult people. Because if we get busy loving first, we won't have time to worry about keeping score, or running a tab. Unfailing love can feel foolish. It can make us feel taken advantage of. It seems wrong somehow, in this broken world.

There are the people who are billboards of love. You know the ones. They seem to always be smiling. They offer hugs and kind words of encouragement. Tell them your struggles and they stop what they're doing to pray with you on the spot. They don't keep a tab. They don't worry about being taken advantage of. And, you know what, you have never thought to yourself how foolish they are for loving so deeply. Chances are, you've been convicted in your spirit to be more like them.

Reflect:

- Do the people closest to you think you're a billboard for love?
- What is holding you back from loving more radically?
- What is one action you can take this week toward radical love?

Dig a little deeper:

- [Here's](#) an excellent podcast episode on Loving Better
- [Here's](#) one of my favorite books on doing love
- Lord, search me and show me the places in my heart that hold love at bay. Help me to remember that I am not worthy of your love, and yet You love me. Help me to love others with the same unconditional fervor. Help me to see need, and to provide. Amen.

REFERENCES

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV Text Edition, Crossway, 2016.