

## How Does the New Life Affect My Relationships?

The chief characteristic of God is His love. God imparted that love to us but the sin in our lives will rob us of God's love. Jesus says that this process of love erosion will become very pronounced in the last days, Matthew 24:12 NLT: **Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold.** One of the functions of the new life is to bring us into the truth regarding the death of the old nature and then having the Spirit lead us into a life of expressing God's love. We are destined to be the reflection of God's glory and that reflection is the appearance of His love.

The thirteenth chapter of the book of 1 Corinthians is perhaps the best reference for learning about the nature of God's love. Let us take a look at this important chapter to gain a greater insight into the nature of our faith:

**Verses 1-3 NLT: If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.** These verses tell us that even if we do all of the greatest things in life that we could do, but we do not do them for the right reason – love, then we have operated in vain. They are in essence empty gestures that do not reflect the glory of the Father in our lives.

**Verses 4-7 NLT: Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.** These verses tell us of the very nature of God's love and how we are to express ourselves to others. These attributes mirror the Fruit of the Holy Spirit and they are to be the hallmark of a sincere believer. In fact, the absence of love is a sign that one is not of Christ. John expresses this point in 1 John 4:20 NLT: **If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?**

**Verses 8-13 NLT: .....Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.** Jesus thought that love between the family of God was so important that it would be the distinguishing mark of His disciples, 13:35. Paul reminds us of this obligation in Romans 13:8 NLT: **Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.** Of equal importance was the love that we were to show to even our enemies, Matthew 5:44: **But I say, love your enemies! [Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you.] Pray for those who persecute you!;** which is difficult to do but it speaks volumes of the love of God, who loved us even when we were His enemy and we were walking in sin, Ephesians 2:1-5. It is the love that we experience from the Father that will make all of our relationships with others come into proper balance. It is our sin that causes them to be out of balance so the healing essence of His love works to bring them back to proper balance. All of the people that we touch in our daily lives will notice the Christ like attitude and they will be affected by it. All of our efforts in this area are preparations for the Kingdom that will come but it will also show people now the character of that Kingdom as God's love works to bring restoration to a lost and dying world.