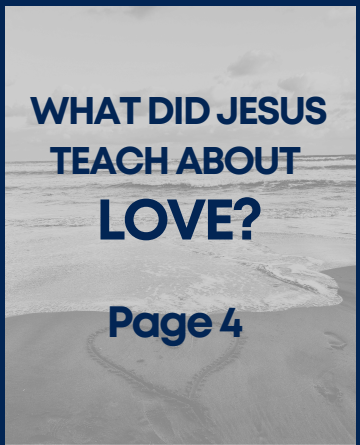
RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY



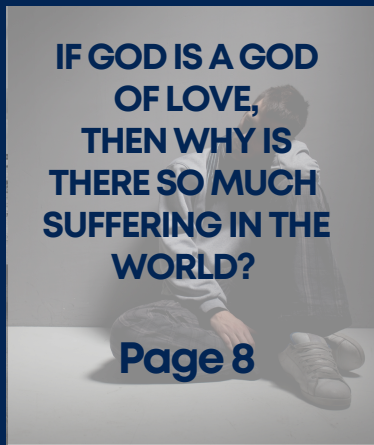
RIVERSIDE
Christian Assembly

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WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT LOVE?

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IF GOD IS A GOD OF LOVE, THEN WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

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Welcome

Welcome to this edition of the Riverside Quarterly and the theme of this edition is **LOVE**. The word itself has been misused so widely that shallow notions of the sentimental or the sexual dominate many peoples thinking. We use this edition to unpack the truth of what love really is.

What we believe about...

LOVE

- **Culturally:** Love is the deepest longing in every human heart and the cry behind most of our cultures songs and poems. We sing about it, we write about it and in reality we all long to live in the experience of love relationships. But our cultures understanding of love is shallow and often debased, unanchored as it is from its origin.....
- **Theologically:** Love is far deeper than most people understand, originating as it does from our Creator God. Love is a fundamental attribute of who God is and has been shared in the relationships of the Godhead; Father, Son and Spirit, for eternity. God is relational, and love relational, to the core, an attribute of God that has been brought into His creation and is seen in humanity because we are 'made in the image of God'.
- **Biblically:** Love in the bible is shown in its richness through many different aspects and different emphases. More than an emotion. More than a feeling. Love toward God and love toward our fellow man is the constant call of the bible for all of us to rise to. We see aspects of it in so many people, but it has only ever been fully seen in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Man.

Whats on?

SUNDAY

- **9:30am** Breaking of Bread

Coffee @11:15am

BIBLE FOR ALL

11:30am

Creche available

- 4:00pm Bible Teaching
- 4:00pm Sunday School (both Term Time)

MONDAY

- 10.00am Toddlers (Term Time)
- 8:00pm Prayer Meeting

WEDNESDAY

- 6:30pm Kids Club (P1-6)
- 6:30pm Youth Club (P7-S2) (both Term Time)
- 8:00pm Bible Teaching

SUMMER HOLIDAY CLUB

10th-13th August

See back page for details

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

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 FAILS

Written by Craig MacKie for
www.understandingthegospel.org

What did Jesus teach about LOVE



"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

These words are undoubtedly among the most quoted, preached on, and well-known words in the Bible. Spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to a Jewish teacher named Nicodemus around 2,000 years ago, they have been widely used to explain the message of the gospel.

As we read the verse, one word stands out – loved.

This shows that the actions of God are not those of a self-centred or capricious being but are, in fact, motivated by love.

So, as we look at the verse, we might ask: What did Jesus teach about love?

Love has a Source

There are so many things about God that are beyond our understanding, but the Lord Jesus does not begin there. Rather, He starts with something most people can grasp to some extent – love. He doesn't just begin the verse with the word love; He takes us all the way back to the very source of love – God Himself.

In 1 John 4:8 the same writer who recorded these words says, "God is love". This is not a mantra to justify doing whatever we want, assuming a God who is love will ignore our sin. Rather, it is an explanation of the nature and character of God.

The Persons of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) have loved eternally, and this outflowing of God's love resulted, not only in the creation of the world, but also in the creation of humankind. Even though we humans who fill God's world have disobeyed and disappointed Him, He still loves us.

Love is Sacrificial

But how can we prove that God loves us? According to our verse the proof is that God sent His only Son, the Lord Jesus, in human form to demonstrate His love.

The day before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus tells His disciples, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down His life for His friends" (John 15:13). Lest we should wonder to whom He is referring, He tells His disciples in the following verse, "You are my friends".

The Lord Jesus wants His followers to understand that the greatest demonstration of love is that of giving oneself, especially when it is done without expecting anything in return.

When the apostle Paul is summarising this message in the book of Romans He says, "but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8 ESV).

Looking to the love of God as something Christians can depend on, He refers to God as, "He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all" (8:32 ESV).

Love can Save

My hope, as you read this article and consider the sending of the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross, is that you understand the motivation behind this momentous event.

The death of Jesus was not merely a miscarriage of justice, nor was it a dreadful accident – it was an act of love. God loved humanity so much that He sent His Son to take God's judgement on behalf of sinners. The verse that we are considering does not conclude with the love of God, nor with the sending of the Lord Jesus.

Rather, it concludes with an offer that is extended to the whole of humanity and has only one condition: "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life". The love of God is not just something shown in the past; it is available now and extends into the great eternity ahead – it is something that He wants you to enjoy with Him forever.

What does the Bible have to say about LOVE?

1 cor 113:13

"Faith, Hope and Love
THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE"

The word LOVE is used in the Bible **684** times (ESV)

and is described using FOUR greek words...

Storge | **Phileo** | **Eros** | **Agape**

Loyal

Natural family affection—the love between parents and children, siblings, and close family members. It is characterized by loyalty, care, protection, and a sense of belonging.

"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him."
Psalm 103:13

Relational

Affectionate, loyal friendship love. The bond of mutual care, trust, and companionship between people. It is often described as brotherly love among Christians and close friends.

"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour."
Romans 12:10

Visceral

Passionate, romantic love that is not intellectual but felt deeply, intuitively and physically. The word eros is used in the Greek Old Testament to describe romantic love and marital intimacy as gifts from God.

"Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away."
Song of Solomon 8:7

Sacrificial

Unconditional, self-giving love that seeks the good of others regardless of personal cost. It is the love God shows toward humanity and the love Christians are called to show one another.

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."
John 15:13

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Most well known reference to agape love

The Bible helps us to understand Agape love by comparing Christ's love for the Church to how a husband should love his wife in Ephesians ch5....

Agape love IS FURTHER DEFINED AS:

- Heartfeltness, — "present her to Himself" (v25)
- sacrificial, — "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (v25)
- commitment, — "nourishes and cherishes her, just as Christ does the church" (v29)
- for the ultimate best of the object. — "present her without spot... ...holy and blameless" (v27)

This was ultimately demonstrated when Christ died on the cross, summarised in Romans 5:8...

In comparison to weak and powerless humans

Ultimate proof of His love

"but God demonstrates

His own love (agape) toward us, in

that while we were

Christ stood in the place of humanity, paying the penalty for sin.

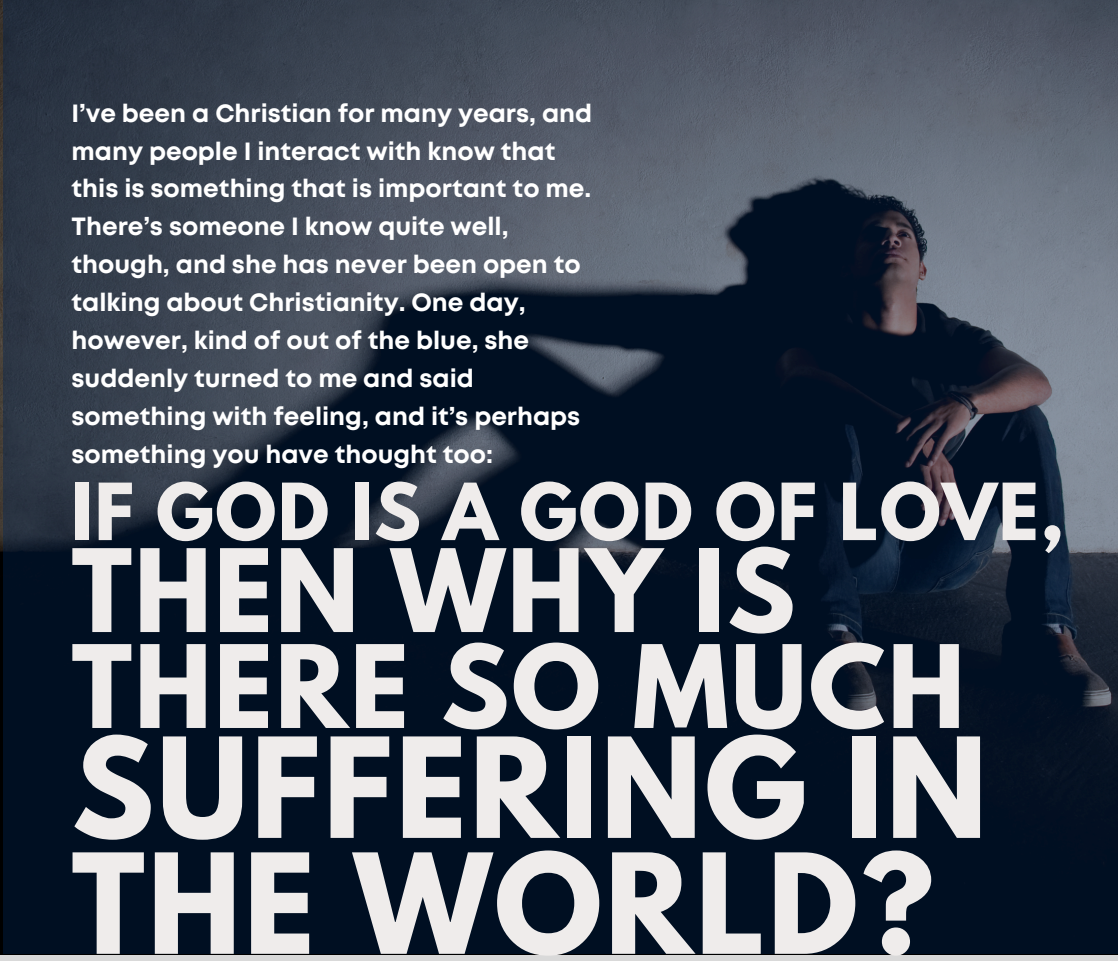
yet sinners,

God's grace is seen in stepping in to rescue unworthy sinners.

Christ died for us."

1 John 3:16

"By this we have known love THAT CHRIST LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US"



I've been a Christian for many years, and many people I interact with know that this is something that is important to me. There's someone I know quite well, though, and she has never been open to talking about Christianity. One day, however, kind of out of the blue, she suddenly turned to me and said something with feeling, and it's perhaps something you have thought too:

IF GOD IS A GOD OF LOVE, THEN WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

This is a deep question, and I just want to acknowledge at the outset that there is a lot of pain out there, a lot of sadness, and a lot of evil. Maybe you personally feel it and it makes you question God.

PERFECT BEGINNINGS

The Bible begins by telling us that God did not create a world filled with suffering. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and everything He made was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). There was no sickness, no death, no violence, and no sorrow. Humanity lived in perfect harmony with God and enjoyed a perfect creation.

SO WHAT WENT WRONG?

The Bible teaches that suffering entered the world because of sin. When humanity rebelled against God, the consequences were far-reaching. Sin not only damaged our relationship with God as individuals, but also affected the whole of creation, and the world that was once perfect became broken.

As the Apostle Paul explains, creation itself is now "groaning", waiting for the day when God will restore it (Romans 8:22).
This helps us understand why suffering exists. We live in a fallen world where the effects of sin are everywhere. Human selfishness produces conflict, hatred, oppression, and injustice. The natural world itself bears the scars of this brokenness. The suffering we experience is not evidence that God does not care, but rather it is evidence that something has gone terribly wrong with the world as it currently exists.

EVEN IN THE MIDST OF PAIN, WE CAN KNOW THAT GOD IS LOVE.

It's easy to assume that suffering disproves God's love, but I want to point you to the cross. God did not remain distant from our suffering. In Jesus Christ, He entered into it. Jesus experienced rejection, betrayal, injustice, torture, and death. The cross demonstrates the depth of God's love for humanity. As Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This means that when Jesus died, He died for me, and He died for you. When I think about Christ on the cross, I understand that God punished Him for my wrongdoing, and that He took my place. As a result, I can go free – someone else took my punishment.

SPIRITUAL BATTLE

The Bible also teaches that there is a spiritual battle taking place between good and evil. We see the effects of that battle all around us. Evil is real, but it does not have the final word. God's purposes are not defeated by the darkness of this world. Throughout history, He has been working out His plan of redemption and rescue.
The great hope of Christianity is that Jesus Christ has already won the decisive victory. Through His death and resurrection, He conquered sin, Satan, and death itself. While we still live in a world marked by suffering, we know that evil's days are numbered. Christ will return, and He will restore all things. Then after this, the Bible promises a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Rev 21:4).

THIS HELPS US UNDERSTAND THE WORLD AROUND US

This future hope does not remove today's difficulties, but it gives them context. Suffering is not permanent. The brokenness we see around us is not the end of the story. Most importantly, God offers peace in the midst of life's troubles. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven, reconciled to God, and given the gift of eternal life. Salvation does not mean we will never face hardship, but it does mean we no longer face it alone. The question is not merely, "Why is there suffering?" The greater question is, "Where can we find hope in the midst of suffering?" The Christian answer is found in Jesus Christ. In a broken and groaning world, He offers forgiveness for the past, peace for the present, and the promise of a restored future. Because Christ is victorious, those who trust in Him can face even the darkest circumstances with confidence, knowing that one day He will make all things new.

The 10 Commandments:

A Blueprint for **LOVING GOD** and **LOVING EACH OTHER**

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...
You shall love your neighbour as yourself.
There is no other commandment greater than these"
Mark ch12

1	YOU SHALL HAVE **NO OTHER GODS** BEFORE ME	To love God means to recognise His RIGHTS in life
2	YOU SHALL NOT **MAKE OR WORSHIP** IDOLS	To love God means to recognise His UNIQUENESS in life
3	YOU SHALL NOT TAKE **THE LORD'S NAME** IN VAIN	To love God means to recognise His GREATNESS in life
4	REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY **KEEP IT HOLY**	To love God means to recognise His GOODNESS in life
5	HONOUR YOUR **FATHER AND MOTHER**	To love God and others means to recognise AUTHORITY in life
6	YOU SHALL NOT **MURDER**	To love others means to recognise HUMAN DIGNITY in life
7	YOU SHALL NOT **COMMIT ADULTERY**	To love others means to recognise MARITAL DIGNITY in life
8	YOU SHALL NOT **STEAL**	To love others means to recognise PROPERTY RIGHTS in life
9	YOU SHALL NOT **TELL LIES**	To love others means to recognise the VALUE OF TRUTH in life
10	YOU SHALL NOT **COVET**	To love others means to recognise WRONG DESIRES in life

The first four commands teach us how to **love God** through worship, loyalty, honour, and trust.

Number 5 bridges the **Godward** and **Manward** commands

The last six teach us how to **love others** through respect, honesty, faithfulness, and concern for their well-being.

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

Get in touch if you would like

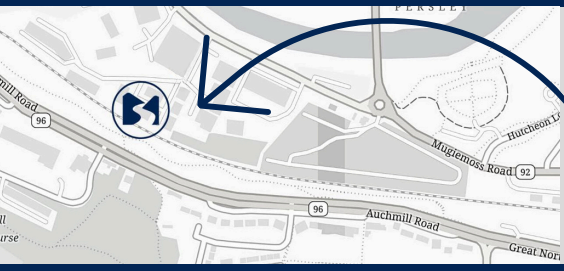
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- a study course
- to find out more



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RIVERSIDE
Christian Assembly

Unit 20
Spires Business Park
Mugiemoss Road
AB21 9BG



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RCA KIDS

DANGEROUS JOURNEYS

HOLIDAY BIBLE CLUB

10TH - 13TH AUGUST
10AM - 12PM

Join us for these 4 fun fillled mornings for games, craft, baking, and learning about some of the Bible's

JOURNEYS OF DISCOVERY







MORE INFO...

- P1-7 (in August)
- Snack Provided
- **Free of Charge!**
- Prize Giving: Thursday Evening!

FIND US...

Riverside Christian Assembly
Spires Business Park
Mugiemoss Road,
AB21 9BG

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