

Introduction

Christ longs for his followers to love as he loves. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). Christ not only raises the standard of love, but he also offers himself as the model. When we love as Christ loved, we are showing others the love of God.

In the book *Love as a Way of Life*, I named the seven distinguishing characteristics of a loving person: kindness, patience, forgiveness, courtesy, humility, generosity, and honesty. I believe that when we reflect these traits in daily life with neighbors, family members, co-workers, and even strangers, we are reflecting the love of Christ.

While *Love as a Way of Life* is intended to challenge you to action, this devotional book is designed to speak to your heart so that you might know more of the love of God in your own life as you learn to love others more. This book is divided into short readings that follow the order of the character traits of a loving person in *Love as a Way of Life*, including as well three introductory readings and three concluding readings. In light of the variety of stories, verses, and suggestions, the two books complement each other.

All the devotional readings are intended for personal quiet times with God, whether that’s first thing in the morning, last thing at night, or during a break in the middle of the day. My hope is that my words will be springboards for prayer in your life. With that in mind, after each devotional I include a brief prayer, thought, or idea related to strengthening your relationship with God and prompting a life of love.

God wants his followers to be channels of his love. May this small book draw you closer to God so that you might be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19) and discover the joy of seeing Christ’s love flow from you to others every day.

Part 1: Love as a New Way of Life

Bedtime Stories

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—ROMANS 8:38—39

When my grandchildren were toddlers, I read many books to them about farms, the alphabet, and how to have good manners. A more subtle theme among children’s picture books is unconditional love. “Mama, do you love me?” a child asks her mother. “How much do you love me?” a bunny asks his father. With a variety of settings and characters, countless books represent children asking, “What if I ran away? What if I hurt you? What if I traveled to the moon or broke a vase or hit my sister? Would you still love me?”

“Yes,” the parent says. “I will love you no matter what. I will always love you.”

These cozy bedtime stories reflect a universal need that we never outgrow: the need to know that someone, somewhere, loves us without restraint or condition. What a gift we give each other when we communicate that kind of love every day. We might not say it with words. In fact, we might choose to love by *not* speaking but by being patient in the face of frustration, kind when someone is rude to us, or humble when it would be easier to talk about our accomplishments. But every time we are purposeful about making love a way of life, we are affirming what we each need to hear—and what God speaks to us every day: You are loved. No matter what. Forever and always.

Thought

How would truly believing God loves you—no matter what—change your thoughts and actions in the next twenty-four hours?