

"Heaven created us to love, not to contend with one another."
—Alexandre Dumas

17-Nov-17

What Makes a True Disciple? (Part Two)

We saw in Part One that the defining, identifying trait of Christ's disciples is that they show love for each other just as Christ loved His disciples ([John 13:34-35](#)). No one in the Bible gives a better description of the attributes of this kind of love than the apostle Paul, as he does in I Corinthians 13. In fact, the virtues he lists in [Galatians 5:22-23](#) as "the [fruit of the Spirit](#)" are described in more detail in what is known as the Love Chapter. We will focus on two of them.

[I Corinthians 13:4](#) in the *New English Translation* begins, "Love is patient [NKJV: *suffers long*], love is kind." Notice that these are the only two characteristics Paul says love *is*, defining it positively in these two words. After them, the apostle continues his list but with negative traits, ones that are not typical of love, behaviors that love does not do. It behooves us to take a look at these two positive character traits that are clear expressions of love.

W. E. Vine points out that "longsuffering" is the most frequent biblical meaning of the first term, Greek *makrothumē*, and he differentiates between "longsuffering" and "patience":

Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy. . . . Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope.

Commentator Leon Morris adds:

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First, love is long-suffering. The word Paul uses indicates having patience with people rather than with circumstances. In fact, Paul's word is the opposite of "short-tempered," it means—if we may invent a word—"long-tempered."

Commenting on [I Corinthians 13:4](#), Matthew Henry writes about "longsuffering":

It can endure evil, injury, and provocation, without being filled with resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives it power over the angry passions, and furnishes it with a persevering patience that shall rather wait and wish for the reformation of a brother than fly out in resentment of his conduct. It will put up with many slights and neglects from the person it loves, and wait long to see the kindly effects of such patience on him.

It should come as no surprise to find that "longsuffering" is often used to describe [God](#). He certainly suffers long with us, giving us sufficient time to [repent](#) of our transgressions.

David, a man after God's own heart ([Acts 13:22](#); see [I Samuel 13:14](#)), also exemplified longsuffering. King Saul persistently sought to kill David, once he knew the younger man would someday replace him as king of Israel. David not only endured this persecution graciously, refusing to take the king's life when given the chance, but he also actively sought to do good to Saul. David was both longsuffering and kind, showing godly love toward an enemy.

For the Christian, longsuffering is not optional. [Ephesians 4:1-3](#) commands us to be "longsuffering" or to manifest "patience," as some translations render it, toward others:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

People in our part of [the world](#) are not inclined to endure ill-treatment from anyone. We often hear people say, "I wouldn't put up with that!" when they see others being wronged. But putting up with mistreatment is what longsuffering is all about. We are to bear long with one another, as Paul writes in [Colossians 3:13](#): ". . . bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

If longsuffering or patience is the passive side of love, kindness—the other positive attribute of

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love in [I Corinthians 13:4](#)—is the active side. Kindness and goodness are connected virtues. A kind person is truly interested in doing good for those around them. Such people are doers of good, not those who express platitudes and sympathy but do nothing to help (see [James 2:15-16](#)). A kind individual has a heart predisposed to helpful action, only requiring a hint of need to take action to provide aid.

Again, David is a striking example. As recorded in II Samuel 9, after Jonathan died, David wanted to demonstrate his love toward his best friend. The only way to show kindness to Jonathan was to help one of his relatives. He was delighted to find out that his friend had a living heir, a son, Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet. So David took care of him and his family for the rest of their lives. David's love manifested itself in kindness, a predisposition to do good to others.

As a character trait of God, kindness should characterize us as well. Paul writes in [Ephesians 4:32](#), "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Since Christians are commanded to be kind, failing to show kindness is disobedience. As the apostle James notes, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

According to Paul, then, love is positively demonstrated by two general characteristics: 1) longsuffering in the face of adverse treatment by others, and 2) kindness even toward those who mistreat us. Longsuffering endures ill-treatment without retaliation, and kindness seeks to do good even to those who delight to cause us harm.

Loving one another is not just a recommendation by [Jesus](#), nor is it merely a piece of good advice. Love is a command ([John 13:34](#); [15:12](#)). If loving one another is a command, then our only choice is to obey or disobey Christ in this matter.

Remember, showing love to one another as Christ has loved us is the identifying sign that we are His true disciples and have His Spirit within us. This type of love cannot be faked, and it can be truly expressed only by those who have "the love of God poured out in [their] hearts by the [Holy Spirit](#)" ([Romans 5:5](#)). As God's called and converted children, we can do no less than to love one another.

- Clyde Finklea

World News Highlights

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[How Birdwatching Made Japanese Designers Design a Better Train](#)

Digg/Vox 01-Nov-17

[Teaching Children About Sin Now Considered 'Extremist'](#)

Prophecy News Watch 10-Nov-17

['Last Days Babylon' Now on Drawing Board?](#)

WND 13-Nov-17

[Pope Says No Phones in Church. Parishioners Keep Scrolling.](#)

The New York Times 12-Nov-17

[Tension Mounts in Lebanon as Saudi Arabia Escalates Power Struggle With Iran](#)

The Guardian 11-Nov-17

[Officials Raise Iran-Iraq Earthquake Death Toll to at Least 530](#)

The Guardian 14-Nov-17

[Majority of Americans Would Skip Holiday Gift-Giving, Survey Says](#)

Minnesota.CBSLocal 13-Nov-17

[The Last Places on Earth With No Internet](#)

The Telegraph 14-Nov-17

[An Alarming Number of Shoppers Are Still Paying off Debt From Last Christmas](#)

CNBC 17-Nov-17

[When Ai Rules, One Rogue Programmer Could End the Human Race](#)

BGR 08-Nov-17

Prayer Requests

New prayer request updates have been posted for the following people:

[Carrol Allen](#)

[Deborah Clinton](#)

[Delicious DeBlair](#)

[Steve Durosky](#)

[Steve Durosky](#)

[Mike Fuhrer](#)

[Dennis Hensell](#)

[Nida Powers](#)

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Longsuffering of Our Lord Is Salvation](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Martin Collins, citing a startling 700,000 assaults ("intimate partner violence" episodes) in 2001, accounting for 20% of felonious crime, suggests that patience and longsuffering are diminishing commodities in modern Israel, while selfishness and violence sadly are on the increase. We are admonished, as practicing Christians, to incorporate both patience (toward trying circumstances and things) and longsuffering (toward offenses and insults from people). Because God has demonstrated incredible longsuffering (one of His most significant characteristics) with our shortcomings (mercifully giving us space to repent), we should similarly exercise forbearance and longsuffering to those who have offended us. While we patiently bear the offenses (the annoying idiosyncrasies) of others, we need to root out the sins in ourselves, sins often as egregious to God as their offenses are to us, and incorporating the fruits of God's Holy Spirit in our behavior repertoire.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Kindness, the fifth fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, goes hand-in-hand with love. It is an active expression of love toward God and fellow man. As we come out of this calloused world, we must develop kindness through the power of God's Spirit.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study will be **Acts (Part 4)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh** on **Friday 17-Nov-17**. The Bible Study will be continuously available from **6:00 pm Friday** until **12:00 pm Saturday (EST)**.

Daily Audio Programs

Hear previous sermons, sermonettes, and Feast of Tabernacles messages, **Sunday through Friday**. [Available from the homepage](#).

Date	Title
Sunday 19-Nov-17	God's Entourage
Monday 20-Nov-17	Where Is the Beast? (Part 3)
Tuesday 21-Nov-17	Spirituality and True Conversion
Wednesday 22-Nov-17	An Acceptable Offering (Part 2)
Thursday 23-Nov-17	You Are What You Choose
Friday 24-Nov-17	Created to Do God's Will and Work

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