Love in Practice—A Closer Look, Part 2

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Scripture quotations are from the ESV unless noted.

Introduction

Part 1 asked what love is. Part 2 asks what it looks like on an ordinary Tuesday.

In *Love—A Closer Look* we saw that Scripture defines love by pointing to God, not to our feelings. Love begins in Him, is shown supremely at the cross, is given to the undeserving, and is lived out in obedience and costly action. We also saw that love is commanded, which means it is something we can choose and do.

If love can be commanded, then it can be practiced. And Scripture does not leave us guessing. Alongside the great commands to love God and neighbor sit dozens of others: love one another, love the stranger, love your enemies, husbands love your wives, do not love the world. Most of them come with concrete instructions attached.

Jesus Himself set the pattern. When He restored Peter, He did not ask Peter to describe his feelings. He said, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). This study gathers the love commands of Scripture, groups them by whom or what we are told to love, and lets Scripture itself show what each looks like in practice.

By "love commands" we mean imperatives ("love your enemies"), commands in the future tense ("you shall love"), and statements of obligation ("we ought to love one another"). A full list, with the Hebrew or Greek word behind each, is in the appendix.

A Note on the Words: Are They All Agape?

Mostly, but not all. In the New Testament, the great majority of love commands use agapao (verb) or agape (noun). But a significant group uses phileo-family compounds, and the Old Testament commands use Hebrew words, chiefly ʾahav and sometimes chesed.

The agape commands

Every command to love God, neighbor, one another, enemies and wives uses agapao or agape. That includes the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37–39), "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44), the "new commandment" (John 13:34) and "Husbands, love your wives" (Ephesians 5:25). The negative command "Do not love the world" (1 John 2:15) also uses agapao, a reminder from Part 1 that agape is not automatically noble.

The phileo-family commands

These are the exceptions worth noting. None uses the bare verb phileo as a command. Each is a compound built on phil-:

Greek word	Meaning	Where commanded
philadelphia	brotherly love	Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 1:7
philadelphos	loving as brothers	1 Peter 3:8
philostorgos	tenderly affectionate (phil- + storge, family affection)	Romans 12:10
philoxenia / philoxenos	love of strangers, hospitality	Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9
philandros / philoteknos	loving husbands / loving children	Titus 2:4
aphilargyros	not a lover of money	Hebrews 13:5

Philostorgos in Romans 12:10 deserves a word. Part 1 noted that storge appears in the New Testament only in compounds, such as astorgos, "heartless." Here is the positive side: Paul commands believers to be family-warm toward one another.

The Old Testament words

The Old Testament commands use ʾahav: love the LORD (Deuteronomy 6:5), love your neighbor (Leviticus 19:18), love the sojourner (Deuteronomy 10:19). Two commands use chesed instead: "love kindness" (Micah 6:8) and "hold fast to love and justice" (Hosea 12:6). When the Septuagint translated Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, it used agapao. So when Jesus quoted them, the Greek word was already in place.

Why it matters in practice

The agape commands are about choosing and doing: you can be told to do good to an enemy whether you feel like it or not. The phil- commands add warmth: affection, family closeness, an open door. Three times Scripture sets the two side by side:

- "Let love [agape] be genuine… Love one another with brotherly affection [philadelphia, philostorgos]" (Romans 12:9–10). Consider that Romans 12:9–21 can be a "closer look" at love without hypocrisy. This is also a demonstration of Romans 12:2, being transformed by the renewing of your mind. In this view, brotherly affection is one example of love without hypocrisy.
- "For a sincere brotherly love [philadelphia], love [agapao] one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22).
- "And godliness with brotherly affection [philadelphia], and brotherly affection with love [agape]" (2 Peter 1:7).

This refines a point from Part 1. Love is not defined by feeling, and it can act without feeling. But God does not settle for duty alone among His people. He also calls for affection, and Peter speaks of adding it, which implies it can be cultivated. Feelings follow love, as Part 1 put it, and God wants them to follow.

Love God

Loving God is shown by obeying Him, staying close to Him, and caring for those He loves.

The commands

- "You shall love ['ahav] the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5; see also 10:12; 11:1; 30:16).
- "Be very careful, therefore, to love ['ahav] the LORD your God" (Joshua 23:11).
- "Love ['ahav] the LORD, all you his saints!" (Psalm 31:23).
- "You shall love [agapao] the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matthew 22:37–38; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).
- "Abide in my love [agape]" (John 15:9).
- "Keep yourselves in the love [agape] of God" (Jude 21).

What it looks like in practice

Obey Him. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Deuteronomy says the same: "You shall therefore love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always" (Deuteronomy 11:1). In practice, love for God is measured less by how a worship song makes me feel and more by whether I do what He has said when it costs me something.

Stay close to Him. "Abide in my love" is followed by "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (John 15:9–10). Jude tells us how to keep ourselves in God's love: "building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit [holy spirit]" (Jude 20–21). Regular time in the Word and in prayer is not a religious chore. It is how love stays close.

Put Him first. "Whoever loves [phileo] father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). Loving God with all the heart means He gets the deciding vote when other loves compete: career, comfort, even family.

Hate what He hates. "O you who love the LORD, hate evil!" (Psalm 97:10). Love for God shows up in what I refuse to entertain, watch, joke about or excuse.

Care for His people. "Do you love me?… Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20). One of the clearest ways to love God is to care for someone He loves.

Return to your first love. To the church at Ephesus Jesus said, "You have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first" (Revelation 2:4–5). Notice the remedy. Jesus does not say "try to feel it again." He says remember, repent, and do. When love for God has cooled, the way back is to return to the practices of that first love.

Love One Another

"Love one another" is the most repeated love command in the New Testament, and the one that comes with the most practical detail.

The commands

- "A new commandment I give to you, that you love [agapao] one another: just as I have loved you" (John 13:34; repeated in 15:12, 17).
- "Let love [agape] be genuine… Love one another with brotherly affection [philadelphia, philostorgos]" (Romans 12:9–10).
- "Owe no one anything, except to love [agapao] each other" (Romans 13:8).
- "Through love [agape] serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).
- "Walk in love [agape], as Christ loved us" (Ephesians 5:2).
- "And above all these put on love [agape]" (Colossians 3:14).
- "Let brotherly love [philadelphia] continue" (Hebrews 13:1).
- "Love [agapao] one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22); "Love [agapao] the brotherhood" (2:17); "Above all, keep loving [agape] one another earnestly" (4:8).
- "Beloved, let us love [agapao] one another" (1 John 4:7); "we also ought to love one another" (4:11); see also 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:21; 2 John 5.
- "Let all that you do be done in love [agape]" (1 Corinthians 16:14); "Pursue love [agape]" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

What it looks like in practice

Serve. Jesus washed His disciples' feet and said, "I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:15). This came just before the new commandment. "As I have loved you" had a towel in its hand. Love takes the lowly job no one else wants.

Meet real needs. "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). Paul says to "contribute to the needs of the saints" (Romans 12:13). The early church did this so thoroughly that "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34). Love notices the job loss, the hospital stay, the empty pantry, and does something.

Bear with and forgive. "Bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). "If one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (Colossians 3:13). Fellowship among real people requires putting up with quirks and letting go of offenses.

Cover, don't broadcast. "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 10:12). Love does not keep circulating a brother's failure. It does not excuse sin, but it refuses to gossip about it.

Restore the fallen. "If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1). When a disciplined believer repented in Corinth, Paul said, "Turn to forgive and comfort him… reaffirm your love [agape] for him" (2 Corinthians 2:7–8). Love goes after the one who fell, and welcomes him back fully.

Honor. "Outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10). "Count others more significant than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). This includes those who lead: "Esteem them very highly in love [agape] because of their work" (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

Build up. "Knowledge puffs up, but love [agape] builds up" (1 Corinthians 8:1). Love asks whether my words will strengthen this person, not just whether I am right.

Give up liberties for a brother's sake. "If your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love [agape]" (Romans 14:15). Love will gladly set aside a freedom if exercising it would trip up another believer.

Speak the truth. "Speaking the truth in love [agape]" (Ephesians 4:15). Love has hard conversations, gently. Leviticus put it this way: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:17).

Show up. "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love [agape] and good works, not neglecting to meet together" (Hebrews 10:24–25). Love is hard to practice from a distance. Being present, and encouraging others by it, is itself an act of love.

Be warm. Philadelphia and philostorgos call for real affection, the warmth of family. Paul greeted believers by name and with affection (Romans 16). Love remembers names, asks after children, sends the note, and enjoys the company of God's family.

Love Your Neighbor

Loving my neighbor means doing for whoever is in front of me what I would naturally do for myself.

The commands

- "You shall love ['ahav] your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18).
- "You shall love [agapao] your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27).
- "The commandments… are summed up in this word: 'You shall love [agapao] your neighbor as yourself.' Love [agape] does no wrong to a neighbor" (Romans 13:9–10).
- "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love [agapao] your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14).
- "If you really fulfill the royal law… 'You shall love [agapao] your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well" (James 2:8).

What it looks like in practice

Leviticus 19: the neighbor command in context. The command to love your neighbor does not stand alone. It sits at the end of a list of very practical instructions in the same chapter:

Lev. 19	The instruction	Related NT references	In practice today
vv. 9–10	Leave the edges of the field for the poor and the sojourner	Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 6:17–18	Build generosity into your budget, not just your leftovers
v. 11	Do not steal, deal falsely or lie	Ephesians 4:25, 28; Colossians 3:9	Be honest in business, taxes, resumes and timesheets
v. 13	Do not hold back a hired worker's wages overnight	Colossians 4:1; 1 Timothy 5:18; James 5:4	Pay people promptly and fairly
v. 14	Do not curse the deaf or trip the blind	Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 8:9	Never take advantage of someone's weakness

Lev. 19	The instruction	Related NT references	In practice today
v. 15	Do not show partiality to poor or great	1 Timothy 5:21; James 2:1–9	Treat people the same regardless of status
v. 16	Do not go around as a slanderer	Ephesians 4:31; Titus 3:2; James 4:11	Refuse to pass along gossip
v. 17	Reason frankly with your neighbor	Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:15; 1 John 2:9–11	Talk to the person, not about the person
v. 18	Do not take vengeance or bear a grudge	Matthew 22:39; Romans 12:17–19; Ephesians 4:31–32	Let offenses go
v. 32	Stand up before the gray head	1 Timothy 5:1–2; 1 Peter 5:5	Honor the elderly
vv. 35–36	Use just balances and weights	Luke 3:12–14; 2 Corinthians 8:21; Colossians 3:23	Do honest work and give honest measure

The Good Samaritan: who is my neighbor? When a lawyer asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29), Jesus told a story that turns the question around. The real question is not "Who qualifies for my love?" but "To whom can I be a neighbor?" The Samaritan's actions give us a pattern (Luke 10:33–35):

1. He **saw** him. The priest and Levite saw too, and passed by. Love starts by noticing.
2. He **had compassion**. Love lets the need move it.
3. He **went to him**. Love closes the distance.
4. He **bound up his wounds**. Love deals with the immediate need.
5. He **brought him to an inn and took care of him**. Love spends time.
6. He **paid**. Love spends money.
7. He said, "**When I come back** I will repay you." Love follows up.

Jesus ended with, "You go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

No partiality. James places the neighbor command right in the middle of a warning about favoring the rich man with the gold ring over the poor man in shabby clothing. "But if you show partiality, you are committing sin" (James 2:9). In practice: who do I greet first at church, and who do I overlook?

Do no wrong. Paul summarizes the second table of the Ten Commandments—no adultery, murder, theft or coveting—with "Love does no wrong to a neighbor" (Romans 13:9–10). At minimum, love means I do not harm my neighbor's marriage, life, property or peace.

"As yourself." As Part 1 noted, this phrase assumes we already care for ourselves. A practical test: when I am sick, I want someone to check on me. When I am wronged, I want to be forgiven. When I fail, I want a second chance. Love gives my neighbor the same.

Love the Stranger

God tells His people to love the outsider because they once were outsiders themselves.

The commands

- "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love ['ahav] him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34).
- "Love ['ahav] the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19).
- "Seek to show hospitality [philoxenia]" (Romans 12:13).
- "Do not neglect to show hospitality [philoxenia] to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2).
- "Show hospitality [philoxenos] to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9).

Hospitality is also a qualification for overseers (philoxenos, 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).

What it looks like in practice

Remember where you came from. Israel's motive was memory: "you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Ours is the same. We were once "strangers to the covenants of promise… But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near" (Ephesians 2:12–13). Love for the outsider grows out of remembering that God welcomed us.

Open the door. Philoxenia is literally "love of strangers." In practice it means the meal, the spare room, the ride, the invitation to sit together. The word "seek" in Romans 12:13 implies going looking for the opportunity, not waiting for it.

Notice the newcomer. The visitor at church, the new family on the street, the coworker from another country, the student far from home. These are today's sojourners. God "loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing" (Deuteronomy 10:18), and the very next verse tells us to do likewise.

Do it without grumbling. Peter knew hospitality can be inconvenient. Love does it anyway, and does it cheerfully (1 Peter 4:9).

Remember who you are serving. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). Jesus counts kindness to the least of His brothers as kindness to Him.

Love Your Enemies

Jesus attached five concrete actions to the command to love enemies: do good, bless, pray, give, and refuse revenge.

The commands

- "Love [agapao] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).
- "Love [agapao] your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:27–28).
- "But love [agapao] your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return" (Luke 6:35).

The Old Testament laid the groundwork: return your enemy's stray ox or donkey and help with his fallen load (Exodus 23:4–5), and "if your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat" (Proverbs 25:21). Paul quotes that proverb in Romans 12:20.

What it looks like in practice

As Part 1 noted, this is where agapao matters. No one can be commanded to feel fond of an enemy. But anyone can be commanded to act for an enemy's good. Jesus spells out what that looks like:

Jesus says	What it looks like
"Do good to those who hate you"	Help the person who has hurt you when they are in need (Exodus 23:4–5)
"Bless those who curse you"	Speak well of them; refuse to answer insult with insult (1 Peter 3:9)
"Pray for those who abuse you"	Pray for their good by name, as Jesus did from the cross (Luke 23:34) and Stephen did as he died (Acts 7:60)
"Lend, expecting nothing in return"	Give where you will not be repaid (Luke 6:34–35)
"Do not resist the one who is evil"	Refuse to retaliate (Matthew 5:39; Romans 12:17)

Leave the vengeance to God. "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Romans 12:19). Loving an enemy does not mean pretending wrong was not wrong. It means handing justice to God rather than taking it into my own hands.

Overcome evil with good. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). Love does not simply refrain from revenge. It goes on the offensive with kindness.

Look like your Father. Jesus gives the reason: "so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:45). Loving enemies is the family resemblance. It is also what God did for us: "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10).

Go beyond the expected. "If you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:46). Loving people who love us back is ordinary. The test of agape is the person who has nothing to give back.

Start with the near enemy. For most of us, the "enemy" is not a persecutor in a distant land. It is the difficult relative, the hostile coworker, the ex-spouse, the neighbor who complains, the person on the other side of an argument online. That is where this command is usually obeyed or ignored.

Love at Home

At home, love is measured by Christ's self-giving for the church, and practiced in the daily details of marriage and parenting.

The commands

- "Husbands, love [agapao] your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

- "Husbands should love [agapao] their wives as their own bodies" (Ephesians 5:28); "let each one of you love [agapao] his wife as himself" (5:33).
- "Husbands, love [agapao] your wives, and do not be harsh with them" (Colossians 3:19).
- Older women are to "train the young women to love their husbands [philandros] and children [philoteknos]" (Titus 2:4).

A note on the words. Husbands are commanded with agapao, the word of self-giving choice, measured by the cross. Wives are not directly commanded to agapao their husbands; Ephesians 5:33 asks the wife to respect her husband. Titus 2:4 uses the phil- compounds: young wives are to be trained to be "husband-loving" and "child-loving." We should not build too much on this, since believers of every kind are told to agape one another. But the choice of words is worth noticing: husbands are pointed to sacrifice, and wives to affection, both of which every marriage needs.

What it looks like in practice

Husbands: give yourself up. "As Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her… so that he might present the church to himself in splendor" (Ephesians 5:25–27). Christ's self-giving had a goal: a church grown "to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). He taught and trained His disciples with that maturity in mind. He invests in her growth in Christ: praying with her and for her, sharing the Word together, encouraging her gifts, and setting the example himself. He does this as a fellow heir of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7), not as one standing over her.

Husbands: nourish and cherish. "No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church" (Ephesians 5:29). Nourish is provision and growth. Cherish is tender care and warmth.

Husbands: don't be harsh. "Do not be harsh with them" (Colossians 3:19). Love watches its tone, its temper and its words.

Husbands: understand and honor. "Live with your wives in an understanding way… showing honor to the woman… so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Love takes time to know her, and treats her as a fellow heir of the grace of life.

Wives: be husband-loving. Philandros calls for warmth, friendship and devotion toward one's husband. Joined with respect (Ephesians 5:33), it describes a wife who is her husband's friend and champion.

Parents: be child-loving. Philoteknos is warm, affectionate love for children. It shows up in presence, attention, delight and time.

Parents: love disciplines. "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves ['ahav] him is diligent to discipline him" (Proverbs 13:24). God Himself "disciplines the one he loves [agapao]" (Hebrews 12:6). Love says no when no is needed.

Parents: don't provoke. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4); "lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21). Love disciplines without crushing.

What to Love, and What Not to Love

Scripture commands us to love some things and not others, because love can be rightly or wrongly aimed.

Part 1 showed that "love is love" is not a biblical idea. People can love darkness, money and this present world. So Scripture tells us not only whom to love but what.

Love these

Command	Word	What it looks like
"Hate evil, and love good" (Amos 5:15)	’ahav	"Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good" (Romans 12:9)
"Love kindness" (Micah 6:8); "hold fast to love and justice" (Hosea 12:6)	chesed	Delight in loyalty and mercy, not just tolerate them
"Love truth and peace" (Zechariah 8:19)	’ahav	Honest speech; making peace (Romans 12:18)
Wisdom: "love her, and she will guard you" (Proverbs 4:6)	’ahav	Seek wisdom from God and His Word (James 1:5)
An overseer must be a "lover of good" (Titus 1:8)	philagathos	Enjoy what is good and spend time on it (Philippians 4:8)

Do not love these

Command	Word	What it looks like
"Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15)	agapao	Watch for "the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life" (2:16)
"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have" (Hebrews 13:5)	aphilargyros	Contentment, generosity, being "rich in good works" (1 Timothy 6:17–19)
"Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty" (Proverbs 20:13)	’ahav	Diligent work (Colossians 3:23)
"Love no false oath" (Zechariah 8:17)	’ahav	Let your yes be yes (Matthew 5:37)

The New Testament also warns against things people love that are not phrased as commands but carry the same force: loving one's own life above Christ (John 12:25, phileo), loving the best seats and public honor (Matthew 23:6, phileo), loving the praise of people (John 12:43, agapao), and being "lovers of self" and "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2, 4).

In practice

What we love is shown by where our time, money and attention go. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). A practical exercise: look at last month's calendar and bank statement. They will tell you what you love more honestly than your feelings will.

1 Corinthians 13 at Work

Each phrase of Paul's description of love has a matching instruction elsewhere in Scripture that shows what it looks like.

Part 1 suggested putting your own name in place of "love" in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. Here is a way to take that further. Every word in this passage is agape.

Love…	What it looks like	Scripture
is patient	Bears with people's slowness and faults without giving up on them	"Bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2)
is kind	Actively does good, gently	"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another" (Ephesians 4:32)
does not envy	Celebrates another's blessing	"Rejoice with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:15)
does not boast; is not arrogant	Doesn't need to be noticed or proven right	"In humility count others more significant than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3)
is not rude	Watches its manners and its words	"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6)
does not insist on its own way	Gives up preferences for others' good	"Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor" (1 Corinthians 10:24)
is not irritable	Slow to take offense, slow to snap	"Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19)
is not resentful	Keeps no running record of wrongs	"Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26)
does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth	Won't celebrate sin, even an enemy's fall; delights when truth wins	"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls" (Proverbs 24:17); "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4)
bears all things	Carries others' loads; covers rather than exposes	"Bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2)
believes all things	Is not cynical; gives the benefit of the doubt	Barnabas vouched for the newly converted Saul when others were afraid (Acts 9:26–27)
hopes all things	Does not write people off	"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion" (Philippians 1:6)
endures all things	Keeps going when love is costly	"I endure everything for the sake of the elect" (2 Timothy 2:10)

A note on "believes all things" and "hopes all things": the Greek gives neither verb an object, and two readings are possible. Most of verses 4–7 describe how love treats people, so these phrases may mean that love does not assume the worst or give up on others. That does not mean gullibility; the same Paul warned against false teachers. Love reads people charitably until the facts say otherwise. The phrases may also point to God: love believes what He has said and hopes in what He has promised. Verse 6 has

just said love "rejoices with the truth," and verse 13 joins love with faith and hope. The two readings fit together. Because love trusts God's Word and hopes in His promises, it can keep believing and hoping for people.

When Love Is Hard

Scripture anticipates the hard cases and gives a way forward for each.

When I don't feel it. Act anyway. "Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Start with something small and concrete: a meal, a note, a prayer by name. As Part 1 said, the feelings very often grow as we choose to love.

When I've been wronged. Forgive as you were forgiven (Colossians 3:13). Leave vengeance to God (Romans 12:19). If the matter is serious, go to the person privately first: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone" (Matthew 18:15). Love neither pretends the wrong away nor nurses it.

When love needs to say no. Love "rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6) and "the Lord disciplines the one he loves" (Hebrews 12:6). Saying no to a child, declining to fund someone's destructive habit, or confronting sin in a friend can all be acts of love. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6).

When I'm worn out. Love is not endless self-depletion. Jesus withdrew to pray (Luke 5:16), and the Twelve were told to "come away… and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). Rest in His love first, then give: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

When I don't know what love requires. No written command covers every situation. Should I speak or stay silent? Give or hold back? Comfort or correct? As Part 1 showed, God has given the gift of holy spirit for exactly this. Through the utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge and distinguishing between spirits (1 Corinthians 12:8, 10), He can show what love calls for here and now. Ask, and pray as Paul did: "that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment" (Philippians 1:9).

When I've failed. Peter denied Jesus three times, and Jesus restored him with three questions and one assignment (John 21:15–17). Failure in love is not the end of love. The way forward is the same as for Peter: come back, and feed the sheep.

Conclusion

The love commands of Scripture reach in every direction, and nearly every one of them comes with something to do.

We are told to love God, one another, our neighbor, the stranger, our enemies, our spouses and our children. We are told to love good, truth and kindness, and not to love the world, money or ourselves above others. Most of these commands use agape, the love that chooses and acts. Some use phil-compounds, the love that is warm and welcoming. God asks for both.

What ties them together is the standard Jesus set: "just as I have loved you" (John 13:34). He loved by serving, giving, forgiving, restoring and laying down His life. Every command in this study is a way of walking in that same love (Ephesians 5:2).

Some practical takeaways:

- **Pick one direction this week.** Choose one of the groups in this study and practice one concrete action from it.
- **Start with the person in front of you.** The Samaritan loved the man on his road, not humanity in general.
- **Let love cost something.** Time, money, comfort, preference. Love that costs nothing is rarely love at all.
- **Add warmth to duty.** Do the loving thing, and ask God to grow the affection too (2 Peter 1:7).
- **Check your loves.** Your calendar and your bank statement will tell you what you love.
- **Ask for help.** When you don't know what love requires, the gift of holy spirit can show you.
- **Rest first.** "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Jesus told the lawyer who asked about loving his neighbor, "You go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). That is the point of Part 2. Part 1 gave us the definition. Now we go and do it.

Appendix: The Love Commands at a Glance

The commands are listed in canonical order. Parallel passages are grouped on one line.

Reference	Command	Toward	Word
Leviticus 19:18	Love your neighbor as yourself	Neighbor	ʼahav
Leviticus 19:34	Love the stranger as yourself	Stranger	ʼahav
Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:16, 20	Love the LORD your God	God	ʼahav
Deuteronomy 10:19	Love the sojourner	Stranger	ʼahav
Joshua 22:5; 23:11	Love the LORD your God	God	ʼahav
Psalm 31:23	Love the LORD, all you his saints	God	ʼahav
Psalm 97:10	You who love the LORD, hate evil	God	ʼahav
Proverbs 4:6	Love wisdom	Wisdom	ʼahav
Proverbs 20:13	Love not sleep	(not to love)	ʼahav
Hosea 12:6	Hold fast to love and justice	Kindness	chesed
Amos 5:15	Hate evil, and love good	Good	ʼahav
Micah 6:8	Love kindness	Kindness	chesed
Zechariah 8:17	Love no false oath	(not to love)	ʼahav
Zechariah 8:19	Love truth and peace	Truth, peace	ʼahav
Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35	Love your enemies	Enemies	agapao
Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27	Love your neighbor as yourself	Neighbor	agapao
Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27	Love the Lord your God	God	agapao
John 13:34; 15:12, 17	Love one another as I have loved you	One another	agapao

Reference	Command	Toward	Word
John 15:9	Abide in my love	God	agape
Romans 12:9	Let love be genuine	One another	agape
Romans 12:10	Love one another with brotherly affection	One another	philadelphia, philostorgos
Romans 12:13	Seek to show hospitality	Stranger	philoxenia
Romans 13:8–10	Owe no one anything, except to love	Neighbor	agapao, agape
Romans 14:15	Walk in love toward a weaker brother	One another	agape
1 Corinthians 14:1	Pursue love	(all)	agape
1 Corinthians 16:14	Let all that you do be done in love	(all)	agape
2 Corinthians 2:8	Reaffirm your love for him	One another	agape
Galatians 5:13	Through love serve one another	One another	agape
Galatians 5:14	Love your neighbor as yourself	Neighbor	agapao
Ephesians 4:2	Bear with one another in love	One another	agape
Ephesians 4:15	Speak the truth in love	One another	agape
Ephesians 5:2	Walk in love	(all)	agape
Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33	Husbands, love your wives	Wife	agapao
Philippians 2:2	Have the same love	One another	agape
Colossians 3:14	Above all, put on love	(all)	agape
Colossians 3:19	Husbands, love your wives	Wife	agapao
1 Thessalonians 4:9	Love one another (brotherly love)	One another	philadelphia, agapao
1 Thessalonians 5:13	Esteem leaders very highly in love	Leaders	agape
1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22	Pursue love	(all)	agape
Titus 2:4	Love husbands and children	Husband, children	philandros, philoteknos
Hebrews 10:24	Stir up one another to love	One another	agape
Hebrews 13:1	Let brotherly love continue	One another	philadelphia
Hebrews 13:2	Show hospitality to strangers	Stranger	philoxenia
Hebrews 13:5	Keep free from love of money	(not to love)	aphilargyros
James 2:8	Love your neighbor as yourself	Neighbor	agapao
1 Peter 1:22	Love one another earnestly	One another	philadelphia, agapao
1 Peter 2:17	Love the brotherhood	One another	agapao
1 Peter 3:8	Have brotherly love	One another	philadelphos
1 Peter 4:8	Keep loving one another earnestly	One another	agape
1 Peter 4:9	Show hospitality without grumbling	One another	philoxenos
2 Peter 1:7	Add brotherly affection and love	One another	philadelphia, agape

Reference	Command	Toward	Word
1 John 2:15	Do not love the world	(not to love)	agapao
1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 21	Love one another	One another	agapao
1 John 3:18	Love in deed and in truth	One another	agapao
2 John 5	Love one another	One another	agapao
Jude 21	Keep yourselves in the love of God	God	agape
Revelation 2:4–5	Return to your first love	God	agape

The last entry is a rebuke rather than a direct command, but it carries a clear instruction: “repent, and do the works you did at first.”