

“BE AN EXAMPLE ... IN LOVE, IN SPIRIT”

(1 Timothy 4:12)

I. Introduction: Example, Exhort, Entreat (1 Tim. 4:12,13; 5:1).

II. “Be an Example in Love”

A. What is love?

1. The nature of God: “Love is of God ... God is love” (1 John 4:7,8,16).
2. Self-sacrificial: “God so loved the world that He gave ...” (John 3:16); “Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2); Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).
3. Not dependent on any quality or response found in the object of the love: “God commands His love toward us, in that, while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8); “Love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44).
4. Two kinds of love: A-ga-pe and Philia. Agape love (1 Tim. 4:12) is self-sacrificing (such as a mother toward her infant child). Philia love is the affection of friends or liking things (such as “I *like* my friend” or the bumper sticker “I ❤️ Pizza”).
5. Agape is an “in spite of” kind of love, while philia is a “because” or “if” kind of love.
6. Is agape love unconditional? “The love of Christ constrains us ... that those who live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14).

B. Characteristics of agape love (1 Corinthians 13)

1. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing.” You may ask, “But how could anyone do these things apart from love?” The answer is that one might do such things out of selfishness, expecting something in return, such as the praise of men, the favor or mercy of God or the like.
2. “Love suffers long” or literally, “Love has a long temper.” It counts to ten (or a thousand) before responding to an offense.
3. “[Love] is kind.” “Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).

4. “Love envies not” or really, “Love is never jealous.” Do we not often become unhappy when others are preferred before us? This is selfishness. Love delights to see our brother or neighbor or colleague honored and esteemed. “Rejoice with those who do rejoice” (Rom. 12:15).
5. “Love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up.” Love does not boast, or brag, or in any way draw attention to itself.
6. “[Love] does not behave itself unseemly,” that is, in an unbecoming or shameful manner.
7. “[Love] seeks not her own.” What is it that occupies our attention and energies the most: seeking to promote *our own* interests, reputation, wealth, or honor, or those of the *Lord* and of our *fellow men*?
8. “[Love] is not easily provoked” or stimulated to anger. We read, “Be angry, and sin not” (Eph. 4:26). The next time you find yourself angry toward someone, ask yourself whether your anger is solely due to that person’s sin against God, or whether it may be because that person, in sinning, has offended or slighted *you* personally.
9. “[Love] thinks no evil,” that is, does not keep a record of the evil done to it or doesn’t hold a grudge.
10. “[Love] rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” How little do we realize the perverse pleasure we sometimes receive from seeing our brother or our neighbor fall into sin.
11. “[Love] believes all things, hopes all things.” Love is not prone to be suspicious, but rather credits people with the best possible motives.

C. Sacrifice of self, will, habits, pleasure

1. A Christian man who is preparing for retirement wrote: “I am really looking forward to not having anything to do except what I want to do.”
2. Last days: “Men shall be lovers of their own selves ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:2,4). Possible examples: “Workaholic,” overeating (1 Cor. 6:19), TV sports, computer games.
3. Pornography (Lev. 18:6-17; Prov. 4:23; 5:15,20; Matt. 5:28,29; Matt. 6:22,23).
4. Following Christ→denial of self (Luke 9:23,24; Rom. 14:7).
5. Christ prayed, “Not My will but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42).

6. Prison inmate: “It is too much sacrifice to become saved just yet” (compare Phil. 3:7,8).

D. Sacrifice of money and what money can buy

1. Being content with a lower standard of living; not buying on credit, going deep into debt, in order to have the latest electronic toys or wear the latest styles (Rom. 13:8; Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6,8; Heb. 13:5).
2. Giving to the Lord (“tithing”; Mal. 3:8-10; 1 Cor. 16:2); laying “up treasure in heaven” (1 Cor. 16:2); giving to the needy (Prov. 11:24-26; 19:17).

E. Sacrifice of pride

1. Being insulting or ‘just kidding’ (2 Ki. 2:23; Prov. 4:24; Matt. 5:22; Eph. 5:4; Col. 3:21; Jas. 3:2-6).
2. Giving criticism, correction, “10 to 1 rule” (Prov. 19:11; Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1).
3. Receiving criticism (Matt. 5:25; Prov. 13:18; 15:5,31,32; compared with Prov. 10:17; 12:1; 15:10).
4. Forgiving, not retaliating (Matt. 5:38-45; 6:15; Rom. 12:17-21).
5. Confessing, admitting sins, fears, failure, weakness (2 Ki. 19:14-19; Psa. 32:3-5; 51:1-9; Matt. 5:23,24; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Jas. 5:16; 1 John 1:9).
6. Dealing with conflict, anger (Prov. 13:10; Eph. 4:26,31).
7. Desiring to win or to be ‘numero uno’ (Jer. 45:5; Matt. 19:30; Luke 14:9,10; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 10:18; Phil. 1:15; 3:8).
8. “Be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5,6).

F. Sacrifice of time

1. Taking time to get to know your friends, siblings, parents, and, later on, your wife or husband (1 Pet. 3:7) and finding out what makes them happy (Deut. 24:5).
2. Asking your friends what you can do to help them, or looking out for opportunities to serve them (Luke 22:26,27; John 13:4-16).

III. “Be an Example in Spirit”

- A. “In Spirit” is missing from most ancient New Testament manuscripts; it is only included in the KJV and NKJV plus a few uncommon versions.
- B. “Spirit, soul, and body” (1 Thess. 5:23).
 - 1. Body: Man is like the plants (Gen. 1:11,12) and animals (Gen. 1:20-25) in having a physical body (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:1).
 - 2. Soul: Man is like the animals (Gen. 1:20,21) in having a soul (Psa. 23:3; 103:1, etc.); man and animals alike can learn, remember, and have appetites, desires, and emotions.
 - 3. Spirit: Man is alone among the inhabitants of the earth in having a spirit. It is the possession of a spirit that sets man apart as created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26,27). The attributes of the spirit include reasoning power, creativity, conscience, responsibility, moral qualities, and ability to know and believe in and commune with the invisible God. The Holy Spirit communes with our spirit (Rom. 8:16).
- C. How can we be “an example in spirit”?
 - 1. By being “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18), that is, allowing the Holy Spirit liberty to do His desired work in our lives.
 - 2. By being characterized by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23).
 - 3. By being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).
 - 4. By speaking often of our Lord and Saviour (Mal. 3:16), rejoicing in the Lord (Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16), praying to God (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:1-8), and giving thanks always (Eph. 5:4; 1 Thess. 5:18).
 - 5. By being enthusiastic about our relationship with and service for the Lord—“fervent in spirit” (Acts 18:25; Rom. 12:11; Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 4:8).