

LOVING LIKE CHRIST DURING PANDEMIC

(1 Corinthians 13:5)

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only led to a spike in cases of viral infections and death. It has also led to a spike in marriage break-ups, separation and divorce. A divorce lawyer named Billy Gundelfinger makes this insightful remark, *"Before COVID, there were many distractions in everyday life: going to work, business travel and socializing. People are now forced to confront the true essence of their relationship. This exposes the fundamental problems in their relationship."* This ongoing pandemic ultimately reveals our heart issues which give rise to our relational problems. In contrast to the unbelieving world which views love as shallow, selfish, fleeting and uncommitted, the true disciples of Christ are called to cultivate a self-sacrificing love as exemplified by our Lord Jesus (John 13:34-35). Hence, **as we nurture our relationships during this pandemic, we must resolve to extend Christlike love to others on a daily basis.** Let's consider the qualities of this biblical love that we must exercise.

1. We must love like Christ who is _____.

Loving like Christ entails a kind of love that does not insist on its own way (1 Corinthians 13:5). In other words, biblical love is not self-seeking or self-serving. It repudiates our natural self-assertion which is the fallen tendency of our sinful hearts to promote ourselves and to seek after our own interests first before the interests of others (1 Corinthians 10:24; 14:12; Philippians 2:3-4). When we love others the way our Lord Jesus loves us, our heart's disposition must be to constantly put God first, others second and ourselves last. Such love compels us to willingly make the necessary sacrifices in order to serve the needs of the people we love (Matthew 26:36-46).

2. We must love like Christ who is _____.

Loving like Christ entails a kind of love that is not irritable, not quickly provoked and not easily angered (1 Corinthians 13:5). Irritability is often perceived as a natural response to life's frustrations. But in God's eyes, it is a form of sinful anger which expresses a lack of love. Our Lord Jesus Himself is never quick to lose His temper for He is slow to anger and abounds in compassion and steadfast love (Psalm 103:8; 1 Peter 2:23) As James 1:19-20 exhorts us, we must be *"quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."*

3. We must love like Christ who is _____.

Loving like Christ entails a kind of love that is not resentful (1 Corinthians 13:5). Biblical love keeps no record of wrongs nor does it take into account offenses and grievances. The love of Jesus in our hearts is powerful enough to deliver us from the sin of resentment and to enable us to totally forgive, no matter how serious and painful the offense is. When God forgives us, He makes a promise and commitment that He will no longer count our sins against us (Romans 4:7-8). By God's grace, we must renew our commitment to get rid of all bitterness and to readily forgive others as God has lovingly forgiven us in Christ (Ephesians 4:31-32).
