
What must I do to inherit eternal life? (Part 2)

Having established that our vocation is to be transformed into the image of our Father who is pure love, (Part 1), [how do we practice being love now](#) in preparation for Eternal Life?

The life of Jesus is what God's love looks like when it really goes into action. So [we too have to be completely motivated by love for God, Jesus and our fellow man](#). Jesus said that the distinguishing mark of his followers is that they love one another because that love reflects the nature of God (John 13). The Apostle Paul gave us some ideas.

I Corinthians 13 –

[I will be patient](#) - Just as God is patient with me, so I will not get frustrated with you. I will not get angry at your constant questions or need for my time. I will gently nurture you rather than stomp on your ideas. I will grow with you in love. I will patiently accept you as you are and pray that we can work together and be an example to those around us.

[I will be kind](#) – If you have a need, I will be there to try to fill it or help you find someone/something who can. I will walk with you through your pain and brokenness and share with you in your joy. I will care for the orphans and widows and the vulnerable in my community and I will encourage and support those who work so hard in our ecclesias and communities to spread the Gospel and shepherd the flock. I will show compassion. I will not get drunk or take drugs as I cannot show love under their influence. I will be careful to keep a tight rein on my tongue.

[I will not envy or boast](#) – I will not put you down because you do not live up to my expectations or what I perceive to be the expectations of Christ. I will value you more highly than myself (Philippians 2:3). My love for you and desire for a right relationship will transcend my need to be right. (Romans 15:1-3). Like Jesus I will proclaim liberty – freedom from judgementalism, shame and guilt.

[I will not insist on my own way](#) – I will care about what you think and why you think it. I will be open to the idea that you have something of value to offer the conversation and the ecclesia. I will encourage your gifts and talents and not put a dampener on them. I will embrace your difference and look for true unity in diversity and so bring variety and strength to the whole. I will put my motives, agendas and preferences on hold to become like Christ to you. There is no room for division or hatred in love.

[I will not be irritable or resentful](#) – I will not get tired of doing good. (Galatians 6:9). I will always be here for you and not resent your need for me. I will not get irritated by your behaviour and will not take out my feelings on you.

[I will not rejoice at wrong doing](#) – I will forgive you as God has forgiven me. I will love you enough to pull you up and gently correct you from scripture and help you back on the road. I will come alongside you as a fellow struggler, keenly aware of my own issues. I will not allow you to fall by the wayside unnoticed. I will miss you when you stray and will go looking for you.

[I will rejoice in the Truth](#) – I will be happy at your baptism. I will not condemn or criticise, but always welcome.

I will bear all things – I will trust God through all our trials and always be at your side. I will be there to protect and lift you up.

I will believe all things – I will believe in the hope of the glory of Christ and I will encourage you along the way and hold the light for us to walk together.

I will hope all things – I will always pray for you and you will always be my brother or sister.

I will endure all things – I will always be there for you and carry you home if you get lost.



My love for you will never end and I will love you as Christ has loved me. I will be prepared to give myself for you as Christ did for me.

I will acknowledge that we are only as safe as our most vulnerable member; we are as strong as our weakest member; we can only lift the whole if we lift the lowest, empower the weakest and safeguard the most vulnerable.

I will be as the God of Jesus to you.

By becoming part of the body of Christ, God has put us in a community. Often, we overlook the importance of this community. Philip Yancey in one of his books posed the question "Where is God when it hurts?" He concluded that we should really be asking "Where is the ecclesia when it hurts?" God is only visible when we practice being Christ to one another. Through us, both individually and collectively, people should see the invisible made visible.

The cross represents the vertical relationship we have with God and the horizontal relationship we have with each other – the two great commandments – Love the Lord your God with all you have and your neighbour as yourself. Loving our God and loving each other goes hand in hand. If we cannot love our brother who we can see then how can we love God who we cannot see? (1 John 4:20)

In Jesus' parables, the sheep wandered off and the son chose to walk away, but the coin was lost by the woman in the house. **Sometimes our brothers and sisters get lost in the ecclesia** and we don't know it because the house is dark – we need to light the ecclesia with the love of Jesus.

When we are baptised, we spiritually and collectively become part of the family of God – a community. We do not choose who else is in that group with us, but we are bound to and committed to them by the Spirit and all parts depend on one another – the individual is no longer the priority. Peter describes believers as maybe unchiselled, living stones building a temple for the Lord.

The journey of life is not always easy and that is why we are called to be in a family, a community, as we will need each other for support, advice, wisdom, understanding, practical help and just to be there for each other – to be Christ to each other.

We are called to take up our cross and follow Jesus – to respond to his costly love with a life of self-giving love. To live a life not for ourselves but for Christ and others. To wash the feet of our

brothers and sisters and consider each other more highly than ourselves and to pray for the world and show our love through suffering and giving. We are not called to an easy life in Christ, not to one of self-indulgence, but to one of self-giving love and service to others.

The Beatitudes do not just describe a random group of people. We are the Beatitude people - the people through whom the Kingdom will be launched. It will be put into operation through the poor in Spirit, the mourners, the meek, the justice-hungry people, the merciful, the pure in heart and the peacemakers. We will learn to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, Matthew 5:13-16. We will learn the way of forgiveness and reconciliation, 5:21-26, the way of purity, 5:27-32, the way of truthfulness. 5:33-37. We will learn the way of non-violence, love for enemies and prayer for persecutors, 5:38-48. We will turn the other cheek, go the second mile – thereby demonstrating that we are truly children of our Father in heaven, 5:39, 41, 40, 45.

[We need to re-think our behaviour based on self-giving love because self-sacrificial love for one's neighbour is the pattern by which we should live.](#)

There is no going back – we have been changed – our life has been changed. We have been chosen (I Peter 1:2), saved (Ephesians 2:8), redeemed (Galatians 3:14), justified (Romans 8:30), glorified (Romans 8:30) and given eternal life (I John 5:11). We are the bride of Christ, his body, the ecclesia of God, the pillar and foundation of the truth, brothers and sisters in one family. As that one family we are to carry our cross together – to support each other and work together.

Through all his letters, Paul is at pains to tell the story of Jesus and therefore of God - to tell of their self-giving love which Paul wants to be the bedrock on which all believers build their relationships with each other. The story of Jesus and especially his cross and resurrection has to become our story and shape our behaviour and lives in the way Jesus commanded. Love one another as I have loved you.

This overwhelming self-giving love is the power of the Gospel. It is the way we not only preach the Gospel but the way we live it. This is not only how we learn to tell the story of Jesus, but to live the story of Jesus. Individually and as a community we aim to be living and walking parables of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

[I Peter 2:9-10](#) 'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you (together) may declare the praises of Him who called you out.'

[Colossians 1:27](#) 'Christ in you (plural) the hope of glory.'

The Ecclesia is a working model of the Kingdom where truth and love is lived, not just preached. [Under the New Covenant we love God BY loving our neighbours.](#)

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