



Abounding in Love

Devotion

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all
(1 Thessalonians 3:12a).

It is not always easy to abound in love. There are days when it is not easy to abound in like. Abounding in love seems impossible when a spouse has forgotten to take out the trash or the children bicker over a toy or gadget. Yet, Christ says in John 15:12: *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* We don't have a choice to love or not.

We are the redeemed children of God. We are loved by God who has given His Son for us. He is there to help us love others. He made love an action verb. He leads us to actively love others. In our families a hug and a kind word actively shows love for one another. In times of stress and frustration, however, this is not easy to do. At these times, a special Bible verse can be brought to mind: *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Romans 5:5b). This verse is a comfort when it seems impossible to love someone else. God pours His love into us. By His help it will overflow.

When a co-worker seems to be deliberately hurtful and obstinate instead of helpful; when a neighbor allows her dog to run loose in your garden; when a teacher at school is less than understanding to a child you love; these are times God gives us the opportunity to practice love. At times like these we can love a person as God has commanded or take vengeance as God has commanded us not to do in Leviticus 19:18: *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.*

The Holy Spirit works in us to give us the strength to show love to those who at times are unlovable. We can show God's love to the co-worker by taking her a cup of coffee and by giving her your willing ear to listen. We can show God's love to the neighbor by taking her a plant or a bouquet of flowers from your garden. We can show God's love to the teacher by volunteering to help with a classroom project. These are ways to share the overflowing love God has poured into our hearts.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, this love can overflow into our communities through random acts of kindness. Take cookies to a business that you patronize. Volunteer at a non-profit in your area. Keep smiling at the grocery store and invite the person with a fussy child to go in front of you in line. Christ looked at individuals and saw their need and helped them. God works in us and helps us to look at people to see what their need might be so that we can help them and show them His love.

Praying for family, friends, and strangers is also a great way to spread God's love. To pray for the drunk driver, the terrorist, the unfriendly nemesis, as well as the victim, is not easy but they too are part of the "all" our Lord commands us to love. Even when what to pray seems impossible, God takes over. God's Word promises us, *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words* (Romans 8:26).

Prayer: Lord, help us walk Your servant way
Wherever love may lead
And, bending low, forgetting self,
Each serve the other's need.

You bid us bend our human pride
Nor count ourselves above
The lowest place, the meanest task
That waits the gift of love.

Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way
LSB 857, verses 1 and 4

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