

A Proof of Discipleship

From the Advocate and Messenger October 1976

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
John 13:35

This text does not say, *"If ye have love one for another,"* but rather, *"If ye have love one to another."* I may have love for my brother without it being generally known, but if I have love to him it will be demonstrated so as to be evident to all discerning observers. I have love for my wife, and she for me. This is something we carry about within ourselves wherever we go; something we feel in our hearts. But it goes further than this. Neither of us are content to merely have that love one for the other. We desire to manifest it through acts of kindness and devotion. Our conjugal relation could not exist on the level of merely having love for each other. Husbands are taught to love their wives, *"even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."* (Ephesians 5:25) This love was not merely for the church. If it had been it would never have benefited them. But it was also to them. He not only loved them but He also *"gave himself"* for them and in this act we have one of the greatest manifestations of His love to them.

Many are the ways in which God has love to His children and so large is this subject, time and space would not allow that we exhaust our store of thoughts upon it, but we only wish to stir up the pure minds of our readers and encourage them to enlarge upon it in the secret chambers of their own hearts and consider some of those merciful ways.

And as He has manifested His love toward us, so should we, in our own measure, manifest our love one toward another.

The text tells us how it may be discerned that we are true followers and pupils of our Lord. It is only as we devote our hearts and lives to acts of kindness and love to our brethren that we can be distinguished as true disciples. It is through the grace of love that we feel a kinship with, and an affection for, our brethren and sisters in Christ, but it is through obedience and service that we show that love and prove our discipleship.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." I John 3:16) ---Elder Ralph Harris