

One of the women greeted me.
I love you, she said. She didn't
Know me, but I believed her,
And a terrible new ache
Rolled over in my chest,
Like in a room where the drapes
Have been swept back. I love you,
I love you, as she continued
Down the hall past other strangers,
Each feeling pierced suddenly
By pillars of heavy light.
I love you, throughout
The performance, in every
Handclap, every stomp.
I love you in the rusted iron
Chains someone was made
To drag until love let them be
Unclasped and left empty
In the center of the ring.
I love you in the water
Where they pretended to wade,
Singing that old blood-deep song
That dragged us to those banks
And cast us in. I love you,
The angles of it scraping at
Each throat, shouldering past
The swirling dust motes
In those beams of light
That whatever we now knew
We could let ourselves feel, knew
To climb. O Woods—O Dogs—
O Tree—O Gun—O Girl, run—
O Miraculous Many Gone—
O Lord—O Lord—O Lord—
Is this love the trouble you promised?

Tracy K. Smith, "Wade in the Water"

Monday Morning

If I speak in human languages, or even in those of angels, but do not have love, then I've become a clanging gong or else a clashing cymbal. And if I should have prophetic gifts, and know all mysteries, all knowledge, too; have faith, to move the mountains, but have no love—I'm nothing. If I give all my possessions to the poor, and, for pride's sake, my very body, but do not have love, it's useless to me.

Love's great-hearted;
love is kind,
knows no jealousy,
makes no fuss,
is not puffed up,
no shameless ways,
doesn't force its rightful claim,
doesn't rage or bear a grudge,
doesn't cheer at others' harm,
rejoices, rather, in the truth.
Love bears all things,
believes all things,
love hopes all things,
endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7 — *New Testament for Everyone*

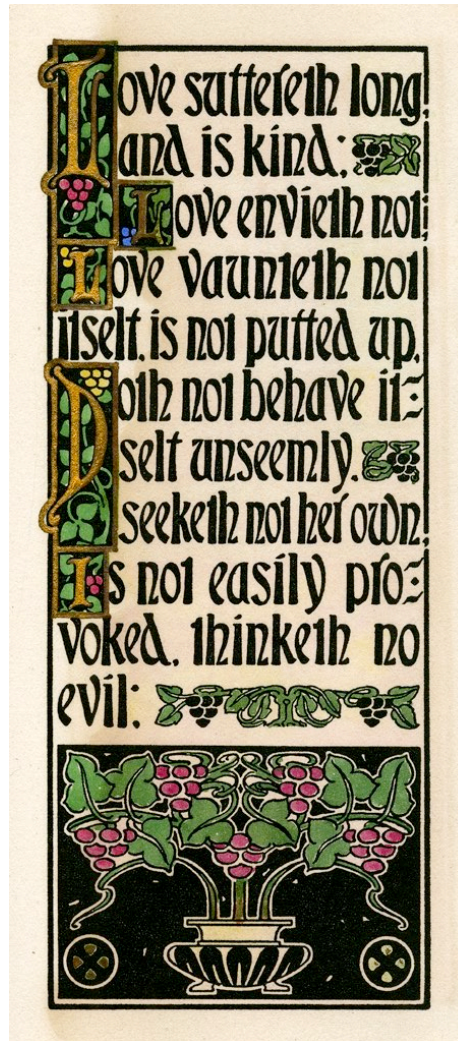
Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always, always looks for the best,
Never looks back, but keeps going to the end.



With considerable rhetorical flourish Paul concludes the characterization of love by a string of most sweeping claims about love, each beginning with the direct object (πάντα *panta*, “all things”), thereby emphasizing love’s all-encompassing scope. The “all things” list opens and closes with very nearly the same point about how love functions in the present, thus highlighting these two claims: “Love passes over all things in silence” (v. 7a) and “Love bears [or endures] all things” (v. 7d). On one level these assertions are positive counterparts to the disclaimer that love does not keep track of wrongs; they represent the necessary kind of “running forgiveness” that is ingredient to any sustained relationship. On another level they establish love as the context in which the difficulties and trials of life are met. How do they do so? Because love is never held alone in one’s self; love always involves another; love always links one’s self to another. Love is a two-way street that provides a context of mutuality, understanding, and relatedness between each person and others, between God and believers, and between believers and believers. And that is the context in which love enables us, with the support of the others who are linked in love, to bear, to endure whatever comes along.

New Interpreter’s Bible

Love believes and hopes well of others. Indeed love does by no means destroy prudence, and, out of mere simplicity and silliness, believe every word (Proverbs 14:15.) Wisdom may dwell with love, and love be cautious. But it is apt to believe well of all, to entertain a good opinion of them when there is no appearance to the contrary; nay, to believe well when there may be some dark appearances, if the evidence of ill be not clear. All love is full of candour, apt to make the best of every thing, and put on it the best face and appearance? it will judge well, and believe well, as far as it can with any reason, and will rather stretch its faith beyond appearances for the support of a kind opinion; but it will go into a bad one with the upmost reluctance, and fence against it as much as it fairly and honestly can. And when, in spite of inclination, it cannot believe well of others, it will yet hope well, and continue to hope as long as there is any ground for it. It will not presently conclude a case desperate,



but wishes the amendment of the worst of men, and is very apt to hope for what it wishes. How well-natured and amiable a thing is Christian love? How lovely a mind is that which is tinctured throughout with such benevolence, and has it diffused over its whole frame! Happy the man who has this heavenly fire glowing in his heart, flowing out of his mouth, and diffusing its warmth over all with whom he has to do! How lovely a thing would Christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more actuated and animated by this divine principle, and paid a due regard to a command on which its blessed author laid a chief stress! (John 13:34-35) Blessed Jesus! How few of thy professed disciples are to be distinguished and marked out by this characteristic!

Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God’s Law and Prophets and this is what you get.

Jesus in Matthew 7:12

It is from the saying in Matthew 7:12 that love became the dominant and summarizing theme of the Christian ethic. To act in this manner, in constant deeds of love, is to bring to expression that to which the law and the prophets pointed. That is, a world where only good is done to others involves by definition eschatological fulfillment, a return to the paradise of the Garden of Eden. If the ethics of the kingdom of God anticipate the coming future in the present, then this is especially true of the ethic of the golden rule, which is the distillation of kingdom ethics. If this teaching of Jesus were to be lived out in the world, the whole system of evil would be dramatically shaken. Even if it were to be manifested seriously in the Church, its impact would be incalculable. In this sublime command, so simple and yet so deep, we encounter a challenge central to the purposes of God and therefore one that

is also eschatological in tone. No other teaching is so readily identified with Jesus; no other teaching is so central to the righteousness of the kingdom and the practice of discipleship.

Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*