

## Love Does Not Demand Its Own Way By Wendy Wood



**Love does not demand its own way.** Loving others is living a life that is focused on God and others. Other translations say “love does not seek its own advantage” (CEB) and simply, “love is not selfish” (CSB). The Greek combines *zēteō* which means to seek or have an affinity for and *heautou* which means self. The idea is that love does not seek, pursue, or strive after what self wants and desires. A loving person can certainly have desires and wants, but a loving person will not seek to get those desires fulfilled at the expense of others or in a sinful way.

Let’s approach this facet of love with the opposite of selfish. Love is self-sacrificing. Love is willing to give up desires and wants to help and serve others. Jesus is the perfect example of self-sacrificing love. Philippians 2:5-8 says, “Have this mind among

yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus, equal with God, willingly came to earth to live as a human and became a servant to all, even to the point of death. The love of God and Jesus is best seen in the sacrifice on the cross. God gave up His one and only Son to be tortured and killed so that we, who continually sin against Him, could be restored in relationship to Him. Jesus, the only perfectly holy and blameless person, paid the penalty for other people’s sin. Jesus did not seek his own way or his own benefit. He lived for others.

Jesus served His disciples as an example to us. When Jesus was with His disciples just before the Passover, He gave them a picture of serving others by washing their dusty, dirty feet. This was usually a job reserved for the person of lowest social standing in the group. “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:14-17). Jesus could have had someone else wash His feet. That would have been the culturally appropriate thing to do. But, Jesus didn’t come to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28). Jesus demonstrated what love looks like by taking on a menial task that was technically beneath him.

What is your response when there is a need for help in a menial task or something that you would typically not consider “your job”? When someone needs volunteers are you quick to do the dirty, dusty jobs (like washing other people’s feet) or do you look for some way to serve that is more comfortable and clean? Love doesn’t insist on the easy comfortable way to help others. Love is willing to get dirty and do the difficult jobs so other people can do the easy ones. Consider how this might play out at home. When

you see a task that needs to be done, do you walk by it assuming and hoping your spouse will do it before you get back to it? When diapers need to be changed do you pretend not to smell anything so that your spouse will have to do it? What does this look like in your home? Are you quick to do the hard jobs or quick to pass by hoping it won't have to be your job?

When Jesus washed the disciples feet He said He was setting the example for us. He also promised a blessing for those who lived the self-sacrificial life. To demand your own way is to forfeit blessings from God. If we are to be Christlike, we must love as Christ loved.

The parable of the good Samaritan is another picture of love that does not seek its own way. Take a minute to refresh your memory of Luke 10:25-37.

*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."*

*But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of*

*these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

Look back at all the ways the Samaritan denied himself to help a total stranger. Not only did the Samaritan not demand his own way, he made sure someone in need received the best possible treatment.

The Samaritan gave up his time. He was journeying somewhere. He had business to attend to when he saw a need. He wasn't sitting around wondering what to do, this stopping to help cost him time and efficiency. He gave up time taking him to the inn and taking care of him there.

The Samaritan gave up his own comfort. In order to bandage and clean up the man who was beaten, stripped, and half dead, the Samaritan would have had to get close and dirty himself. He would have had to touch someone who was dirty and bleeding. He had to lower himself, getting down in the dirt, to bandage this man.

The Samaritan gave up money. The cost of the room at the inn and any expenses this hurt man incurred, was to be paid by the Samaritan. He generously offered his own resources to make sure this stranger received the needed and best care.

Jesus finishes this story by saying this is how we are to love other people. We are to love all people this way. Jesus says, "Go and do likewise". Do you love this way?

Romans 12 is helpful again in describing this type of love. "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (verses 17, 18). Doing what is honorable and seeking to be peaceful, often means letting the other person have the last word. Seeking peace over being "right" is more important to someone who loves well.

Love that does not demand its own way is quick to ask for forgiveness when offense or sin has been committed against another. Love that does not demand its own way is also quick to grant forgiveness and restore relationships to peace.

Love that does not insist on its own way will not worry about getting the credit for work that is done and will be quick to praise others instead.

Genuine love is self-sacrificing. Genuine love is willing to give up time, comfort and money to help others. Genuine love prefers reconciled relationships over being proven right. Genuine love is content with knowing that God sees the work done and trusts God's timing for reward. Genuine love looks like Jesus, who willingly sacrificed his own desires even to the point of death, to serve others.

Wayne Mack says that this type of love is a growing experience. "God does not just zap this kind of love into our hearts. We must search for it, train for it, reach for it! It takes effort and sacrifice and prayer for us to be able to lay hold of this precious love."<sup>15</sup> So take heart, this is something that takes time and energy to develop, and it is only through prayer and dependence on God that we will continue to grow to love like Christ.

Application:

1. What aspects of "love does not demand its own way" stood out to you?
2. How have you sacrificed time for others?
3. How have you sacrificed comfort for others?
4. How have you sacrificed money and resources for others?
5. How do you need to sacrifice more time for others? What will that look like in your family and with others? Be specific!
6. How do you need to sacrifice comfort for others? What will this look like with family and others? Be specific!
7. How do you need to sacrifice money and resources for others? What will this look like specifically? You may need to have a conversation with your spouse since money and resources are shared. Be specific!
8. Write out a prayer asking God to help you grow in love.

---

<sup>15</sup> Maximum Love by Wayne Mack