

The Commands of Yeshua ~ Part 15

In this post, we begin a new mini-series on the character traits that Yeshua expects us to possess concerning others.

Concerning Others ~ Part A

"Let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Introduction

Yeshua's love for people is consistently reflected in His commands. When people see how we live and how we treat others, they should be able to see Yeshua in action within us. Yeshua wants us to treat others as **He would treat them** because only then can we truly represent Him to others. If we do not genuinely demonstrate His love to those around us, we will endanger our ability to relate to God.

God has always connected our relationships toward those around us with our relationship to Him. He cares how we treat the orphans, the widows, and the strangers in our midst as well as our brothers and sisters in Yeshua. As Believers we function in community, not in isolation.

1. Love One Another

"I am giving you a new command: that you keep on loving each other. In the same way that I have loved you, you are also to keep on loving each other. Everyone will know that you are my talmidim by the fact that you have love for each other." (Yochanan 13:34-35) (See also Yochanan 15:12, 17.)

This command can be seen as a summary of all Yeshua's commands. It's like a satellite view of the purpose behind those commands. It is as though Yeshua's commands have a single purpose in mind ~ an overall goal of achieving our life focus, our character, our perspectives, and our life's work for Him. Love has always been a central theme that permeates all of God's activity both in the Tanakh as He related to His people and in the Brit Hadashah as He reveals Himself through His Son. Yochanan chapters 14-17 are heavily laden with significant truths and valuable assurances from Yeshua for His people. The word "love" ¹ is found no fewer than sixteen times in fourteen verses within Yochanan chapters 13-17. As these were some of the final words of Yeshua prior to His being arrested, they carry great significance as Yeshua wanted to impress them on His talmidim.

The telltale sign of a true talmid is possessing love for his/her fellow Believers. The standard for what that type of love looks like was demonstrated by the One who gave the command. There could have been so many other criteria for determining who was a genuine follower of Yeshua, but the One who is love wanted us to demonstrate His love to others in a public and obvious way. Unfortunately, we tend to water down this command to mean we are to be *nice* to one another or be *polite* to one another or not to harm others. If we fail this test of love toward one another, then we also fail in our love for Yeshua. ***"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar. For if a person does not love his brother, whom he has seen, then he cannot love God, whom he has not seen."*** (1 Yochanan 4:20) Ouch!!

Although this command seems fairly straightforward, it is for several reasons one of the most difficult to follow of all Yeshua's commands:

1. In order to love others, we must continually fight against our tendency toward selfishness and self-centeredness. This has been evident from the Garden of Eden onward.

¹ All references to love in these verses are the noun or verb form of *agapaô*.

2. We have terribly distorted God's definition of love to become such things as lust, control, manipulation, greed, addiction, infatuation, obsession, and passion - all of which fall far short of true love. This is why Yeshua did not just **tell** us about love; He **showed** us what love looked like so we would have no question or doubt in our minds.
3. We tend not to make the connection between our actions toward others and our love toward God. In fact, I doubt seriously that we truly and completely understand how to love God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our strength, and our entire mind. Many seek to serve Him, please Him, honor Him, or worship Him; but loving someone we have not seen is challenging, perhaps even mysterious. If we truly understood how to love God fully, we would not have any significant problems with loving one another.

Of course the ultimate act of love was demonstrated by Yeshua on the execution stake. ***"No one has greater love than a person who lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you."*** (Yochanan 15:13-14)

It is sobering to realize that this is exactly the kind of love Yeshua expects His talmidim to demonstrate for one another. Most would be willing to give their life to save a child or a spouse, even perhaps a dear friend or relative. But to give one's life for strangers or enemies is showing a level of love I think we can scarcely comprehend.

Application: Can you truly say you love others? Can you truly say you love God? Some people respect God, some fear Him, some admire Him, or seek to please Him. But they have trouble loving Him. It is easier to love others when we understand we are actually letting Yeshua love them through us. When Yeshua said, ***"Yes, indeed! I tell you that a person who receives someone I send receives me, and that anyone who receives me receives the One who sent me"*** (Yochanan 13:20), He meant that loving others is, in effect, loving Yeshua. We don't love others because they deserve to be loved; we love them because we owe it to Yeshua to love them. The only way we can truly love others with genuine, authentic, Messiah-like love is to allow Yeshua's love for others to flow through us. When we are able to love others truly and selflessly, we begin to understand the heart of God Himself. Accepting His love is far more than an emotion, and it always leads to action that helps us go the next step in loving others.

Remember always the words of Yeshua: ***"If you love me, you will keep my commands."*** (Yochanan 14:15)

In my next post, we will continue in this mini-series on the character traits that Yeshua expects us to possess concerning others by looking at loving our enemies and turning the other cheek.