

In this Epiphany season when Jesus is unfolding who he is as the promised Savior and Messiah,

He is also showing us God's Way of life and calling us to share it.

When Jesus first began attracting disciples, they were called followers of Jesus' Way or just followers of the Way.

The Didache, a written summary of the apostles' teaching dating from the late 1st century like the Gospels, begins like this:

- 1. There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the two Ways.*
- 2. The way of life is this: " First, you shall love the God who made you, secondly, your neighbor as yourself; and whatever you would not want done to yourself, do not do to someone else."*

Though quoted over 2000 years ago, these words are roughly 3500 years old.

These are words that the Lord God used to establish his covenant with his people of old –

- the people he brought out of slavery in Egypt,
- led through the wilderness and
- prospered in the land of Canaan.

These are words which Jesus repeated as a reminder

that his followers were being connected to the God

whose word persists through thousands of years

and whose power gives life when it seems death has prevailed.

Central to the Way of life is *love*.

Now, this is not the many-splendored thing that the crooners sing of – that’s erotic, romantic love.

Nor is it some sentimental attachment to something or someone. That’s idolatry – or obsession.

The Way of life is the love that is rooted in God – love that is action rather than feeling.

This is the love whose source is the God
who first acted to give life to the universe
and to create humanity in the image of God.

This is the love that speaks all things into being
and whose word brings life into a dying world
and light into the darkness.

This love – the love St. Paul croons so eloquently in 1 Corinthians 13 –
is the stuff of character rather than emotion.

- *Love is patient,*
- *kind,*
- *love is not envious or boastful*
- *or arrogant or rude.*
- *It does not insist on its own way;*

- *it is not irritable or resentful;*
- *it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.*
- *It bears all things,*
- *believes all things,*
- *hopes all things,*
- *endures all things.*

This love is and does

as God is and does in Jesus Christ:

It surrenders itself to serve others – enduring suffering and death.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind is not a call for feeling a certain way but **a call to action** –

It is the call to place our entire being under the lordship of the God who gives us life

- who makes us breathe,
- who provides food and water,
- who births us into a family
- and who gives us purpose as a member of a community.

Liturgically, many Christians act out this love by prostrating themselves before the altar of God,

or bowing or genuflecting, or kneeling or bowing their heads, which are adaptations of prostration.

But such action is symbolic of the love that is done in everyday actions

– actions of choice and decision. For example:

- We have just heard that someone we know is getting a divorce.
 - Do we: gossip with others about what broke up the relationship
 - Or do we go to that friend and find out how we can help?
- We are working on our taxes.
 - Do we fudge on numbers because “everybody does it”
 - Or do we remember God’s commands about not lying or stealing and give honest information?
- A new student has come to our class and sits alone at lunch.
 - Do we sit with our friends as usual
 - Or do we get our friends to sit with the new student?
- One of our closest friends has disappointed us.
 - Do we stew in resentment
 - Or do we take the initiative to forgive?

Loving God is keeping the covenant commands as the Way of Life Jesus has taught us by his own example.

Love is action, decision, commitment to do God’s way of life –

In the small and large things of our daily living.

Listen again to the description of love in action:

Love is patient, kind, love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

How would

- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter,
- Snapchat, TV news, the editorial pages of our local newspapers,
- diners,
- and school hallways across the globe

be different if God’s love were the rule rather than the exception?

Turn to your neighbors in groups of 4-5 and talk about that – see if each group can share one way things would be different if Jesus’ love were the rule.

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As the followers of Jesus’ Way,

baptized into his suffering, death, and resurrection as the way of life – **we are called to love God and others as Jesus first loved us.**

The Holy Spirit bears fruit in us of such love whenever we choose

- to forgive,
- show kindness,
- be patient,
- show humility,
- be content with what God has given us,
- be gentle,
- and control our greed.

Hear the Lord Jesus who says (John 14), *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.”*

“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

As we are nourished at the Lord’s table for his Way of life, let us go from this place as people who live,

choosing to love with the love of God.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhHoiLXMRPk>

for kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riJ79FDB8KA>