How Do You Say, "I Love You"?
Dub McClish

Surely, the case does not need to be argued that the New Testament teaches Christians to be a loving people to all men. This includes not only our fleshly kin, friends, those we know well, and our brethren in the Lord. It also includes our enemies and strangers, too (Mat. 5:43–47; Luke 10:30–37). Some have thought it impossible to love an enemy because they thought it meant one had to associate with him, pretend to like him, and approve of his behavior. Thus, they have given up trying. However, to love someone in the Biblical sense does not require any sort of intimate association. The Samaritan in Luke 10 had never met the man he lovingly helped on the Jericho road before he found him in need. Biblical love does not require that we like someone or approve of his or her conduct. At the time God gave His Son He **loved** the world, but He certainly didn't **like** it or **approve** of its conduct (John 3:16). What is the meaning of the love we are to have for all men and for one another as brethren? It means to seek the good of, to try to help rather than hurt, to benefit rather than tear down. It means "goodwill."

Some in the church have adopted the artificial approach to love of others by urging that we say to everybody we see, friend or foe, previous acquaintances, or rank strangers, "I love you." I don't see this in either the teaching or practice of the Lord or of His most dedicated followers who walked with Him. Jesus didn't say that all men would know that they were His disciples by hearing them constantly say, "I love you," to each other. He said, "…if ye **have** love one to another" (John 13:35). Anybody can say, "I love you," but only those who truly love will behave as love requires. The practice of turning around to rank strangers before or after worship and saying, "I love you," perhaps before one even knows his or her name at least borders on the ridiculous, while abusing the real meaning of *love*.

Now I am sure that we need to love one another more, and perhaps we need to say we love and appreciate each other more. But when you really get down to what the Bible teaches, it defines *love* in terms of doing rather than merely saying. How do you really say, "I love you," then? I love my enemy when I withhold personal vengeance, speak to him kindly, and wish him no harm. I love the visitors to our assemblies on Sunday by making them feel welcome, helping them to their classroom, and such like. When I give a stranger a "jump start" from my battery, that expresses love. A dish for a bereaved family, a visit to one who is ill, a knock on a door inviting the home owner to worship on the Lord's day, mailing a Bible correspondence course lesson, preparing a lesson to teach in a classroom, youngsters obeying parents, parents

bringing children up to love the Lord and His church, generously giving money to help the helpless and spread the Word are some **real** ways of saying "I love you."

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