Choose to love as God does

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Somewhere, sometime, just about everyone around us has been exposed to John 3:16: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” God loves us, and demonstrates His love for us by sacrificially giving Himself to us.

God wants us to love Him in return. We love Him by worshiping Him, and by obeying His commands. We are also expected to show our love for God by loving other people. “We love because He [God] first loved us…. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4: 19, 21, ESV).

We use the word love to cover a great deal of things. It can refer to two teenagers, to our fondness for ice cream, to a couple married 50 years, and to God’s son dying for us on the cross. Often we think of love as an emotion, but emotions are fleeting–so basing our love on our emotions makes our love fleeting as well.

If we want to know what love is really like, we can turn to 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, a passage we often associate with weddings. “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (ESV).”

This definition of love makes it a function of our will and our actions, not our emotions.

Understanding this definition of love is the first step in truly loving others. We should also soak in the reality of God’s love for us. Then God’s love can overflow from us to others.

Third, we should get over the notion that life revolves around us and recognize that, while you are valuable, so is everyone else.

Finally, we can examine ourselves, asking for example, “Am I patient with that person? Am I kind to that person?”

We may not always be able to love a person with our emotions. But we can always choose to love everyone as God loved us.