

The gift of loving

By [Robert Rimbo](#)

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This week's reading tells us in clear, compelling words where the Christian life begins and ends, where the church finds its purpose. It's not with condemnation; it's with love. It's a commandment from Christ. It's a gift, and it is new. What an interesting collection of descriptors.

The key to understanding this love that Jesus commands is understanding the motivation. It is not something we *have* to do, but something we *get* to do. It is a gift. You don't acquire it by human effort, by wanting it, by being the best you can be through your own efforts, pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps. It comes from God through Jesus, the source of this love. You have this love because Jesus loves you, because his love was so all-embracing that he laid down his life for you—an act of love that gave life, his life, to you and to me.

Which gives me hope. I see this love in action so often. The response of countless people to the storm-ravaging destruction of Hurricane Sandy is amazing to me. The ministry of healing offered by people in our congregations to battered, abused women and girls is love in action. The efforts to address gun violence in the face of Newtown are inspiring, especially since politicians are actually working together. The prospect of immigration reform lives out Israel's welcome to aliens.

We are learning to love, and this gives reason for hope. We follow Jesus, the Lord of life, the source of forgiveness, the fountain of hope.