

Understanding Love

Believers are to be motivated by love when serving others.



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

February 3, 2019/ February 6, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

FIRST THOUGHTS

° Welcome to Super Sunday! Let's play some Super Bowl Trivia!

Every person has basic human needs, including the need to be loved. Paul wrote the most definitive description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Today we'll look at that chapter in the context of love expressed in our LifeGroup.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

First Corinthians 13 is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible, and rightly so. Love is central to the message of the gospel itself (John 3:16). Indeed, the Bible's simplest description of God's character is love (see 1 John 4:8). Love is foundational to Christian identity, Christian theology, and Christian living. Jesus even said all the Law and the Prophets (the whole Old Testament) could be summed up in loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:36-40).

Unfortunately, this chapter is often read and understood in isolation from its context. No doubt, there is a unique quality to Paul's content that stands on its own (for example, reading it in a wedding ceremony). But Paul's overarching discussion in chapters 12–14 is about spiritual gifts, ministries, and activities in the life and worship of the church. Some gifts, coupled with divisions and self-centered behavior, caused problems in the Corinthian church.

Paul intentionally inserted this digression about love to clarify and establish "an even better way" (1 Cor. 12:31) for the Corinthians to act. He wanted them to "eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy" (1 Cor. 14:1); but spiritual gifts are not ultimate, love is. If the church is not being built up, then spiritual gifts are not being used appropriately. Simply put, "everything must be done so that the church may be built up" (1 Cor. 14:26). How can this happen without love?

Paul concluded his letter by striking on the note of love once again. In a simple but profound summary statement, he declared, "do everything in love" (1 Cor. 16:14). Although his letter is saturated with commands, rebukes, and exhortations, Paul wanted the Corinthians to know of his deep affection for them as the final word: "My love to all of you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 16:24).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

NECESSITY OF LOVE

> Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- ° Paul describes some amazing abilities and gifts in these verses, but what makes them hollow and useless without love? Have you ever seen someone extremely talented or gifted or leading the church yet lacking love? How did you know love was lacking?

- How have you seen the ministry of Christians impact the lives of believers? How about unbelievers?
- How do you think a hungry person would feel if he or she received food but was not shown love?

NATURE OF LOVE

> Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- What should people see in believers who demonstrate Christlike love?
- What should others not see in believers who demonstrate love?

PERMANENCE OF LOVE

> Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

In a LifeGroup, love should characterize everything we do. It should be seen in the way we treat one another, serve one another, speak to one another, talk about one another, encourage one another, and confront one another. If love is the defining characteristic of God, then it should be the defining characteristic of our lives, our church, and our LifeGroup. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is my life characterized by love? How so?
- Is my church characterized by love? How so?
- Is my LifeGroup characterized by love? How so?

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-29
- What comes to your mind when you celebrate the Lord's Supper?
- Think about how Jesus intended the Lord's Supper to bring the church together. How had it become divisive to the Church in Corinth? What about today?

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

3rd - Exodus 35-36; Acts 10 | **4th** - Exodus 37-38; Psalm 19; Acts 11 | **5th** - Exodus 39-40; Psalm 15; Acts 12 | **6th** - Leviticus 1-3; Acts 13 | **7th** - Leviticus 4-6; Acts 14 | **8th** - Leviticus 7-9; Acts 15 | **9th** - Leviticus 10-12; Acts 16