

If you are a Christ-follower – that is you have trusted your soul to Christ to be right with God and know His joy and love. – you have probably been torn during this latest unrest, hurt, and division in our city. If we can be honest – some of us are angry, some of us are confused, some of us are hurting, and some of us are truly wondering – is there any thing that can really make a difference? Moments like these expose what we really believe about Jesus and our call to follow Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. These moments expose ugly sin deep in us and they also expose the beauty of Jesus in even deeper places in our soul. In us we see anger, hate, and the want to stay separated and yet if we are a Christ follower - God also let's us see mercy, love, and the hope for healing and unity. What will really make a difference in this moment in our city for those who feel they have been wronged, for those who are angry, for those who are confused – for our friends, and maybe as important – for you and I? When a real lasting impact is needed - what will make a difference in this moment and other moments that will come in our city, our body – in our lives. *That is what God wants to show us today in His Word. God's Word is always timely and relevant to our hearts – our souls, but this could not be more timely.*

When a real lasting impact is needed - what will make a difference in our city, our body - our lives? *This is the one question we want answered today. This will apply to our situation in our city – but this will also apply to our body, and to our lives. Wherever and whenever – we are overwhelmed and think what can really make a difference? Listen to God's Word. Actively hear, wrestle with His words in your soul and let's ask God to answer this question for us.*

A little review: We – as the Bride of Christ – that is those who have trusted their soul to Christ to be right with God and know His joy and love - We are called to be God's servant. And, the Holy Spirit of God has been placed in us and He (as God) has given us gifts to serve the Lord and His body. Why? As the bride of Christ – those who have had the life of God breathed into our souls – we are called to serve God and others in this world – so they can know the joy and love of God.

We all want to believe **that something** can make a difference in this world. God has been teaching us in chapter 12 that in our union with Christ's body – we have become a part of **that something**. You and I have become a part of **that something** – Christ's body – that God has designed to make the difference – to have the lasting impact we all want and see that is needed in our city, our body – our lives. Then in chapter 13 God stops this and implores us to listen to the way we must serve as His boyd - if we are to have any lasting or eternal impact. **When a real lasting impact is needed - what will make a difference in our city, our body – our lives?** *Listen to His words again...*

1 COR. 12:31–13:8 (ESV) 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

01. Together, we are called to serve God and others. *God has called us – the bride, the body of Christ to serve others with the gifts of the Spirit He has given us. There is no lasting impact that will make a difference in our city, our body, our families, our friends, our neighbors – our lives – outside the Holy Spirit of God coming in contact with others thru us as we serve with all his gifts. But then – God goes on to say this ...*

1 If I speak in the **tongues** of men and of angels, *(if we use the gifts of tongues or teaching)* but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, *(if we use the gift of prophecy)* and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, *(if we use the gifts of wisdom or knowledge)* and if I have all faith, *(using the gift of faith)* so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, *(if we use the gift of giving by giving our stuff or our lives)* but have not love, I gain nothing.

At least 7 gifts are spoken of here in this passage. And in all these cases, the use of the gift is carried out in a way that seems to have power and impact. But in every case, God says where love is not a part of our service in using these gifts – there is no power and there is no lasting or eternal impact.

Everything we do to serve in the gifts of the Spirit, without love > leads to nothing. *Nothing in us – nothing thru us.*

-serving others in our gifts – love = 0 eternal impact

Don't miss this. This is a profound warning. Without love – **there can never be any eternal impact! – 0** **Where things are hopeless – in our city & in our lives – we will bring 0 hope and 0 eternal impact w/out love.** *You leave yeast out of bread – it will never rise, never. You leave sugar and salt out of peanut butter it is awful – always awful. You take water away from any living plant and it will always die – always. God says, if you remove love from any use of the Spirit's gifts as you seek to make a difference in this city and in lives – it will always result in zero eternal impact.* **-serving others in our gifts – love = 0 eternal impact / 11**

But, there is another powerful implied truth in this passage. God began this in **vs 31 of ch 12** saying – let me **show you a still more excellent way.** God is implying thru this whole passage ...

-serving others in our gifts + love = eternal impact

*You put yeast in bread – it will rise. You put sugar & salt in peanut butter it is good – always good. You give a plant water – and all other things being equal – it will grow. **When we serve in love – we will have an eternal impact.***

A lot of crazy and ridiculous things have been posted on social media during these last two weeks – things that do not speak hope or bring hope, things that only cause more hurt and divide. However, this quote was a powerful and hopeful beam of light in the midst of what can be a dark place. It was more than that though – because it is based in and echoes the Words of God – it is truth that does bring real hope and calls us to something bigger than just rhetoric or opinion. It calls us to Jesus – and to His gospel that is our hope. This is Tremaine Combs -

I would pray for justice, but from my experience St Louis has taught me we need more love.

What good is justice without love? Pic of Tremaine Combs - Dayspring Church St Peters

Tremaine is an African American pastor who has been on the front lines of calling for justice but also calling for peace. What did he say – We can serve people well – even give them justice – but without love – even justice is nothing. It has no eternal impact.

serving others in our gifts – love = 0 eternal impact / serving others in our gifts + love = eternal impact / 14

God says – if we want to make a difference in our city and in our lives – we must act on this truth. / 13:30

02. Together, we are called to serve God and others in love.

This is God's Word, his truth – His hope to us and for us. But it begs the question – *What is LOVE?*

Video – “What is Love” That's just funny. Silly song that Saturday Night Live made a living off with a little sketch by Chris Kattan and Will Ferrell – here Jim Carrey joins them. **Silly song – but powerful question – “What is Love?”**

In 1 of my fav Calvin&Hobbes – Calvin asks his friend hobbes –How good do you really have to be to get presents at Christmas. Do you have to just act good or do you really have to be good in your heart? I think this truth begs we ask the same question. Is God asking us to act loving as we serve, be a little kinder – or is he really asking us to have love in our hearts? I think he answers that question – as he describes what love is from vs 4-8.

Before we dive in – where have you most often heard this passage – at weddings. This detailed unveiling of the deep truth of what love is - definitely applies to couple who are to be married. But the context of this passage is not about marriage – it is describing how the body is to love if we hope to see God make a difference in this world through His bride, through His church – through us. *This is to us – hear these powerful words!*

4 Love is patient and kind; / This is love's response toward others who are not loving toward us.

- one is passive in one sense > **patience** – to bear up without complaint when under attack (phy, emot, lies or hits)
- one is active > **kind** – to extend love, compassion, mercy – to become sympathetic and caring to one who isn't

love does not envy or boast;

- **envy** is to want something that is not yours. Love does not fixate on and want something that is not yours.
- **boast** is to heap praise on oneself to raise one's status. Love does not point out how great you think you are.

it is not arrogant 5 or rude.

- **arrogant** – *lit. to be puffed up with air*, pride > that which gives a false view of one's self or accomplishment. Love does not have a false view of my self and my accomplishments.
- **rude** – is to dishonor others, or take away their dignity. Love does not dishonor others and steal their dignity.

It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

- **insist on its own way** – means to be selfish. Love is selfless.
- **irritable** – easily angered. Love is not easily provoked to anger and emotional outbursts that hurt.
- **resentful** – to hold a grudge, to keep a record of wrongs. Love does not keep score – so pain or pleasure can be fair.

6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

- **rejoice at wrongdoing** – to celebrate anything that is against God's heart and will. Love does not celebrate anything that raises itself up against God's heart and will.
- **rejoices with the truth** – to celebrate anything that reveals or reflects God's heart and will. Love celebrates all things that reveal and reflect the heart of God.

7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.

- Love takes all that comes against love.
- Love believes all that stands for love.
- Love hopes in all things that will cause love to thrive.
- Love endures all things that will try to kill love.
- Love will always – and forever endure. Love will never end.

This is amazing. God says if we serve with this kind of love – we will see real impact and a difference made in our city – our body – our lives. **serving others in our gifts + love = eternal impact**

There is just one problem – and it's a really massive problem. I can't love like that. CAN YOU?

CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

- * I can be patient – *but I'm not always kind.*
 - * I mostly don't want what's not mine – mostly, and I'm not a boaster
 - * But, internally, I am arrogant – *I do struggle with thinking what I do is great.*
 - * I think my way is best, I may be kind about it, but I like my way – I don't get irritable or resentful
 - * And I don't rejoice in wrongs, I want to rejoice in truth – but honestly I'm often afraid to celebrate – ya know.
 - * And the last list: *my love easily falls under the weight of attack – I don't always bear, believe, hope, or endure.*
- I see real problems in our city – and I don't believe, I do lose hope, I don't fight for truth. When crises attacks our body or you, I so easily believe there is no hope. My love is so convenient. I am not like this list. **Are you?***
- This list of love – is so self-less, self-giving, self- sacrificing, - for others! **Who loves like this?**

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8 (NLT) 6 Though he (Jesus) was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Who loves like this – Jesus!

He loved like this when he came to earth and He still does!

- * He was patient – with those who did not believe and kind to those who rejected and persecuted Him.
He is patient and kind to you now – when you and I don't believe Him and reject Him.
- * He did not envy. He rejected Satan in the desert & selflessly did not promote Himself (often shhng the healed).
He is jealous for you – because you are His (difference) and He still does not promote Himself in this world does he.
- * He was not arrogant – but humble as GOD in flesh and He was never dishonored others – but gave honor to all.
He serves you now – praying at the throne for you now and never shames you even in your sin – but gives honor.
- * He even chose to submit to His Father's way in the garden – not insisting on His own way when he said ...
He gently leads you and I now – even when we are in rebellion. It is his kindness that leads us to turn to Him.
- * He did not grow irritable w/ Peter, but loved the loud mouth & did not become resentful toward the unfaithful.
He does not grow irritable with your loud mouth or stubborn will and he loves me, even when I love other things.
- * He never rejoiced in wrong – and always truly celebrated truth – even when he saw it in the smallest of ways.
(The woman who gave a mite vs the rich man who made a show of giving a little.)
He hurts when injustice happens now whether it is in a TV spotlight or in the silence of your home and he celebrates when we stand up for truth no matter how large the audience is that sees it.
- * And, when His love for His Father and for you was under attack ...
He bore the cross – Believing his work their would make a lasting impact – would matter / Love bears all things – believes all things.

He had a sure hope His Father would raise Him from the dead – and even more would not leave Him.

So He endured the cross. / Love hopes all things – endures all things.

God – did not leave Him. (Sin, the guilt & shame makes you think you are alone – that's why the cry. But God the Father, Son, and Spirit have always been one and could not cease being one – even at the cross). **Love endures.**

So God – raised His Son to life – conquering sin and death so we can now say & know – Love never ends.

His love for us in Christ will never end because Jesus took our sin, our shame and has now given us himself.

*So Christ – who is LOVE – this perfect love in I Cor 13 – now lives in us and we can say - **Love never ends.***

If you are a Christ-follower – *you have trusted your soul to be right with God through the work of Christ to know the joy and love of God – the love of Christ lives in you through the Holy Spirit of God who is in you. Hear God ...*

EPHESIANS 3:14-19 (ESV) 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. *The love of Christ – I Cor 13 love – is in you.*

When a real lasting impact is needed - what will make a difference in our city, our body - our lives?

Serving others in the Spirits gifts + love of Christ = eternal impact for God

Michael and Jarvis and I were sitting at breakfast Thursday and Michael was telling me about a man he met in his neighborhood about a six months ago. Michael has been talking to him about the love of God and one day the man said – I don't want to hear about the love of God or your church. Michael said – I really didn't like or love that guy when he walked off talking trash about Jesus and the church. / Last week Michael ran into the man and they were talking about all the trial and the protests and the man said – where's the church in all this - why can't people just love each other. Michael said in his heart he grew angry, then something happened. God spoke – and said listen and love. And so he did. He listened as the man went on and on and then Michael said – “Hey you remember when I was talking to you about the love of God and you said I don't want that. Well – when most of our city says – I don't want that love – we end up living in a city where a lot of hurt, hate, and divide happens. But the church is here – I'm here talking to you and the love of God is here for you. So they got into another conversation about God's love and the church. And what that love really is because it is hard to see it.

How do you and I serve in the love of Christ?

EPHESIANS 3:14-16, 19 (ESV) 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ... 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

PRAY for God's Spirit to fill you with Christ's love and for you to know this love in a life changing way.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21 (NLT) 20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

PRAY for God's Spirit to accomplish infinitely more than we can ask or think.

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