

Small Group Guide: Love Never Fails (Part 2)

1 Corinthians 13 - Love Is Not Self-Seeking

OPENING ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Question to start: Who or what is the last thing you declared your love to this week?

Share your answers and discuss: How is the love we feel for things (coffee, music, etc.) different from the love we're called to show people?

KEY SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."*

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

1. Love is not just a feeling—it's a choice and an action. The dictionary defines love as feelings, but biblical love goes deeper than emotions.
 2. The center of 1 Corinthians 13 is: "Love is not self-seeking." All the negative behaviors listed are forms of self-seeking behavior.
 3. The biggest test of love is how we respond when wronged. Do we fight hate with hate, or do we respond with Christ-like love?
 4. Quick anger, grudges, and vindictiveness reveal self-seeking hearts. These responses make situations worse, not better.
 5. We can only truly love because God first loved us. Jesus' perfect love on the cross empowers us to love others through the Holy Spirit.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Understanding the Message

1. The sermon explained that 1 Corinthians 13 uses a "chiastic structure" with the main point in the middle. Why is it significant that "love is not self-seeking" is at the center of this passage?
2. How does understanding that this passage was written to correct the Corinthian church's behavior change how you read it?

Personal Reflection

3. Quick Anger: Can you think of a time this past week when someone offended you? How did you respond? What made you quick to anger, and what might that reveal about what's underneath?
4. Keeping Records: Are you currently holding a grudge against someone? What would it look like to "forgive their debt" and stop keeping a record of wrongs?
5. Vindictiveness: Have you ever entertained fantasies of revenge or vindication? How did that affect your peace and joy?

Going Deeper

6. Read Luke 6:27-31, 35-36. Jesus commands us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. Why is this so difficult? What makes it possible?
7. Milissa quoted Martin Luther King Jr. saying, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that." Share an example of when you've seen this truth demonstrated.
8. How does experiencing God's forgiveness for our own sins help us forgive others who have wronged us?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

OPTION 1: The Forgiveness Exercise

- Identify someone you're holding a grudge against
- Even if you don't feel like it, choose to forgive them in prayer
- Remove them from your "inner court of judgment" and place them in God's hands
- Pray for them daily this week

OPTION 2: The Anger Audit

- Pay attention to what makes you quick to anger this week
- Journal about what triggers you and what self-seeking behavior might be underneath
- Ask God to reveal what needs healing in your heart
- Share your discoveries with a trusted friend or this group next week

OPTION 3: The Enemy Love Challenge

- Think of someone who has wronged you or who you consider difficult
- Do one practical act of kindness for them this week (even anonymously)
- Pray for them daily, asking God to bless them

Accountability Questions

- What specific situation or relationship came to mind during this sermon?
- What is one concrete step you can take this week to respond with love instead of self-seeking behavior?
- Who in this group can you share this with for accountability?

REFLECTION & PRAYER (15-20 minutes)

Personal Reflection Time (5 minutes of silence)

Consider these questions quietly:

- Where have I been self-seeking this week in my anger, unforgiveness, or vindictiveness?
- Who do I need to forgive?
- How have I experienced God's forgiveness for my own lack of love?

Confession & Forgiveness Prayer

Use the prayer structure from the sermon:

1. Confess your self-seeking behaviors to God
2. Choose to forgive those who have wronged you (even if you don't feel like it yet)
3. Pray for those people, asking God to work in their hearts
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with God's love afresh

Group Prayer Time

- Share prayer requests related to relationships where you're struggling to love
- Pray for each other to experience God's transforming love
- Pray for reconciliation where possible and for freedom from bitterness

CLOSING THOUGHT

"We love because He first loved us." - 1 John 4:19

Remember: Forgiveness is a choice before it becomes a feeling. It's only through Jesus' cross and the empowerment of the Spirit that loving our enemies becomes possible.

FOR NEXT WEEK

- Continue practicing your chosen application
- Be prepared to share what God taught you through it
- Read 1 Corinthians 13 daily and ask God to reveal areas where you need to grow in love