

Love Never Fails: Small Group Guide

What Matters Most? - Week 1

Opening Prayer

Begin by inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to receive what God wants to reveal about His love.

Icebreaker

Share a time when someone showed you love in an unexpected or particularly meaningful way. How did it impact you?

Sermon Recap

This week, Joel introduced a new series on 1 Corinthians 13, challenging us to evaluate our success—both individually and as a church—not by worldly metrics but by God's standard: love. The passage was written to address the Corinthian church's misuse of spiritual gifts and lack of love in their community. True spirituality is measured not by impressive gifts or achievements, but by submission to Christ's lordship and loving service to others.

Key Takeaways

1. Success in God's eyes is measured by love, not statistics or achievements
 2. Spiritual gifts without love are worthless and like "clanging cymbals"
 3. Declaring Jesus as Lord means submitting to His authority and His definition of love
 4. Love for God naturally expresses itself in loving concern for others
 5. Unity in diversity is only possible through the Holy Spirit working in a loving community
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Context

1. Why do you think Paul felt it necessary to write about love immediately after discussing spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12?

2. How were the Corinthians misusing their spiritual gifts? What parallels do you see in the modern church?
3. Joel mentioned that declaring "Jesus is Lord" was a bold and dangerous statement in the first century. What does it cost us today to truly submit to Jesus as Lord?

Personal Reflection

4. Critical question from the sermon: "**Can you see what the Spirit is doing?**" Where have you seen evidence of the Holy Spirit at work recently—in your life, our church, or our community?
5. Joel gave examples of giving and serving without love (with bad attitudes, skepticism, or wrong motives). Have you ever caught yourself serving or giving in these ways? What was happening in your heart?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 again. Which of Paul's examples hits closest to home for you?
 - Speaking eloquently but without love
 - Having great knowledge or faith but without love
 - Giving generously but without love

Application to Church Life

7. How can we celebrate our church's growth (baptisms, attendance, etc.) while ensuring we give God the glory and don't become prideful?
8. Joel mentioned three areas where love should be evident:
 - In the church (giving, serving, participating)
 - In our families (parenting, marriage, relationships)
 - In our workplaces and communities (work ethic, witness)
9. Which of these three areas is most challenging for you personally? Why?
10. What does it look like practically to "embrace and celebrate our differences and diversity" in the church while maintaining unity?

Going Deeper

10. Joel stated: "The primary sign of the Holy Spirit is submission to the Lordship of Christ." How does this challenge common perceptions of what it means to be "Spirit-filled"?
11. How does Jesus' example in the Garden of Gethsemane ("not my will, but yours") inform how we should approach loving others?

12. David Prior wrote that 1 Corinthians 13 "uncovers all of the weaknesses, gaps, failures, and sins in any Christian community." What weaknesses might this passage expose in our group or church?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Heart Check - Before serving at church, giving financially, or doing something "spiritual," pause and ask yourself: "Am I doing this with love, or am I doing this out of obligation, to be seen, or for personal gain?" Confess where needed and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with genuine love.

Option 2: Submission Audit - Identify one area where you've been resisting God's lordship (a relationship, financial decision, career choice, habit, etc.). Take a concrete step toward submitting that area to Christ this week.

Option 3: Love in Action - Choose one person (family member, coworker, neighbor) and intentionally show them love this week in a way that costs you something—time, comfort, pride, or resources. Reflect on how this mirrors Christ's love for you.

Option 4: Unity in Diversity Intentionally connect with someone in the church who is different from you (different generation, background, or personality). Learn their story and celebrate how God is using them.

Reflection Exercise

Take 3-5 minutes of silence for personal reflection. Ask the Holy Spirit:

- "Where do I lack love?"
- "How have I prioritized looking spiritual over actually being loving?"
- "What needs to change?"

Share with the group (as comfortable) what God revealed to you.

Prayer Time

Pray together:

- For the Holy Spirit to continue moving in our church and city
- For God to expose areas where we lack love and lead us to repentance
- For specific people in our lives who need to experience God's love through us
- That we would submit more fully to the Lordship of Christ
- For the 8-9 people getting baptized in the coming weeks

Looking Ahead

Next week, we'll dive deeper into specific characteristics of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Come prepared to examine what it means that "love is patient, love is kind..."

Closing Thought

"If you give or serve but do not have love, you are a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. You gain nothing. You missed it." - Joel

May we be people whose lives resonate with the love of Christ, not just the noise of religious activity.

Group Leader Note: Be prepared to share vulnerably about your own struggles with loving others well. This will set the tone for honest, transformative discussion.