

Lesson 1
Laying the Foundation for Great Relationships
(1 Corinthians 13:1–3)

God created us for relationships. When He created Adam, He placed him in the Garden of Eden, a perfect paradise. However, in the midst of paradise, what does God say in Genesis 2:18b?

The thirteenth chapter of *1 Corinthians* is the greatest passage ever written about relationships. The believers at Corinth were having all kinds of relationship problems. There were divisions, confusion, and contention about which gift was the most important. After discussing spiritual gifts, what does Paul write in the last phrase of 1 Corinthians 12:31?

Then, in chapter thirteen, Paul declares *love* is the most important thing in the Christian life. It is the foundation of all great relationships.

Laying the foundation of love has **two** requirements ... **Analyze the kinds of love & Realize the consequences of not loving.**

Analyze the kinds of love.

As we talk about love, one problem we encounter is the English language has only one word for love. For example, I can say, “I **love** boiled okra, and I **love** my wife.” Does the word “love” have the same meaning in each of those statements? Of course not! I think one reason God inspired the writers of the New Testament to write in Greek is there are four words for “love” in that language.

First is the word *erōs* (air’-os), which has to do with physical attraction. *Erōs* refers to a relationship based on physical attraction and physical intimacy. It is a love that uses people until it gets all it wants from them physically, and then it moves on. This word is never used in the New Testament.

Second is the word *phileō* (fil-ay’-oh), which describes the love between brothers and sisters. We get our English word “Philadelphia,” which means “brotherly love,” from this word.

The third Greek word for “love” is *storgē* (store’-gay), which denotes love for family. It usually refers to the love between parents and children.

None of these three words for “love” is used in 1 Corinthians 13. The word used in this chapter is *agapē* (uh-gah’-pay), which is an enduring, sacrificial love that will do anything for the one loved. This is the word Jesus uses twice in John 15:12.

*To lay a foundation for great relationships, first **analyze the kinds of love** and then ...**Realize the consequences of not loving.***

In 1 Corinthians 13:1–3, Paul lists **four** consequences of not having *agapē love*, or “charity.”

1. All I say is just noise.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (13:1). The word *tongues* (glōssa, glow-sah’) means languages (Acts 2:4–6). The phrase *tongues of men and of angels* refers to the greatest possible eloquence of speech and oratory in both earth and heaven. “A noisy gong or a clanging cymbal produces a meaningless sound that is very irritating. In all our relationships, when we speak without *love*, our words are meaningless and even irritating.

The most important ingredient in any relationship is communication. The basic reason people cannot communicate is failing to obey what command in Ephesians 4:15a?

2. All I know is negated.

Paul writes, *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ... but have not love, I am nothing* (13:2). As someone has said, "Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care." How does the last sentence in 1 Corinthians 8:1c–d express this truth?

If we don't *love*, our *knowledge* causes us to be puffed up with pride and hurts our relationships rather than helps them. If you want anyone to listen to what you know, don't talk down to them; talk to them in *love*.

3. All my faith means nothing.

If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing (13:2b–c). If we do not *love*, our *faith* means *nothing* to God or anyone else. Being a Christian is much more than what we believe, it also includes how we behave. The real issue is not only what we believe about Jesus, but also what difference He has made in our lives and our relationships. How does Galatians 5:6b express this biblical truth?

4. All my sacrifices are nullified.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing (13:3). One man said, "I have worked hard all my life to give my wife a new house, a nice car, and clothes, but now she wants to divorce me." Why? Without love, it is all nullified.

Why do kids whose parents buy them smart phones, laptops, new cars, and designer clothes often grow up resenting their parents and often breaking their parents' hearts? Because without *love*, it is all nullified! What does God tell parents in Colossians 3:21?

The word translated *fathers* (*patēr*, *pat-air'*) can also be translated "parents," as it is in Hebrews 11:23. Why do many children grow bitter or angry toward their parents? Because children spell love "T-I-M-E! All that expensive stuff many parents buy their kids is often just a payoff for not spending enough time with their kids. The kids know that! Many parents can't say "no" to anything their child wants because they feel guilty for not spending enough time at home. Remember, no one's last words have ever been, "I wish I had spent more time at work." Of what does Ephesians 5:16 warn us?

The consequences of not loving are **all I say is just noise, all I know is negated, all my faith means nothing, and all my sacrifices are nullified.**

To lay a foundation for great relationships, **analyze the kinds of love and realize the consequences of not loving.**