

You know, a few minutes ago, the Praise Team concluded with: "The Blessing." That's a song about loving your family and your children and their children, for a 1,000 generations... that's a prayer to God that His love might be poured out on our families multi-generationally. It's a song of heartfelt Love... And that's the embodiment of chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians. Love... And we know LOVE was the focus of Jesus' teaching when He said. "Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself." That's the two greatest commandments, Jesus said... and it looks like a cross! It looks like this...



Love God, Love Others... Jesus said, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments...if you love others...you will treat them like you would yourself.

Listen, think about it...if you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, if you love your neighbor as yourself, you will keep all of the 10 commandments. Love, takes care of it all. You see, if you ever wonder why Jesus boiled the 10 commandments down to TWO...this is why. You don't need a commandment that says, "Thou shalt not kill your neighbor" if you love your neighbor. You don't need a commandment that says, "Don't covet" if you love the person who possesses what you don't have. You get it...if you simplify all living to "loving God and loving your neighbor," then you won't have to worry about anything else.

But you see...as we return to our study in 1 Corinthians, this was the struggle for the Corinthians. They were not showing love. And this is why the Apostle Paul literally stops midstream in his teaching on Spiritual Gifts and says, "Guys...you're majoring on the minors about who has what gift and you have gone over the top with a few of them to the point that it's causing chaos in your meetings, and you need to understand **the more excellent way. Love...agape.**"

And so, we saw last week how Paul juxtaposed some of the spiritual gifts they were highlighting against the more excellent way...LOVE...and today we will see how the Holy Spirit guides Paul to give the Qualities of this more excellent way...love...

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8a**

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with

the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

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If you've been with us during our series...you know the church at Corinth was a mess. We've seen this from the beginning of our study...if you go all the way back to chapter 1, you will remember when we read about all their division and factions. They were arguing over whom they followed... "I follow Paul, I follow Apollos, I follow Peter." That's a lack of love. By the time we got to chapter 5, we read how the church was accepting sexual immorality in the church...a man and his stepmother were in an illicit relationship. Then we came to chapter 6 and saw how they were suing one another. They were not showing love.

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Then we came to chapter 7 and we saw all the problems they were having in the home...their marriages were a wreck and then we got to chapter 8 and saw all the drama about whether or not they could eat meat offered to idols... and then chapters 9 and 10, where the stronger Christians were stepping all over the weaker Christians, and had become stumbling blocks...even to the point that when we came to chapter 11, we saw how their participation in the Lord's Supper had become more like a food fight at drunken, gluttonous party than a celebration of what Jesus did for us on the cross. No... they weren't showing love...they didn't love one another enough to even wait on everyone to get to the service before they jumped in and started eating and drinking... How rude!

And then, we came to chapter 12 and all the arguing about who had the greatest Spiritual Gift... "I've got this gift...and you should desire what I have." And Paul puts on the brakes and stops midstream in his explanation of Spiritual Gifts and in essence he says, "ENOUGH guys! This is NOT the way...this is not the way of God... There is a more excellent...the way of LOVE."

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You see, church family, their lovelessness toward one another showed that they were spiritually unhealthy, spiritually sick...and this was characterized by how they were treating one another...but Paul says... "Guys if your life is characterized by love, you're going to be spiritually healthy," and then he gives the qualities and the characteristics of how that LOVE looks...how it's lived out... And there's 16 of these qualities listed in verses 4-8, and they're beautiful... See them again...

### **1 Corinthians 13:4-8a**

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

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Now, church, I must tell you... I could take an entire Sunday for each one of these characteristics...but that would take four months...and the truth is...you'd probably check out on me, but truly, these qualities are pretty much self-explanatory...so, we'll hit each one briefly...

Now remember, as we've read through these qualities (twice now), the backdrop for these verses isn't the love between husbands and wives...even though I use this chapter in every wedding I do...yes...it's fantastic words for husbands and wives...but...NO...the backdrop is how Christians in the church should love one another. This is more about loving in the church, because the Corinthian church was NOT doing that. They were not BEHAVING in a loving way.

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### **#1 Love is Patient**

The Corinthians were not being patient...meaning they were becoming frustrated with one another...they were getting angry... (And we all get that)...dealing with troublesome, difficult

people isn't easy. The word PATIENT, in the Greek means, "long-tempered." We would say...has a long fuse...meaning you can show understanding even when it's hard. You are patient.

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## **#2 Love is Kind**

The word actually means: "useful." If you are kind, you find ways to be useful. Kindness is not something superficial or something you fake; it's finding ways to render service to someone else. Maybe it's comfort. Maybe it's encouragement. Maybe it's wisdom. Maybe it's companionship. Being kind within the body means we find ways to minister to one another, no matter who the person is...whether we like them or not...even if, they tax our patience, we're kind. 😊

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## **#3 Love Doesn't Envy**

In other words, Love is not jealous of another church member...it doesn't matter how gifted or talented they are. Love doesn't resent or become bitter. It doesn't hate other people's successes, their place in life, their looks, their possessions, their position. No...you have thoughts of love toward them...you are actually happy that they're doing so well, you're not envious, because you love "neighbor as yourself." You're happy for them!

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## **#4 Love Doesn't Boast**

No! Love does not brag...and the word used here is the word for a "wind-bag"...a "blowhard." People who brag about what spiritual gift they have...like in Corinth...and church, isn't all bragging designed to make others feel inferior. The reason we parade our accomplishments, our achievements, tell the stories that we tell, is so often because we want other people to feel like we're "too cool for school." Have you ever heard this saying: "Jealousy wants what others have; bragging wants to make others want what you have." Neither of those is an attitude of love.

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## **#5 Love is not Arrogant**

Arrogance is the pinnacle of bragging. Arrogance is such a high opinion of oneself that you've got your nose stuck up in the air so high that you'd drown in a hard rain. **Listen, humble people love.** Arrogant people well...arrogant people are annoying... Remember our monkey from last week...



## **#6 Love is not Rude**

You know, rudeness at its core is actually disdain for someone else. When we're rude to someone we're actually showing blatant disrespect toward them. That's what the Corinthians were doing when they weren't waiting on one another when they had communion...AND...it's what they were doing when they were talking over one another in their church gatherings...we'll see that in chapter

14...oh, they were being so rude. Listens, Love yields our “rights” to someone else. Love holds us back from being rude.

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### **#7 Love is not Selfish**

In other words, love doesn't “insist on its own way.” Think about our cross again...



If you love God and love others...who are you not thinking about? YOURSELF...so, you aren't selfish. Love that's unselfish never demands recognition, or applause...it doesn't care whether it's honored or elevated... because to do so would be selfish. No, when you are unselfish...you are loving and you don't desire to be served...but...instead, you desire to serve. Like Jesus did with the towel and the basin of water when no else would wash each other's feet. Love is not rude...it thinks of others first.

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### **#8 Love is not Irritable**

The Greek word for “irritable” means: “sudden outburst, or an explosion.” Maybe you had one of those earlier this morning getting ready for church (Sunday mornings can be so hard) 😊 Oh, we get irritable. Often that happens when we're tired or stressed or frustrated. We become hypersensitive to an offense. It seems that everything begins to annoy us... irritates us.

You know, when you think about it, irritability is really a manifestation of...self-centeredness...when everything isn't going our way...well, it's easy to explode (sudden outburst). Just like what's getting ready to happen to this balloon?



What needs to happen! Stop blowing...acknowledge that you are struggling. Listen, I'm telling you, the only cure for irritability is to admit it to the Lord, and say “Lord, I'm struggling and I'm about to

explode, please release the air in my balloon before I pop.” The real key in overcoming irritability is to admit it, AND AS SOON as we do...the air can begin to come out of the balloon.

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### **#9 Love is not Resentful**

Some translations might say, “Keeps no record of wrongs.” It’s an accounting term. It means that you’re not going to keep a ledger against people. But, that’s hard isn’t? Somebody DOES US WRONG and it’s hard to NOT remember...or have the desire to keep a record of it! Yet, the loving thing is NOT to hold a grudge. No, we don’t HOLD the wrongdoer, permanently accountable for what they did. This idea of not being resentful has everything to do with forgiveness. Watch this quote:

**“As a spark falls into the ocean and does no harm, the loving person holds no grudges, so there can be no further harm.”** Anonymous

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Isn’t that what God did when He imputed our sins to His Son. He transferred the balance from the ledger that we owed, (because of our sins), to His Son. Can I show you what that looked like when God made that accounting transfer from my ledger to Jesus’? This is God...keeping no record of wrong.



That’s gruesome! Aren’t you glad God isn’t resentful! Jesus (hanging on that cross), said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing.” Let that sink in. Are you resentful today? Are you keeping a record of wrong toward someone? Got an accounting ledger going? Let it go.

### **Ephesians 4:31-32**

**<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**

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Listen, love doesn’t keep RECORDS. It doesn’t keep replaying all the wrongs, over and over and over again. That’s so exhausting! And what that does, well, it makes those bad memories and pains so embedded in our spirit, that we can’t live our lives freely. But, if you and I choose to love...we’ll let Jesus take that resentment from us. Christlike, agape-love is able to do just that. Love is not resentful!

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### **#10 Love doesn’t rejoice at wrongdoing**

You know it’s sad, but true, that in our sinful nature it’s pretty easy to take pleasure in other people’s sins. Why? Because it makes us feel good about ourselves because we think or say, “Well, I wouldn’t do that.” And that attitude often turns to Gossip.

But we clean it up when talk about somebody else...we say "Bless their heart," before we tear into them! Oh, we must be careful when we say, "bless their heart..." because we're probably getting ready to say something that isn't good. Yes, it's easy to gossip, because it makes us feel better about ourselves. Yet, love controls the tongue. Love prevents us from gloating over someone else's misfortunes...particularly the people that we don't necessarily like in the first place... Right... It's easy to gloat and say, "Well they had it coming!" Well, maybe they did...but, that's not the loving attitude to have. And left unchecked...that makes for a bitter person. Love doesn't rejoice at someone else's failures. No, we pray for them! Jesus said that we're to EVEN pray for our enemies. No! We don't rejoice in their failures...no, we: #11...

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### **#11 Love rejoices in the truth**

Love always tells the truth. Love is honest. It doesn't lie to falsely protect. Yes, we are to speak the truth in love...**but, we must speak the truth.** Listen, just because we're speaking the truth, doesn't mean that we accept everything about a situation. It doesn't mean that we look the other way and condone sin just to keep everyone happy...so as not to offend. No that's not true love...that's cowardice... No, we show the greatest love, agape, for someone when we tell them the truth. Loving people rightly means we always speak the truth!

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So, let's see where we are...we've been through verses 4-6...

#### **1 Corinthians 13:4-6**

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>[b]</sup> <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

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And now verses 7-8...which is like the crescendo to the song! It's what we've been building toward!

#### **1 Corinthians 4:7-8a**

<sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

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Now church family, these last four are really tied together in a unique kind of way...almost ascending as we go. I'll show you as we go.

### **#12 Love bears all things**

The word "bear," means to "cover or protect." Literally, in the Greek, it means to "cover with silence." You know some things are better left unsaid, aren't they? Genuine love is reluctant to expose people who are caught up in scandal. Now don't misunderstand, to: "bears all things," doesn't mean to overlook sin or wrongdoing... it simply means you and I will not seek to destroy a person or "pile on" them when they're in a bad situation. Remember, Jesus told Peter, "Satan is going sift you...but, I'll pray for you." Jesus certainly "bore all things," when it came to His disciples, didn't He? Many times!

Are you quick to pile on... Most of us are. In fact, most of us are like the proverbial tattle-tale... "Did you know what so-and-so did? Bless their hearts...we need to pray for them." No, that's not genuine love...that's not bearing all things.

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Let me tell you a true story... During the English Civil War in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a soldier was condemned to die by execution. He was to die at the ringing of the curfew bell on a particular evening. The young soldier was engaged to be married to a beautiful young lady. The young lady pleaded with the judge with tears, that he might spare her fiancé's, young life, but in vain.

Preparations were made for the execution. That evening, the city awaited the signal from the bell tower at curfew. The bell sexton, who was old and deaf, threw himself against the rope, as he had for years. He pulled it and pulled it and pulled it, and he didn't know it, but no sound came from the bell.

The girl had climbed to the top of the bell tower, she had reached out, caught, and held onto the tongue of the huge bell at the risk of her life, swinging many feet above the ground. And as the sexton pulled the rope, the young lady was smashed against the side of the bell, over and over again...but the bell remained silent. The sexton the rope, thinking the job had been accomplished. The bell ceased to swing. The young maiden managed to stumble her way back down the many stairs...battered, wounded and bleeding. The Judge was waiting as the entire town looked on...the girl collapsed at his feet. A poet recorded the scene:

**“At his feet she told her story, showed her hands all bruised and torn;  
And her sweet young face still haggard with the anguish it had worn;  
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with misty light;  
‘Go, your lover lives,’ the judge said, ‘Curfew will not ring tonight.’”**

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That young lady was to love...to “cover that bell with silence.” Love bears all things.

### **#13 Love believes all things**

In other words, love doesn't go through life: cynical. Love doesn't go through life: suspecting, suspicious of everybody and everything. Love chooses to believe the best. It's a wife who has a lost and has been for many years; and yet, she continues to believe he'll be saved, even though he seems so far away. Love believes all things. Yes, love sees the wrong, yes, and love sees the weakness, yes, but it continues to believe the best. Love believes when everyone else doubts and gives us. Love believes and #14

### **#14 Love hopes all things**

You see, where you find agape love, you always find HOPE...a hope in God. I'll ask (as I did last week): “Is anything too hard for God?” Listen, love is optimistic. It never stops hoping. When you and I HOPE...we say, “God is still God and He can still do it!” Love refuses to take failure as final. Jesus wouldn't accept that from Peter when He denied Him. Failure is not final...there is always hope in love.

### **#15 Love endures all things**

Listen, when love has borne all things, love has believed all things, love has hoped all things, and IT STILL HASN'T HAPPENED, what does love do? It ENDURES! That word is a military term. It's what an army does...an army fights to the last man. It endures. And that brings us to #16.

### **#16 Love never ends**

What does that mean? It means: love never dies. You can't kill it. It means this...



I'm sorry to show it to you again...it's so gruesome... But, I'll ask you: Could they kill Him... Love never fails...Jesus is LOVE...

The Bible says, "Love covers a multitude of sins." That's what Jesus did on the cross for you and for me! He threw Himself...not against a bell, in belfry tower, but against my sin and your sin, and it crushed Him and killed Him...but, love never fails! You can't kill it. Because three days later...He got up from the grave! And He's alive right now...and He says... "I will never leave you nor forsake you...I will be with you to the end of time!" Love never fails!

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Do you know Him? Do you know this kind of love? Jesus is in heaven and yet His Spirit is speaking to hearts right now. I pray you will surrender to Him and choose to follow Him today!!

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