

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (October 2, 2022)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

We sing about it, write poems about it. I'll go out on a limb and say that every song, book, movie, friendship, and poem is a testimony to our pursuit of this one thing ... LOVE. Our desire to love, and be loved, is at the root of most everything we do.

We are in the third of our seven-week sermon series "Why Church?" taking seriously the question, why do we need God's Church to find true love? While they may not phrase it this way, many who reject the church believe they don't need church to find true love, "I can find love on my own." This morning we are looking for a good answer to this objection.

Making a commitment to a Church is not for the timid, especially in our current day and age. Today, a large percentage of Americans still self-identify as Christian, but more and more believe the church is unnecessary. Some even see the Christian Church as a hinderance to social progress, a place to be avoided, a place against love. Those are conclusions easily reached when we misunderstand God's intentions for the Church. Is the Church, including Grace of Christ, imperfect? Yes! But the Church, Grace too, is still God's chosen organism to introduce Jesus to a world desperate for real truth, real love, genuine compassion, and honest relationships.

This series is not an act of desperation. It is not an attempt to beg, badger, or argue, in order to convince people to come back to, or begin to attend, church. It is meant to be an intentional, Bible-based, communication of God's desire for the church and our part in it. The heart and soul of Christian faith, and the Church, is not dogmas, disciplines, and demands. The heart and soul is God's undeserved, and unending, love. Once we believe that our whole life and world begins to change, and our love for others grows too.

Why Church? I Can Find Love on Own (1 Cor 12:31-13:13)

^{12:31} But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

^{13:1} If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all 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, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or

resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

God's definition of love. Rate yourself 1 to 10. 1 (low), 10 (high)

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| a. Patient | b. Kind | c. Does not boast/envy |
| d. Not arrogant | e. Not rude | f. Does not insist on its own way |
| g. Not irritable | h. Not resentful | i. Does not rejoice at wrong |
| j. Rejoices with the Truth | k. Bears ALL things | |
| l. Believes, hopes, endures ALL Things | | |

Discuss each quality of love. How do you rate? How loving are you?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

1. How does society around us define love? Have they got it right? Are there signs our society misunderstands love? If yes, what are those signs?
2. What are the things you look for when you look for love?
3. What are the biggest hinderances to real genuine love?
4. What sets God's definition of love apart from other definitions?
5. What is the one thing you need most in order to feel loved?
6. Do you want God to change the way you look for love, and the way you offer love to others? Why or why not?
7. Do you believe that God loves you and always will? Explain.
8. What specific acts of love for others is God calling you to?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God and hearing Him talk to you. Pray for a better understanding of love. Pray for a growing confidence that He loves you. Pray to be more loving. God will help you because He loves you.