

LOVE LESSONS
Love Does
1 Corinthians 12:27-13:4

Last week, we read all of 1 Corinthians 13 to introduce the series, LOVE LESSONS. That passage is truly a beautiful and powerful picture of love. **But as we begin to unpack it together, I want us all to be aware that it was given to us in a very specific CONTEXT. Context is very important for us, because it helps us to understand the PRACTICAL implications of what might otherwise come across to us as a POETIC – but perhaps IDEALISTIC – description of love.** So, what was the context of 1 Corinthians 13? The **BIG PICTURE CONTEXT** was very straightforward: The church at Corinth was a VERY IMPERFECT CHURCH, even though it was a church with magnificent potential. They had some of the most gifted and articulate members of any church in any city. They had the blessing of being taught on a regular basis by some of the greatest people of faith (Paul, Apollos) that have ever lived. Paul actually stayed in Corinth for nearly 2 years teaching them. They were also blessed because they were one of the wealthiest cities in all of Achaia, and they did not even have to suffer persecution like other churches! But they were actually a MESS! In spite of all of their blessings, they were a divided, confused, and broken body. You see, Corinth was one of the largest cities in the world at that time (500,000 – 700,000), and that city was FAMOUS for their excessive sins. [Think: New Orleans or New York.] And the CULTURE of that sinful city had a big impact on the church. **It was a miracle that the church was even planted in the first place!** Paul wrote to them to help them see how INFECTED they were with a broken cultural mindset. They were constantly going through inner turmoil and schism. They had members living in outright sin who were not at all concerned that what they were doing was wrong. Open immorality was a constant factor. They actually turned the Lord's Supper into a drunken party, and they were always fighting about who was better than whom. This was the **IMMEDIATE CONTEXT** of 1 Corinthians 13. This passage was sandwiched between Paul's CORRECTIVE INSTRUCTIONS to them about the spiritual gifts and abilities that they possessed as a church. Paul was correcting their perspective about spiritual maturity, spiritual gifts, and spiritual power. **1 Corinthians 12:1-2, 4-7 NASB**

1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were **influenced and led astray** to mute idols. **4** There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. **6** There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. **7** Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the **common good**.

In the verses that followed he began correcting their view of spiritual gifts, and he gave them instructions about the most important spiritual gift of all.

Love is the PERFECT gift for IMPERFECT people! 1 Corinthians 12:27- 13:3 NIV

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way. 1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

*Love is the ONLY GIFT of the Spirit that EVERYONE in the church should possess and pursue! [\[1 Corinthians 14:1\]](#)

-Love OVERARCHES every other gift. [Without love, the gifts are POINTLESS]

-Love REINFORCES every other gift. [\[Mediocre teachers who LOVE well!\]](#)

*Love is NOT ABILITY. [Although love CAN be LEARNED and INCREASED.]

-It is the FRUIT of a Spirit-filled life! [\[Galatians 5:26-27\]](#)

*Love is not a POSITION.

-Some seek position as the ULTIMATE GOAL in life! Wrong ladder.

*Love is not a PERFORMANCE. [Is not passionless action that seeks praise!]

So, what IS love, exactly? Well, Paul doesn't define it; he just describes it.

Love is a VERB.

Love DOES! Now, we often think of love as an EMOTION. It is something that we feel, and when we FEEL it, then we enjoy GIVING it away. That is NATURAL. We have no problem loving those that we feel love for as long as we feel that love. Our problem comes when the feeling is gone. [\[“You’ve Lost That Loving Feeling”\]](#)

*INFATUATION is something that we FALL into. [The Tingles Vs. Intimacy]

-Infatuation is at best a TEMPORARY FUEL. Love lasts!

*Love is a CHOICE that SERVES God and others. It is not first FOR ME!

[Now, I deeply impacted by the verb that Paul FIRST uses to describe love. It is not some kind of warm, fuzzy verb that makes you want to smile and melt. Nor is it a verb that makes you feel strong and noble. He does not begin with love SERVES, or love SHARES. The love that Paul describes has an unexpected starting point.](#)

Consider this: Church is supposed to be a SAFE PLACE, right? Church is the place where spiritual people are supposed share their lives with you. Church is the place that is supposed to be known for things like FORGIVENESS, and GRACE, and MERCY, and LOVE. Yet, it can often be one of the most dangerous and painful environments that you can enter. Some have decided that they will simply NOT put themselves at risk anymore. Others have said that they knew that the church is just a bunch of hypocrites that you cannot trust anyway, so they dismiss the church (and the faith!)

altogether. But before you give up on faith or on church people, I want to remind you that – if you do quit church because of pain or disillusionment with Christians – then you will have to quit relationships altogether as well! No more marriages! No more friendships! No more partnerships! Banish people to banish pain! **This is because proximity with people means proximity with PAIN.** We are ALL BROKEN; and our broken edges rub, cut, and wound those around us. Remember, our BIG PICTURE context for this passage is that of a FLAWED CHURCH. In that setting, Paul gives us the FIRST of two verbs that are our LOVE LESSONS today:

Love SUFFERS long.

Note: "Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, **and is used of God.**

Exodus 34:6 NKJV

6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

-God's longsuffering is the ONLY REASON that he did not forsake me!

*How has his longsuffering impacted YOU?

-God's longsuffering is the only reason that he does not destroy this world!

2 Peter 3:9 NKJV

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

*Yet, God's longsuffering does have a chosen LIMIT!

-Patience is not meant to be ABUSED. (Ours or God's)

***God's love demonstrates that love is a type of IDENTIFICATION, and a source of HOPE!**

The scriptures never hide the dangers of relationships, even when it is in the context of the most spiritual of settings. The New Testament records the facts that the early church in Jerusalem was filled with people who sold their belongings and combined their resources to feed those who were poor or persecuted in their midst. But they also fought over food, lied about how much they were giving, argued over who had the right to be saved, and formed factions. The church, in short, has always been made up of people who are BEING redeemed from their sinfulness. As the church spread and grew, the members had to LEARN how to LOVE those who became their brothers and sisters in the faith. The Apostle Paul had to TEACH them what that love must look like by MODELING it and REMINDING them of what Jesus said about it on a regular basis. Perhaps the most glaring example of a church in need of love was the church at Corinth. Thank God! Their need gave us one of the most beautiful and challenging and practical pictures of love ever painted!

***Love that suffers is a source of IDENTIFICATION. 1 Corinthians 12:25-27 NIV**

25 So that here should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

-In a broken world, all of us will suffer.

-In the church, we should not have to suffer ALONE! [Sympathy pain! Kids?]

*I was so PROUD of CHC last weekend at the funeral as you loved on the family and friends that lost a precious teenager in a senseless murder. [12 kids sought counsel]

***Love that suffers is also a source of HOPE.**

-Longsuffering expresses my HOPE that SEES BEYOND your BROKENNESS!

Ephesians 4:1-2 NIV

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

-Longsuffering is most appropriate as I become aware of my own brokenness!

*Love begins to grow when we FEEL our own brokenness!

-“Longsuffering is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is tied to hope.”

Love shows KINDNESS.

Kind = To show one's self mild (as opposed to harsh/bitter); to be FIT for use!

*Kindness illustrates the SPIRIT in which we are called to exhibit patience.

-HOW you do what you do is just as important as THAT you do what you do!

-Kindness soaked with bitterness will DESTROY the purpose in your patience.

*Kindness is often the KEY to helping someone come to REPENTANCE.

Romans 2:4 NASB

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

*Kindness is a POWER, not a PUSHOVER!

-It will BIND you to those that could have become your enemies.

-It illustrates the character and nature of Christ in all circumstances.

In your life, you are part of a BIGGER PICTURE. God has placed YOU in the CONTEXT of a FAMILY, a CHURCH, and FRIENDSHIPS that NEED love. [Read 1 COR. 12:25-27] You are called to show that love as an imperfect person that serves a perfect God! It is the NEVER ENDING PURSUIT of every Christian's life. It is not a FEELING; it is a FILLING. Ask God to keep you FULL. So, how is your love life DOING?

Let's pray.