

Greater Love

The Picture of Greater Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

February 8, 2026 am

HDBC

Last week we began a study of 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter. It is more than the **love chapter**; it is the **greater love** chapter. The love that is described in this chapter is the highest form of love. Three words for love were used in New Testament times.

Eros – romantic or sexual love.

Phileo – family or friendship love. Philadelphia (city of brotherly love)

Agape – unconditional, selfless love. God kind of love. Highest love.

This is the word used in 1 Corinthians 13.

It transcends that which is presented in romantic songs, Hallmark movies, or 5th grade love poems. It cannot be described in quick, catchy statements like some I've come across.

Two hearts beating beneath the stardust.

An itch than cannot be scratched.

A feeling you feel you are going to feel when you feel a feeling you've never felt before.

A website claimed to have the top 150 definitions of love. Here are a few.

20. A mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship.
36. Finding someone who completes your puzzle.
51. When you can use the bathroom after the other and not care.
52. Holding hands in the rain without knowing it's raining.
79. Two souls frozen in time.
100. A diamond, 2 1/2 kids and a mortgage.
114. A pair of twisted souls at peace with their place in the universe.
123. A boy, a girl sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G

They may work in a song or a poem, but they are do not belong in the

same conversation with the love found in 1 Corinthians 13.

Agape love is **more bone and muscle than fat or soft tissue**. It is strong, powerful, tough. It can stand up under unbelievable pressure. It endures when hope seems to fade. It digs in and hangs on, refusing cut and run. It's the love we see in Christ on the cross. READ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

It includes 15 words or phrases, which make it difficult to organize and preach. How to you preach a sermon with 15 points? It can be done, and I considered it. But not today. I'll use three headings to help us get a handle on these 15 statements about love.

The character, practice and capacity of love.

1. The Character of Love

Two things. One is passive and one is active.

1) Patient

To bravely, endure misfortune/ trouble. To bear the offenses of others.

Refusal to retaliate, even when it might seem justified. **This greater love** has an infinite capacity for endurance. It hangs in regardless of what is thrown at it. It is **durable**. That's how God is!

Robert Ingersoll, an atheist teacher, would often stop in the middle of his lectures against God, and say *I'll give God five minutes to strike me dead for the things I've said. He would use the fact that it did not happen as proof that there was no God.*

One man responded; And did the gentleman think he could exhaust the patience of the eternal God in five minutes?

2) Kind

Love looks for creative ways to show kindness toward others. Love is by its very nature, benevolent. **Going the extra mile.**

We generally think of acts of kindness being the spontaneous things we do to help others. Opening a door, picking up something dropped, helping to carry a load. These are acts of kindness, for sure. But some acts of kindness should be planned and executed. These require effort, energy and planning. They not only make a difference in the moment, but often create memories for a lifetime.

When five-year-old Michael showed up at the courthouse for an adoption hearing with his foster parents, he found a group of surprise visitors --his entire kindergarten class.

The highlight of the day was during a portion of the hearing where the judge, who'd never hosted an entire kindergarten class before, asked all the students to explain why they were there in support. They all gave touching answers like, "I love Michael" and "Michael is my best friend."

Greater love is patient and kind.

2. The Practice of Love

Most of the words and phrases speak of the practice of love. What it does and what it refrains from doing. Notice seven things.

1) Love rejects jealousy.

To burn with zeal. To be heated, to boil with envy, hatred and anger Is often translated as envy. Shakespeare calls it *the green sickness*.

This is a tough battle for most Christians because there will always be someone with something better. Or someone who has more. But agape love has the ability to be content with whatever it has. When you are loving, you are content. **Love suppresses jealousy/envy.**

2) Love conquers pride.

Does not brag and is not arrogant.

The first is the result of the second. Bragging comes when arrogance is allowed to reign. It is interesting to note that many of the things mentioned in this chapter are things which the Corinthians were struggling with. Not only did they have a problem with jealousy, but they were also boastful and arrogant.

Brag - To inflate, to puff up, make proud

Arrogant – An overestimation of one's importance, power, abilities, position. To be conceited.

Jesus heard the jeering crowd, mocking him for claiming to be the messiah. He listened & endured. He could have spoken of His greatness & His glory & His power, but he did not. He humbly died.

3) Love refuses to be rude.

The word speaks of acting in a way that is contrary to what is proper. In other words, acting in an inappropriate manner. When you are operating in love you are conscious of what is right and you don't push the limits. You stay within the boundaries of decency and rightness.

This phrase also implies that love is tactful. When you are loving you know that there are right ways and wrong ways to do things.

Love is never disgraceful and is always respectful.

4) Love rejects selfishness.

This kind of love is always thinking outward, not inward. The focus is more on others than self. It is loving your neighbor more than self.

5) Love is not irritable. (*grouchy, touchy, temperamental, testy*)

To irritate, rouse to anger.

Love gives you the ability to keep the temperature down. Enables you to keep from over-reacting. When you are operating in love you are not touchy or sensitive.

Bible scholar, R.C.H. Lenski points out that ***while love treats others with kindness, consideration, unselfishness it, in turn, receives much of the opposite.*** That was certainly true of Jesus. He heard the jeering, mocking, laughing crowds. He saw their arrogance and pride. He could have become provoked but he did not. **His love for them and for us is the greater love.**

6) Love forgives and forgets.

This is one of the more difficult responsibilities of love, yet it is one of the most important. Notice how Paul put it, *does not take into account a wrong suffered.* In other words, ***love does not keep records.*** It has a bad memory, or better yet, makes a conscious decision to forgive and forget when wronged by others.

You could say ***love is not resentful*** or ***vengeful.***

7) Love takes joy in the right things.

In verse 6 Paul offers a contrast in how love responds to things. This kind of love never celebrates sin or wrongdoing. It does not laugh when others are oppressed or mistreated. It does not celebrate when sin is exalted or accepted.

There are those who believe tolerance is the greatest sign of love. This is not true. Tolerance is not a reflection of love. True love speaks the truth about sin, even when it is considered intolerant, narrow-minded or old-fashioned.

On the other hand, this kind of love rejoices when truth is spoken, received and embraced.

3. The Capacity of Love

This section ends with four statements that reveal the capacity of love.

1) Bears all things

To cover (as with silence). To protect from that which threatens

Love is like the shield soaked in water which the soldiers carried. When the flaming arrows are fired, the shield not only stops the arrow from striking the soldier, it also extinguishes the danger.

There is a protective and supportive element to love. When you love someone you protect and support them.

2) Believes all things *To place confidence in*

Not talking about being gullible, but believing in others and letting them know it. Love is not cynical or naturally suspicious. General disposition to believe, to be positive, and assume the best.

3) Hopes all things *To hope with full confidence*

Real love refuses to be despairing and depressing. Love maintains a positive spirit and attitude. Expects the best.

4) Endures all things *To remain, tarry, persevere, be brave.*

To stand courageously under pressure. When you love someone, you stick with them no matter how much it hurts. Willing to endure the greatest pain, for that other person.

Jesus demonstrated all of these characteristics of love on the cross.

Speaker Brennan Manning has an interesting story about how he got the name "Brennan." While growing up, his best friend was Ray. The two did everything together: bought a car together as teenagers, double-dated together, went to school together. They even enlisted in the Army together, went to boot camp together and fought on the frontlines together.

One night while sitting in a foxhole, Brennan was reminiscing about the old days in Brooklyn while Ray listened and ate a chocolate bar. Suddenly a live grenade came into the foxhole. Ray looked at Brennan, smiled, dropped his chocolate bar and threw himself on the live grenade. It exploded, killing Ray, but Brennan's life was spared.

When he became a priest he was instructed to take on the name of a saint. He thought of his friend, Ray Brennan. So he took the name "Brennan."

Years later he went to visit Ray's mother in Brooklyn. They sat up late one night having tea when Brennan asked her, "Do you think Ray loved me?" Mrs. Brennan got up off the couch, shook her finger in front of Brennan's face and asked, *What more could he have done for you?*

At that moment he experienced an epiphany. He imagined himself standing before the cross of Jesus wondering, *Does God really love me? And Jesus' mother pointing to her son, saying, What more could he have done for you?* Jesus left heaven to join humanity with a resolute determination to go the distance, to finish the mission, to endure the cross . . . because he loves us!

What would He like for you to do?

1. Receive His love, accept his offer and be saved!
2. Realize just how much you are loved. Stop doubting it!
3. Allow His love for you to become your love for others!