

Love Makes Us the Church

Sunday, August 10, 2025

Start with Application Testimony

- **Last week's exhortation:** Embrace God's design for growth – find someone to spiritually apprentice with.

INTRO

- **We are going verse-by-verse, in a topical study through I & II Corinthians**
 - **Current Topic:** Church Relationship – The holy work of being the Body of Christ.
 - So far, we've talked about understanding that there is only one Church (because there is only one foundation: Jesus) and we must all build on it together, working in unity and submitting ourselves to relational discipleship.
 - Today we're diving into one of the most well-known chapters in the Bible (1 Corinthians 13) but we need to be careful not to read it like we already understand it. We probably don't.
 - This passage isn't about marriage, despite how often we hear it at weddings. It's about all our relationships – and especially those in the church. So we don't get to reserve this kind of love for just one or two people.
 - We also need to let this chapter define love for us, because we're probably still working with our own faulty definitions. If we don't let Scripture reshape our understanding of love, we'll find ourselves

following our own desires while convincing ourselves that we're following Christ – and we don't want that.

READ

1 Corinthians 13 CSB

¹ If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, ⁵ is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. ⁶ Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end. 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 put aside childish things. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known. ¹³ Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love.

EXAMINE

#1 | Love makes things matter

1. **Love brings meaning to our words, value to our talents, and reward to our sacrifices.**

- a. 1 Corinthians 13:1–3 *“If I... do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal... I am nothing... I gain nothing.”*
 - i. Without love, everything we do begins and ends with us—leaving no lasting impact – because it’s love, not impressiveness or short-term help, that truly changes lives.
 - ii. Without love, nothing we do is pleasing to God, because we aren’t in step with His character—and that runs against our fundamental purpose, which is to reflect His image in the world.

#2 | Love is maturity – not just a pathway to it

1. Loves pulls you out of yourself and into community.

- a. 1 Corinthians 13:4–5 *“Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs.”*
 - i. Being envious, irritable, arrogant, rude, unforgiving, etc. are all things that come from thinking you matter more than other people do.
 - 1. *For example, we often struggle to forgive others in the very ways we’d want to be forgiven—because we want justice for ourselves more than we want restoration for them.*
 - ii. Love makes other people matter to you. It moves you to want to bless them and give them all the things you used to desire only for yourself.
 - 1. *You can think of it like this: love is the opposite of selfishness.*

2. Love makes us resilient, faithful, and able to bear great loads.

- a. 1 Corinthians 13:7 *“It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

- i. Love doesn't make us naive or blindly hopeful – but it does protect us from being cynical. It teaches us to see the positive where we used to be blinded by the negative.
- ii. Love gives us the fortitude to remain faithful and present – it gives us the capacity to bear the load of care and responsibility that often comes with relationships.

#3 | Love is all that remains in the end

1. The whole journey of maturity is about teaching us to be loving.

- a. 1 Corinthians 13:11 “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 put aside childish things.”
 - i. Paul isn't saying he's fully mature, he's drawing analogy to what the process of maturity looks like.
 - 1. *In this context the “childish things” Paul is referring to, are all the things we pursue instead of pursuing love.*
 - ii. We will reach full maturity when we see Christ and finally understand the fullness of love.

2. One day there will be no more labor, striving, or use for many of our present gifts and skills – but there will be the church and there will be love.

- a. 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 “Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end.”

- i. Eternity is pictured as loving, intimate relationship between God and his people, where He has given them rest from all their labor. (Heb 4:9-10; Rev 21:1-4)

- 1. *In that place, so many of the things we value now, won't have meaning or purpose - but love will.*

3. The church is meant to give a glimpse of that future to the world in the present.

- a. John 17:21 *"May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me."*
- b. 1 John 4:7,12 *"Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God...No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us."*
- i. Simply put, when we act in love toward one another in the church, we are actually providing a preview of the new heaven and the new earth of Rev 21:1-4.

REFLECT

Let's take a moment to pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our attention and lead our conversation, helping us see and understand what He wants us to apply in our lives.

APPLY

Process the passage together with these questions:

- Look at the descriptions of love in verses 4–7. Which one stands out to you the most right now—and why?
- Verse 7 says love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” How can that kind of love help us avoid becoming bitter or cynical in our relationships?
- What’s one way you can choose love over pride, irritation, or self-protection this week – especially in relationships where that’s been difficult?

Where we want to “land the plane”

- Love is what makes our lives matter. It’s the mark of real maturity, the clearest reflection of God’s character, and the one thing that will last forever. So we can’t settle for our own ideas of love—we need to let God teach us what it really looks like. Because when we love one another like this, we’re not just doing what’s right—we’re giving the world a glimpse of heaven.

Exhortation for the Week

- Real love requires humility. Humble yourself in the way you love others this week.

FOOTNOTES

1. **Are faith and hope eternal with love?** Paul completed his three- paneled portrait of love (vv. 1–3, 4–7, 8–13) with a final triad: faith, hope, and love. Much discussion has focused on whether faith and hope were portrayed

by Paul as being (with love) eternal. The solution is probably found in verse 7. Faith is an expression of love (the word “trusts,” *pisteuei*, v. 7, is the verb form of the noun “faith,” *pistis*), as is hope (cf. Gal. 5:5–6). Faith and hope, as manifestations of love, will endure eternally. So too everyone who follows the way of love (1 Cor. 14:1) finds “the most excellent way” (12:31b), because every individual characterized by love carries that mark eternally. The spiritual gifts will one day cease to exist, but love will endure forever. *David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 536.*

2. **(v11) The analogy of putting off childish ways.** Paul elsewhere described the purpose of gifts by an illustration employing the imagery of growth and maturity. According to Ephesians 4:11–16, the gifts were to be used to bring the church from a state of infancy to adulthood. The word translated “mature” in that passage (Eph. 4:13) is the word translated “perfection” (*teleion*) in 1 Corinthians 13:10. In the Ephesians passage, maturity is defined as “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Such a state will obviously not exist until Christ’s second coming. It would appear that the same perspective was developed in this passage to the Corinthians. Paul applied the illustration to himself (cf. vv. 1–3). The threefold talking, thinking, and reasoning were probably meant to balance the thrice-mentioned gifts (v. 8). With the coming of adulthood, such gifts become passé. Paul’s use of the word *became* (*gegona*, a perf. tense verb, probably proleptic; cf. Rom. 13:8; 1 Cor. 14:23) was of course to be understood in the context of the illustration. It does not indicate that he personally or the church collectively had yet arrived at that point (cf. Phil. 3:12). *David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition*

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