

1 Corinthians 13:5 8 Things Love Does Not Do

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We've been working our way through 1 Corinthians lately and we've come to the famous thirteenth chapter where the Bible gives us a beautiful, poetic, reflection on love.

The problem is, it's so beautiful, and so poetic, that we tend to flip over to it and read it all by itself forgetting that the Bible says all of this about love in the middle of saying a bunch of other stuff about spiritual gifts. And that context is important, because the point being made is that while certain spiritual gifts are given to certain people, love is given to *and expected of* all of us.

In other words, this isn't just written to make us go, "Wow" – it's written to help us understand what God is giving to us, how He wants us to treat others, and how He wants them to treat us. This isn't supposed to be just some beautiful passage that we reflect on every now and then – it's an inspection checklist that we're supposed to be working toward establishing in our lives – this is what God wants us to be like and what He wants to help us become like. Remember the greatest commandment is that we would love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor like ourselves. And here is some of what that means:

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

We've already spent time discussing how love compares to all these other things like speaking in tongues, or having divine or supreme knowledge. And we spent a Sunday considering how love is patient and love is kind, and last week we looked at the fact that love doesn't envy or boast because love is directed outwards toward others, while both envy and boasting are self-centered. When I envy I focus on how little I have, when I boast I focus on how much I have, and again, neither of those point toward love.

This morning we're going to learn a little more from the negative – things that love is not, or does not do. Next week we'll look on the positive side at seven things that love does. But this morning we're going to see love described by looking at eight things mentioned here that love does not do. We've already covered the first few back in verse 4:

1. Love does not envy
2. Love does not parade itself
3. Love is not puffed up

But now we come to verse 5 and we have a few more to add.

4. Love does not behave rudely.

That seems like it almost doesn't need to be said, doesn't it? And yet, have you ever been rude to someone you love? What happened there? Well, like every other situation where we fail in love, we shift our focus from the other person to me. Courtesies and concern that should be extended outward are retracted in. Grace and patience that could be shown to others are kept for myself.

Remember, the command is to love others *as you love yourself*. Rude people never stop loving themselves - they just neglect to show the same concern they have for others.

We find an example of rudeness in Scripture by looking at what was happening in Corinth. If you remember, the church in Corinth had a lot of problems going on and they were almost all rooted in selfishness, self-centeredness, and therefore they needed this exhortation to love.

To give you an idea of how bad things were they were actually behaving rudely toward one another during communion. They did it a little differently than we do today – they all gathered together for a meal and celebrated communion as part of that. But some people were eating all the good food before anyone else got some, and others were getting drunk on the communion wine – they were turning things into a big party instead of a reflection on the suffering Christ and what He had done for us on the cross. So chapter eleven provides a reminder of what communion should be all about and Paul straight up tells them – you might behave like that at home, but you don't do it in the church. [1 Cor 11:33](#) **Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.**

It's amazing that we have to be told things like that in the Bible, isn't it? But God knows what we need to hear. And He knew that even today we would still be struggling against the tendency to be rude.

We talk of whole cultures being rude – it's a stereotypical description of the French, isn't it? And people talk about those in New York City being rude – though I hear much of that has changed since September 11th. And we hear stories every now and then about how rude this or that person was. Whenever those stories are told, it's with the understanding that what happened, or what was said, was so completely wrong – so entirely offensive. "How could someone do that?" we ask. "How could they treat another person that way?"

Simple. As we've already said, by thinking too much of themselves and not enough of others. In fact, rudeness typically erupts when there's a difference between what I think I deserve and what happens to me. It's my response to the situation.

So, let's bring it home – have you ever considered the question, "what's it like to be on the other side of me?" Have you ever seriously, and soberly thought about, "How do I come across?" Especially when I'm tired, or in a hurry, or frustrated?

I need us to really get this – when I'm rude, it's not just what I've done, or said, or how I've acted – it's also the fact that I've just done that *to another person*, to another human being and they walk away feeling disgraced, unloved, and perhaps angered as a result. What's going on in just got poured out all over them. We might feel a bit of regret or remorse afterward when we look back – or maybe not, maybe we still think we're somehow justified – but how often do we think about the impact we've just had on someone else? Does that ever grieve us?

Now, that's not to say you have to be all soft and sweet with everyone. I'm not saying you need to get run over. It's often said that we could go through this description of love and remove the word love and put in the name of Jesus – so, Jesus is long-suffering and kind, Jesus doesn't envy, Jesus doesn't parade Himself, is not puffed up, Jesus doesn't behave rudely.

And that's true – Jesus is the perfect example of love and He was not rude – but did He get walked all over? No. He stood up for what was right. He even called people names – He called a group of hypocritical religious leaders whitewashed tombs. He went into the Temple, threw tables around, and chased people out. And no one said, "I can't believe how rude Jesus was there."

So, what's the difference? Simple, Jesus stood up for God and what was right, but not for Himself and what was easy or convenient.

When we're rude, it's almost never for the sake of righteousness or godliness, it's for the sake of us. And therefore, it's wrong and we need to repent. We need to ask for God's forgiveness for what we've done and also for the affect it had on anyone else. And then, in many cases, we need to go to the person we have offended, the person we have sinned

against, and ask for their forgiveness. We need to open up wide and eat a big old piece of humble pie and say, "I was rude and unkind, unloving to you, will you please forgive me?" And you may even need to say the same thing to those who saw it unfold. It's hard to seek forgiveness at times, but no one said love was easy.

And if you've been on the other end of someone who is rude, remember love suffers long, it's patient. Jesus was on the receiving end of plenty of rudeness and He responded well. It doesn't make it right, it doesn't mean you shouldn't say something when the time is right – that you shouldn't call them out, but also remember the reason you feel insulted is because rudeness hurts our pride – our view of our self. In other words, rudeness hurts for the same reason people act rude – because they think they don't deserve what is happening.

If someone treats you rudely, pray for them. Ask God to get their attention, to help them think more about Him than they do about themselves, and in the process you'll be doing the same thing. And hopefully both of you will be changed in the light of eternity as a result.

5. Love does not seek it's own.

Again, you can see the selfishness on display here, right? Remember, hate is not the opposite of love, self-centeredness is, and therefore love is a constant battle against the tendency to think more of me and less of you.

We saw that earlier in 1 Corinthians when we looked at the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Corinth was, and is, a town in Greece, and back in the day, there were a lot of pagan temples there, and that meant there were a lot of sacrifices going on and you could pick up some meat cheap if you didn't mind eating something that had been offered up by the priests that morning. Some of the Christians in Corinth thought this was a great idea – a chance to get a little extra protein on the cheap, and others were aghast.

The problem was, those digging in on Taco Tuesday didn't care what anyone else thought – they said, I can feed my family what I ever I want – what's your problem? More than WHAT they were doing, the problem was with their attitude toward those who disagreed. They didn't want to sit down and talk about it, or pray about it, they just insisted on having their own way.

So Paul had to write to them and talk to them about it. He says look, I know that what you eat doesn't give you bonus points in the sight of God, but still:

1 Cor 8:9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. 10 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? 11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

That's love. "I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." Love does not seek it's own. Love is willing to sacrifice what it could rightfully have, for the sake of others. In fact, if there is no sacrifice in your life, I question whether you are really as loving as you may think.

Husbands, when was the last time you sacrificed something for your wife? And did it happily, joyfully, or at least, without regret – not just muscling your way through, or not just figuring OK, this was her turn, but next time it's mine? Love doesn't seek it's own, it's willing to defer.

I'll put this way, love is willing to give others the ball and let them score and still be happy with the assist or the victory of the whole team. I share that because it's soccer season and Mady and I are spending a lot of time on Saturdays on the sidelines watching or coaching our kids as they play.

Now, our kids are young, and they don't fully understand everything about the game, but they all know that scoring a goal is a big deal. And so is having the ball. So, if you go to an elementary age soccer game, you're going to see a beehive of activity bouncing all around the field as everyone fights for the ball – they all want it for themselves. One of the big things they emphasize in practice at this age is passing – how to stay open, spaced out, and give the ball to others. But that's hard when you're immature – the ability to give away instead of seeking your own is a mark of maturity in athletics and in love.

As **Romans 12:10** says, we should "[Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another](#)"

Philippians 2:4 carries the same thought: [Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.](#)

We have to balance both. I have my rights – I'm supposed to love my neighbor as I love myself – but I'm also supposed to be willing to lay down my rights so you can go by first.

6. Love is not provoked.

Provocation is another response to something that we feel shouldn't have happened. "Why did you do that, or say that?"

"Well, because I was provoked. They did such and such so I responded."

We see this on display in Corinth as the Christians were taking each other to the civil courts. We're not told what the cases were about, but Paul exhorted them – shouldn't you rather let yourselves be wronged? Can't you just let it go, or let someone in the church help you figure it out?

That's not to say the things that provoke us are OK – maybe it should not have happened, but how are you responding – how are you reacting?

What if God was provoked by our actions and attitudes? Don't we all offend Him? Either intentionally or not, yes, we do, regularly. But He's kind to us. In fact, doesn't the Scripture say that it is His kindness that leads us toward repentance?

Brothers and sisters we need to rise above the level of immaturity that flies off the handle at petty provocations. People and things push our buttons, but we need to work with God as He opens up the control panel and we need to cut the wires on the back side of those buttons so they don't work any more no matter how they're pressed. That's not an easy process, that's not a quick process, but that's a necessary process.

We've got to mature, we've got to grow, and we've got to slowly get rid of our excuses. We give ourselves passes that God doesn't accept. And often, they're based on chemicals – either ones that we have, or ones that we need.

How many of you had that parent, or maybe are that parent, that said, "Don't talk to me until after I've had my first cup of coffee." In other words, I need some chemical so that I'm not provoked as easily.

Or, give her plenty of room because it's that time of the month and she's more easily provoked because of the hormone chemicals flowing through her. Folks, the Holy Spirit dwells inside us as Christians – He wants to be the source of our strength in all situations regardless of whatever else is or isn't flowing through our veins.

So brothers and sisters, watch yourselves. Don't give yourself a pass on your behavior – and as we say so often, don't mistake God's patience with you for His permission. "Love is not provoked." Or as some of your translations say, it's not irritable.

Those of you who know your Old Testament well might want to consider this: God used Moses mightily – chose him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, used him to work mighty miracles and call down plagues. He received the Ten Commandments, and the pattern for the Temple and worship, God used him to lead the people through the desert and toward the Promised Land, but he never entered in. He got all the way to the border, he saw it from afar, but he never got to enter in himself. Why?

Because he was provoked by the people he was supposed to be loving and leading, and as a result, in frustration and anger he misrepresented God to them at Kadesh and the waters of Meribah – you can go back to Numbers chapter 20 and read the story for yourself sometime. We must remember that there are consequences to our lack of love.

I know it is not easy, but it is God's expectation that love will not be provoked; He demonstrates that to us and is willing to help us learn it ourselves as a reflection of His love. So let us grasp it, pursue it, before it winds up costing us something like Moses.

7. Love thinks no evil – a better translation would be love keeps no record of any wrongs.

How about us? We all have stories we tell ourselves about certain people in our lives, we remember things about them, or make assumptions about them and then we tend to interpret everything they do or say in light of what we've already determined.

Now again, that might have been justified at some point – maybe someone really did do something wrong toward you, and now you view them in a certain light. But the problem is, how can they ever get out of that jail you've locked them in?

You see, love not only doesn't do evil toward others, it is actually willing to forgive the evil that has been done toward me. It's willing to give a second chance; it's willing to extend mercy, grace, and forgiveness if they're asked for. And until they are, you're not eaten up and consumed by bitterness or anger over what happened last time.

8. Love does not rejoice in iniquity.

Love has limits – it is not willing to just accept everything the other person does. Remember, there was man in the church in Corinth who was having his father's wife and the church was proud of it because they said, "look how tolerant we are!" Folks, tolerance is not a virtue that God esteems if it means rejoicing in what is clearly sin.

This is where that admonition to love the sinner and hate the sin comes in. Which, again, is exactly what God does for us.

So let's stop here for today – we've had a lot to consider – a lot of things that love is not. And next week we'll look at a lot of things that love is.

The Bible has high expectations for us, the Biblical understanding of love is much more complex and challenging than our modern romantic notions, but remember, this is what God wants us to look like because it's what He already looks like to us.

Let's pray.

Father, would you wipe off the lenses of our lives, and help us to see and know your love this way, and then, may we reflect this love as purely as possible without any smudges. May our spouses, our children, our neighbors, our friends and our families, may everyone in this world see a better reflection of You in us. Teach us to love, and forgive us our sins we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.