

### Listening Guide

#### How is my love for others, for God?

**Introduction:** John 13:34-35 is our command. What does it mean to love like Jesus? Is it *storge*, *eros*, *phileo*, or *agape*? It's not "*I love you if...*" nor is it "*I love you because...*" Agape is expressed in a summary way in 1 John 3:16 and 1 Peter 4:8—"*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*" It's our highest priority: "**Above all...**" *Deeply* means stretching out, as a runner stretches at the end of a race to go through the tape. In other words, it means extending ourselves to the max. It means seeking the highest good of others. Therefore, loving like Jesus impacts our mental, physical, spiritual and relational health. (See Current research *Food and Love*, pp. 88-94.)

#### I. **The deepest love is described (elaborated on) in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8.**

In these verses we have 2 **positive** expressions of love, followed by 8 verbs expressing what love **ISN'T** like or doesn't do. The description is wrapped up with 5 positive expressions of what love **IS**. (Paul paints 15 separate portraits of love.)

A. **What does it mean to love deeply and stretched out?** In 1 Corinthians 13, we see:

1. **Love is patient**—v. 4; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:12; 2 Cor. 6:6. It means patient perseverance, even in the event an injury has been received. (Clarification?)
2. **Love is kind**—v. 4. It's the active complement of patience. It means active goodness towards another person as God's is towards us.

B. **What does love not do?**

1. **Love does NOT envy**—v. 4. It means it doesn't earnestly desire someone's position, place, relationships, things, nor is it involved in rivalry. Acts 7:9 (Joseph); 17:5 (mob); James 4:2 (causes fights). It's not jealous!
2. **Love does NOT boast**—v. 4. It means love doesn't behave as a braggart or a windbag. There's no desire to call attention to one's self, gifts, or actions.
3. **Love is NOT proud**—v. 4. It means love "is not puffed up," and it doesn't have the overtone of arrogance. True love is humble!
4. **Love is NOT rude**—v. 5. This means love doesn't behave shamefully or disgracefully. Love has good manners and shows grace, e.g., social graces, etc.
5. **Love is NOT self-seeking**—v. 5. It means it doesn't seek its own; it doesn't believe that "finding one's self" is the highest good; it's not focused on self-gain, self-justification, or self-worth, but the good of others—See Phil. 2:3-4.
6. **Love is NOT easily angered**—v. 5. It's a further description of patience in this list. It doesn't get uptight easily; it even has a sense of humor.
7. **Love keeps NO record of wrongs**—v. 5. It means, "doesn't think on it or take notice of it," that is, the evil or wrong done by others - no list (Luke 23:34).
8. **Love does NOT delight in evil but rejoices with the truth**—v. 10. This love rejoices in victories gained, forgiveness offered, every act of kindness. Love refuses to take delight in gossip. It rejoices in loving truth.

C. **What does true love always do?**

1. **Love always protects**—means “to cover,” or “roof over.” Love protects/bears what descends upon it—v. 7. It doesn’t nitpick or criticize. Speaks truth gently!
2. **Love always trusts**—means it maintains its faith in others. Yes, it has spiritual discernment, but continues to believe the best. This kind of love sees that it’s far better to be hurt than to be skeptical. It trusts God on behalf of others.
3. **Love always hopes**—means it looks for the ultimate triumph of truth and never loses that hope...that God will show mercy on another person’s behalf.
4. **Love always perseveres**—love has tenacity in the present and confidence in the future to live in every kind of circumstance, and pour itself out for others.
5. **Love never fails**—v. 8. It won’t let anyone down; it won’t come to an end; it’s never defeated; it’s not brought to the ground; it persists when it’s rejected.

D. **WHY should we love like this?** Beyond what we’ve already stated, there are four powerful reasons expressed in and out of 1 Peter 4 and 1 Corinthians 13.

- a. **First**, we who know Christ have experienced God’s love stretched out from the cross, and we should give that same love to others—1 Jn. 3:14-17; Lk. 7:47.
- b. **Second**, we love like this because people are going to hurt/reject us, and this love will keep us from being destroyed/embittered by those hurts—1 Jn. 4:7-11. Love keeps on loving, accepting, forgiving—Heb. 12:15; Rom. 15:1-7; James 5:19ff.
- c. **Third**, we should “...love...deeply **because love covers over a multitude of sins**” — v. 8. Remember, “cover” means “to hide, roof over.” It enables us to stretch to cover, hide, forget those sins confessed, repented of, even flaunted before us.
- d. **Fourth**, we should love deeply because of the ENORMOUS BENEFITS.
  - 1) Loving others is the HEALTHIEST thing for us to do for ourselves/others.
  - 2) A growth/small group (ministry team/support group) offers opportunities to develop the kind of relationships that achieve spiritual/physical health.
- e. **Fifth**, other reasons—1 Peter 4:11; John 13:34-35; 17:20-21.

**Conclusion:** Here’s the **LOVE Acrostic**.

- **L**ove others deeply—1 Pet. 4:8. (Meditate on/pray through 1 Corinthians 13.)
- **O**pen wide our hearts to others - risk! 2 Cor. 6:13
- **V**erbalize our love with words that are encouraging and uplifting, and show we value the ones we love—Eph. 4:29 (see also 5:2).
- **E**ngage others regularly in small groups and other relational circles—Acts 2:46.

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**Application Questions**

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1. How would you compare the “*stretched out love*” described in 1 Peter 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 13, with what you experienced from your parents/family when you were growing up? What positive description of love from 1 Corinthians 13 do you think you needed more? Which descriptions had the most impact on your life, e.g., your view of yourself? How does/will the love you received from your family impact how you relate to your mate, children and/or your friends?
2. Of the list of “nots” in 1 Corinthians 13:4-6, which ones have you been most hurt by, or the opposite, tempted to express? (Be honest, without throwing others under the bus.)
3. How does/should 1 Corinthians impact our church? Be specific and suggest ways you personally can express this kind of love to those in and out of the church.
4. Discuss the benefits of the L O V E Acrostic. How might it impact the church, your growth group, your family, your friends? How might we communicate the love acrostic?

Flourish

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