

# It's All About Love

I Corinthians 13 | Week Nine

## Overview

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to take time to hear from each other (15 minutes), review the lesson (30 minutes) and to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes). Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

## Where We Are Now

In the previous lesson we learned that the church is like a body—made up of many parts, but each part being important to the whole. We also learned that God has given each of us unique gifts to help us glorify him and serve others.

## This Week

This week it's all about love, but not love as the world sometimes misrepresents it. Instead, it's about genuine Christian love that finds its source in the love of God, which in turn leads us to love others. If love is the source that is driving us, then we can avoid petty disagreements and strife within the church, instead concentrating on how we can best direct our God-guided love in the world.

## The Big Idea

Love is foundational to the Christian life, but it must be true Christian love, driven by love for God, empowering us to genuinely love others by His Spirit.

## Memory Verse | Cor. 13:13

## Looking at the Text

**Ask someone to read I Corinthians 13:1-13** - *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not*

- 1 | The Problem with Knowledge
- 2 | Wisdom of Man & Power of God
- 3 | Servanthood & Stewardship
- 4 | Sex, Holiness, & Worship
- 5 | Singleness, Marriage, & Calling
- 6 | Knowledge, Idolatry, & Surrender
- 7 | The Anatomy of an Idol
- 8 | All in the Family
- 9 | It's All About Love
- 10 | Spiritual Gifts & The Church
- 11 | The Resurrection & The End

### Get Started

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

### Don't Forget

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version.

### Think About It

*insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 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 gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

1. Verses 1-3 form the first section of the chapter. What point is Paul making in these verses?

If we don't have love, it doesn't matter how gifted we may be or what abilities or skills we may possess. Without love, we are nothing.

2. Compare 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 with Galatians 5:22-23. How is "the fruit of the spirit" passage in Galatians similar to the 1 Corinthians descriptions of love? Why do you think Paul emphasized these insights in his writings?

Both passages emphasize the importance of love in the Christian life, describing it in similar terms, such as love expressing patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Paul knew that true Christian love is produced through a Spirit-led believer allowing Christ to love others through them.

3. In verse 5 we read that love is "not irritable or resentful." What sorts of things irritate you or cause resentment in your life? How could you respond to those things in love instead of with irritation or resentment?

Answers will vary. Responding in love to things that irritate us or that we resent will require us to be deliberate about how we choose to live our lives—how we will react to certain situations and circumstances. If we respond in love to things that usually bother us, we can develop a quality of character that is more consistent in how it reacts to negative influences.

4. Verse 12 says, 'For now we see in a mirror dimly.' What does this suggest about the extent of our knowledge in this world? How should love play a role in how we relate to others when it comes to understanding truths about reality?

It suggests that we don't see or know everything there is to know. Love should help us have compassion and empathy with others, especially those who are non-Christian and have a very different outlook on life and reality.

5. In verse 13 the three so-called theological virtues are listed—faith, hope, and love. Why do you think Paul emphasizes these three? Why is love "the greatest of these"?

Faith, hope, and love are important to the Christian life. Without faith we can't believe in God or his truths. Belief in God and his truths should give us hope because we can trust in God and know that he is guiding and watching over all that happens. Love is probably listed as the greatest because God is love and Christ called us to love one another (John 13:34-35).

### Illustrate It

*The New Bible Commentary* says this about verse 4-7: "The presence of love affirms others and overcomes destructive aspects of our character. Patience, kindness and truth matter. Just as avoiding those sins in the Ten Commandments which deal with other human beings nurtures relationships, so too does love. Envy, boastfulness, self-assertiveness, anger and evil are avoided. Love provides both the stability and consistency in which life thrives."

The New Testament emphasizes the importance of character and our motivations for behavior. Love is central to living the Christian life. How can love help us overcome "destructive aspects of our character"?

### Bill Bright, How to Love by Faith

1. God loves you unconditionally.
2. You are commanded to love others -- God, your neighbors, your enemies.
3. You are incapable of loving others in your own strength.
4. You can love others with God's love.
5. By Faith, ask God to love others through you

### Tips for a Better Discussion

Since the reading this week is shorter than some of the previous readings, feel free to take some time to consider other biblical passages that address love, such as John 13:34-35 and 1 John.

### Tie It Together

## Wrapping Up

6. Western culture often presents love exclusively as feelings related to personal pleasure. Christian love is rooted in God, selfless, and should move us to have an outward focus. How can you cultivate true Christian love in your life? What obstacles stand in your way—your schedule, your focus on your academic pursuits, distractions and diversions? How can you overcome them?

Cultivating true Christian love requires a desire to serve God and others, not out of selfish reasons or other wrong motives, but out of a real desire to live a life that is pleasing to God. Bible study, prayer, and actively seeking to live a life driven by God and his love can help us. The obstacles that stand in our way of living a life of Christian love will vary depending on our unique personality and situation. We overcome the obstacles by being dependent on His Spirit to love others out of our love for him. Ask yourself how you can apply this to people in your department.

R.C. Sproul put it this way: “We must show the love of Jesus to everyone that we come into contact with each and every day. Jesus does not consider this a nice idea, He commands us to do so [John 13:34-35] ... I encourage you to examine your life, to consider, are you striving to love others as Jesus loves us?” (R.C. Sproul, “What Love Is This?”). Take time to personalize the passage (4-7) and list those people who are hard to love. See how God changes your heart toward them, providing you with confirmation that He is working in you.

Augustine considered love foundational to Christian ethics. Love of God should move us to love others. This approach to Christian living has strong biblical roots. When asked, “which is the greatest commandment,” Jesus answered: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-39).

Agape: The Greek word used for love in 1 Corinthians 13 is *agape*. It is not to be confused with other Greek words for love such as *storge* (natural affection, such as between parent and child), *philia* (affection between friends), or *eros* (desire, such as sexual desire). *Agape* describes “the self-giving love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, which is the motivating power and pattern of Christian living” (*New Dictionary of Theology*)

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session with each person substituting their name in the place of love (vs 4-7). Have them feel the overwhelming task to “love as Christ loves.” Let them make a list of people that are difficult to love and let them surrender to Jesus the task of loving them through His power.