

092027 Growth Group Study

What is Love?

1 Corinthians 13



Background: What is Love? It's a question many ask, but few find an answer that will sustain them through all the messy realities of life. Paul's words to the Corinthian church are that answer because Paul wrote them to a church who did not love each other. And although we often confine these words to areas where we feel love (reading them at weddings or hanging them in our family room), they actually have a much broader scope. Come join us as we discover (or rediscover) the Love that is big enough for any situation!

Sermon Text (ESV):

1 Corinthians 12:31-14:1

12:31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

1 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 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.

14:1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

Discussion Questions:

- Preparation
 - As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
 - What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- Sermon Questions
 - For whom in your life does love come more “naturally”? For whom is it hard to love that you would like to love better?
 - The Corinthians cared (too much) about how their culture influenced their faith. For them, church was just another place to gain status in society. What Christian activities might you be focusing on so much that you’re doing so without love?
 - For example, Joel mentioned the pursuit of perfect moral living, how Christianity should inform public policy, and the pursuit of greater knowledge through Bible study
 - Joel reminded us that love does not *replace* Christian activities... It is *necessary* for them to be truly Christian. What would your Christian activity look like with *love* as a central focus?
 - What are your thoughts/reactions to the specific things that love is not?
 - A feeling
 - Tolerance (cheap impersonation of love but requires no change of heart within)
 - Anything Goes (love delights in the truth – Jesus)
 - With your group, reflect on why love is greater than faith and hope

- Like spiritual gifts, faith and hope are needed for a time, but will not last forever (because faith and hope will be sight after Jesus returns)
- Today, we're called to be Jesus's disciples by his love – and we fail, repeatedly. But when faith becomes sight, and when we have what we hope for, we will *love as we are supposed to love*. Will you pray for this kind of love now?