

The True Meaning of Love **1 Corinthians 13**

Introduction:

1. Do you desire for your life to have significance and true meaning? Jesus taught us how our lives can really count. Matthew 22:36-40
 - Do you realize how profound, yet simple, this statement is? Jesus just took the entire Old Testament law and boiled it down to one word – love. John 13:35
2. What are you known for? More than anything else, God desires for His children to be known by their love. Paul mentioned love (or charity) 100 times in his 13 books. Paul also taught that love was the crowning virtue above everything else. vs. 13
3. This chapter (1 Corinthians 13) is known as the love chapter. The context, believe it or not, is one of rebuke. The believers in this local church were misusing spiritual gifts and were shaming each other, abusing each other, and treating each other with great disrespect.
4. In this chapter, Paul gives them insight into what true, godly love is.
5. There are two important principles to learn about love to begin with:
 - Love is not a feeling. Love is correct biblical thinking which leads to correct actions.
 - Love cannot be learned in isolation. You cannot be a spiritual hermit and learn to love. You have to be around people – irritating, imperfect, exasperating people.
6. Love is the only way for your life to have true meaning. Luke 12:15
7. At funerals, people don't talk about all the money or things people possessed. They talk about what kind of person they were and how they demonstrated love.

The Temptation – vs. 1-3

1. Seek to replace love with performance.
2. The Corinthians were esteeming value to people based on their outward performance.
3. Whenever you place stock in your performance instead of your heart attitude, the Bible says:
 - *“I am become...”* (vs. 1) - It is just empty, noisy, clanging.
 - *“I am nothing...”* (vs. 2) - My outward performance doesn't change who I am inwardly.
 - *“It profiteth me nothing...”* (vs. 3) - It doesn't change my inward condition.
4. There are two mistakes people make:
 - They think, “If I perform well enough, he/she will love me.”
 - They think, “If I perform well enough, he/she will believe that I love them.”
5. It is not about your performance or your outward appearance. Life is about relationships. We think it is about achievements and the acquisition of things, but it's not.
6. We become so uptight and stressed out over making a living, doing our work, paying bills, grocery shopping, and running here and there, as if these tasks are the point of life.
7. The point of life is learning to love God and love people. Life minus love equals zero.

The Truth – vs. 7-8a

1. Love lasts forever, and love leaves a legacy.
 - When people are dying, they don't surround themselves with objects. We want people around us – people we love and have relationships with.
2. How you treated other people and loved people (not your wealth and accomplishments) is the most enduring impact you can leave on this earth.
3. When you get to heaven, God won't say, "Tell me about your career, your bank account, your hobbies, your house, your car, etc." He will evaluate your life based on two key questions: "Did you love God?" and "Did you love people?"

The Timeless Keys to Love

1. Love is quick to forgive. vs. 4-5
 - The phrase "*suffereth long*" means "forbearing; patient."
 - In other words, love has a long fuse. We are slow to anger, and we stand ready to forgive any offenses that may come to us.
 - The idea of forbearance and forgiveness go hand in hand. Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:2, 32
 - Love means that we have the proper mental attitude, fully realizing all that Christ has forgiven us. So, we stand ready to forgive others, not hold grudges.
 - Love is "*not easily provoked*." "Provoke" literally means "to exasperate." This is a person who is the opposite of patient. He is touchy, sensitive, resentful, quick-tempered, and short-fused. Love deals with issues as they come along and doesn't allow this inward brooding to take place.
2. Love is kind. vs. 4
 - Christian people should be the kindest people on earth.
 - Love looks for way to be helpful and kind to others. Ephesians 4:32; Galatians 6:10
 - You say, "But people will take advantage of you." Yes, they will, but "*charity suffereth long*."
 - Why are Christians so full of loving kindness? Because nobody knows more about loving kindness than a believer who has been forgiven and saved. Titus 3:3-4
3. Love is honest.
 - One of the leading causes in the breakdown of relationships is a lack of honesty. Trust is such a key factor in any relationship. When the trust factor breaks down, things begin to deteriorate.
 - When people are filled with Christ's love, they rejoice in truth, not sinful deceptions.
 - Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan thinks nothing of lying and distorting the truth in order to use and abuse people.
 - When a person makes a fool out of somebody else by lying and deceiving him, he or she does not love that other person. They may **say** they love them, but God's Word says that love does not rejoice in iniquity, but in the truth.
4. Love is all about giving. vs. 4-5
 - "*Charity vaunteth not itself*."

- A person who “vaunts” is simply a person who loves to boast and draw attention to himself. It is somebody that makes himself bigger than he ought to be. A braggart.
- A person who has never grown in the love of Christ has a very self-centered, egotistical attitude, and it will greatly hinder his closest relationships in life.
- A person who vaunts himself has the attitude, “It's all about me.”
- *“Charity... seeketh not her own.”*
 - True love doesn't pursue self-advantage and exaltation at the expense of others.
 - When you love others, you live for them, their happiness, and their advantage.
 - It is interesting that charity is personified as a lady in verse five. Why is this? I think it is because there is not a better example of charity than a humble, godly lady.
- You cannot be consumed with yourself and show forth true, Christ-filled love to others.
- It is not enough just to say relationships are important - we must prove it by investing time in them.
- The very essence of love is that you are choosing to give to somebody else when you do not have to. John 3:16
- Whenever you give your time, you are making a sacrifice, and sacrifice is the essence of love. John 15:12-13