

Sermon Discussion Guide, 1 Corinthians 13

May 14



CULTIVATING Love

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)

- Anything to share about personal events in the past week? About follow-ups from last Sunday's meeting on "Living in Fellowship?"
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

Opening Question: In your growing up years, where or how did you learn about the love of God?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Would a volunteer please read aloud the sermon scripture below, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Know that it is ok to skip some questions below in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- What other things in the Christian life is love compared with in verses 1-3 and where does love stand in the rankings? How do you explain this ordering of priorities?
- Verses 4-8a, describe the qualities of love. How is this description of love different than love as a "feeling" or the worldly kind of definition of love of today?
- Why does our ability to love others begin with God's love for us?
- Why is the mission of the church more than just missions activities or acts of service?
- Why does love seem to be the marker of maturity here more so than prophecy, knowledge or the gift of tongues (vs 8-13)?

Other Related Scriptures (10 min)

- The word love appears 204 times in the New Testament in the NIV. Which of the following scriptures about love do you think seems most relevant to the times we are living in and why?
 - Mark 12:28-31 ²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”
 - John 13:34-35 ³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
 - Matthew 5:43-45 ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^[a] and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven.
 - 1 John 3:16-18 ¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.
 - 1 John 4:19,21 ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ... ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)

- As you reflect upon the sermon and the additional reading above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
- Try reading verses 4-8 again silently to yourself, but this time replacing the words “love” and “it” with the name “Jesus.” Did it still sound true to you when you heard it in your mind? Why or why not?
- Now try reading verses 4-8 to yourself silently again but this time, instead of replacing the words “love” and “it” with “Jesus,” replace it with your own name. Where were the biggest stumbling points? In what areas shall we seek the Lord’s grace to help us grow in this week?
- Are there any lists of wrongs or resentments against some we might count as “enemies” that Christ is calling us to give up by His grace and pray for? Anyone in particular to add to the prayer time below?
- In the description of love in 1 Cor. 13:4-7, in which of them are you the strongest and which are you the weakest?
- Have you been in situations in which your loving actions toward others were not received or appreciated? How did you respond or feel about it?
- How is this reminder about Christian love challenging you to temper your responses to people who get under your skin or to assist someone in need?

Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)

- Where have you seen love shared this past week in a way that made you take notice?
- Any new ideas for how you might share the love of Christ with others this week?
- The group leader or another volunteer may lead the group in prayer about the joys and concerns shared earlier in the meeting and others as well.