

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: 1 Corinthians

Week of November 3 (Week 14)

1 Corinthians 13: The Way of Love



1 CORINTHIANS 13: SUMMARY

1 Corinthians 13 is a potent reminder of the pivotal role love plays in the Christian life. It portrays love not as a transient feeling but as a tenacious and perpetual action that outlasts all spiritual gifts. As we aim to reflect Christ in our lives, may we continually strive to embody this description of love in all our interactions and endeavors, understanding that it's through love we best emulate the nature of God. (1 Corinthians 13 – Summary. *Bible Hub*).

OBSERVING & APPLYING THE TEXT

There are three aspects of love which he considers in this brief chapter: First, the preeminence of love over everything else. Then the practice (in a very forthright and helpful way); and then the permanence of love, the enduring quality of it. (Ray Stedman)

Love is the More Excellent Way of the Spirit (1-3)

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 makes the point that without love the gifts are worthless.

1. In 1 Corinthians 1:5 & 7 we read that the Corinthian Christians “have been enriched in every way – with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge” (1:5). Paul goes on to say that “you do not lack any spiritual gifts” (1:7). According to 1 Cor. 13:1-3, what seems to be the problem with the Corinthian believers?

2. Why is the exercise of “gifts” without love for others futile?

Reflection: “Unless motivated by love, spiritual service and gifts do not benefit the believer. We must refocus our priorities, setting love of others as higher standard than effective service and as a higher standard than spiritual gifts.” (Richard L. Pratt. *1 & 2 Corinthians*. 494).

Love is an Others Focused and Self-giving Life (4-7)

Verses 4-7 describe the nature of love, in language designed to point out how little the Corinthians are measuring up.

3. How is "love" described in verses 4-7? List the characteristics.
4. What are some practical ways you can express love that you have heretofore not done effectively?

Reflection: Does Paul's definition of love look more like something you feel or something you do? If you did the things in his definition, would that qualify as love? Why or why not? (Richard L. Pratt. *1 & 2 Corinthians*. 514).

Love will Last Forever (8-13)

Verses 8-13 highlight the temporary nature of all the gifts, contrasting with love's permanence.

5. Why is love greater than faith and hope?
6. In verses 9-12 Paul says, "we know in part" (v. 9, 12a), "but when the perfect comes the partial will pass away," (v. 10) and "I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known (v. 12). What is the meaning of these phrases?

Reflection: The reason that love is the greatest is because love is the one virtue of the three mentioned that we will take into eternity. Faith becomes sight in heaven, hope is completely fulfilled in heaven, but love, again, never ends. Love never ceases. Moreover, it is because of the magnificent love of God that our faith will be rewarded by sight and our hope will be rewarded by total fulfillment" (Daniel Akin and James Merritt, *Exalting Jesus in 1 Corinthians*. 725-26).

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

November 4-8, 2024

Read 1 Corinthians 13

Monday: 13:1-3 *"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."* Love adds value to all our traits and abilities. Without "love" our oratory skill, knowledge, faith, wealth, passion and determination for ministry is meaningless. Examine yourself if "love" radiates in your traits and abilities.

Tuesday 13:4-5 *"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful."* How does the characteristics of love speak to you? Take a moment and reflect on the characteristics of love and ask God to help you grow in love so that you will reflect the characteristics of love more and more.

Wednesday: 13:6-7 *"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."* Consider the qualities of love. It rejoices in the truth, and it always looks for the good, the positive. It does not look over people's faults, but it overlooks people faults" (Akin & Merritt, 705-706).

Thursday: 13:8 *"Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away."* "Never ends," literally means "falls" or "collapse." "It is meant in the sense that love never falls away and disappears; it never quits; it is never used up; love keeps on coming; the more you use it the more there is. That is the point Paul is making here" (Ray Stedman). Examine yourself if you have a love that will never quit for your family, friends and church family.

Friday: 13:13 *"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."* Read verse 13 and reflect on this statement: "Of faith, hope, and love, the most Godlike is love because God does not have faith or hope, but 'God is love' (1 Jn. 4:8). God did not send his Son into the world because he believed in the world and had hope in this world, but because he loved this world." (Akin & Merritt, 726). Pray that you may grow in love because it is the most Godlike of the three virtues,.