

## 02 – THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

- ✓ We opened this series, last week, with a question: “What’s your number one goal in life?” If you asked 100 people that question, I’m sure you’d get a variety of answers. But in this series, we’re looking at Paul’s answer to that question. (What was Paul’s #1 goal in life?)

1 Cor. 14:1 – “Eagerly pursue and **seek to develop this love. Make it your aim, your great quest.**”

- ✓ Last week we looked at 5 reasons why walking in love is important. We’re going to spend the *rest* of the series describing what love looks like. (It’s one thing for me to say, “Walk in love”. It’s another thing if I can show you what love looks like. Before we begin to describe love, let me remind you of some important principles.)

### Key Principles

a.) If you’re a Christian, You Already Have the Love of God in Your Heart

- ✓ It’s not a matter of “getting” love. It’s a matter of *developing* the love that’s already there (Ro. 5:5). The best illustration I can give you is a body builder. A body builder isn’t trying to get *new* muscles. He’s trying to *develop* the muscles he was born with.

b.) Love is Developed as You Feed It on the Word and Exercise It

- ✓ Feed: Your job, after this series, will be to take the Scriptures we’ve studied and meditate on them. Take the characteristics found in the love chapter (1 Cor. 13) and personalize them. (Instead of saying, “Love endures long and is patient and kind”, say, “Because love is in me, *\*I\** endure long and am patient and kind”. When you’re *yielding* to love, that’ll be true of you!)
- ✓ Exercise: When you have opportunities to walk in love, *take* them! Refuse to be dominated by the flesh. Yield to love instead. (When someone cuts you off in traffic, and you feel like reacting in the flesh, move in the opposite spirit. Let love dominate.)

c.) Don’t Be Surprised When Your Flesh Kicks Up a Fuss, It Will – (for a While)

- ✓ I might as well warn you in advance. There’s nothing on this list that your flesh is going to *feel* like doing. So what?? You do a *lot* of things you don’t feel like doing. (You get up in the morning and go to work – even when you’re tired. You pay your electric bill.) You can’t grow spiritually without going crosswise of your flesh.

d.) God Issued This as a Command, not a Suggestion – (John 13:34)

- ✓ Commands are Divine expectations. God isn’t asking us if we *feel* like living this way. This is the way He *wants* us to live – loving others, putting other people first.

### Ground Rules for This Series

- ✓ Let’s make an agreement going into this. Let’s agree we’re not going to “beat ourselves up” for what we’re “not doing”. (Have you noticed, that never works? When you condemn yourself for not doing something, you actually get *farther away* from doing it. Guilt paralyzes you.)
- ✓ How do you avoid being paralyzed by guilt? (i) Remember that God measures things in lifetimes. He’s not expecting you to have this “love walk” mastered by tomorrow night. Show yourself some *grace* as you grow.

(ii) Remember that God is the God of the “one thing”. He told the rich young ruler, “*One* thing you lack”. (Do you really think that was the only thing in his life that needed work? Of course not. But God doesn’t overwhelm us by giving us the whole list at once. He’ll help us fix *one* thing. Then when *that’s* fixed, He’ll move on to something else.) Growing spiritually is a life-long endeavor.

Paul said, “This *one* thing I do”. So, pick **one thing** on this “love list”, and start working on it. It’ll keep you out of condemnation, and you’ll be growing in love and pleasing God.

## Characteristics of Divine Love – (What Does Love Look Like?)

### 1.) Love Puts the Other Person First

- ✓ **Human nature** says, “**I treat myself better** than I treat you”. (We act that way from childhood! Don’t we? I take the best toy. I get the big piece of cake; you get the smaller one. That’s human nature.)
- ✓ The OT took it up a notch. Lev. 19:18 says, “Love your neighbor **as yourself**”. That means I put you on the **same level** as I put myself. (When I cut the cake, I make sure our pieces of cake are the same size.)
- ✓ The NT command takes it to a whole new level. Jesus said, “Love **as I have loved you**.” (In other words, **sacrificially**.) So now I treat you **better** than I treat myself. That’s our first point. Love puts the other person first.

*Rom. 12:10* – “Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. In honor, **preferring** one another. “

- ✓ That might be a little “blind” to us. So, let’s put it into another setting. If you came to my house, and I said, “Would you prefer coffee or tea?”, what do I mean? Pick one. When it comes to blessings, if I “prefer” you, I pick you to get blessed. I can wait for my blessing. (One translation said exactly that!)

“In blessings, **put one another to the forefront**.”

- ✓ In marriage, if there’s only enough money for one of us to get new clothes, I pick you! You go first. I can wait. (Here’s a few more translations of that verse, that you can apply in your marriage.)

“**Try to outdo each another** in showing love ...”

“**Compete with each other** ...” (NTFE)

“**Lead the way** in **highly valuing** each other.” (KGV)

- ✓ “What would that do for your marriage, if you practiced that?

“Practice playing **second fiddle**.” (MSG)

“Put yourself aside, and **help others get ahead**.”

### Another Related Verse

*Phil. 2:3* – “Habitually **esteeming one another as higher in value**.”

“Modestly **treat others as your superiors**.” (HNT)

- ✓ **Notice**: It didn’t say they were superior or more valuable. It said, “treat them as if they were”. Jesus modelled this for us.

*John 13:3* – “Then Jesus, **fully aware** that the Father had given everything into His control, knowing that he had come from God, and was going back to God ...” (Who was the Superior? Jesus! He knew He was superior, and yet ...) He got up from supper, took off His [outer] robe, took a towel, and wrapped it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began washing the disciples’ feet and drying them with the towel. When he had finished washing their feet, he took his robe, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table. Then he said, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you are right in doing so, for that is what I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another’s feet. Now that you know this truth, **how happy you will be if you put it into practice**.”

### The Key to Happiness

- ✓ The devil will tell you that, if you live this way, you’ll be miserable. But what did Jesus say? “**How happy you will be** ...”

*John 15:11* – “Keep my commandments. This is my commandment, That ye **love one another, as I have loved you**. These things have I spoken unto you, **that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full**.”

- ✓ The truth is, you'll never find joy in being selfish.

*Albert Schweitzer (Christian) – “I don't know what your destiny will be. But one thing I do know, the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have found how to serve.”*

*George Bernard Shaw (Atheist) – “This is the true joy of life: being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”*

- ✓ I haven't heard anyone say this since the 70's. Joy is: **J**esus, **O**thers, **Y**ou. (Keep that in order, and you'll have joy.)

## 2.) Love Blesses People, Even When They Can't Bless You Back

*Luke 14:13-14 – “Then he turned to the host. “The next time you put on a dinner, don't just invite your friends and family and rich neighbors, the kind of people who will return the favor. Invite some people who never get invited out, invite the poor, the lame, the crippled and the blind. You'll be blessed, because they have no way to repay you, but you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”*

- ✓ What have you done, lately, for someone who can never repay you? (Buy a meal for a homeless person. This is where blessing lives!)
- ✓ Practice saying this. (Repeat it to yourself until it dawns on your heart. “It's not about me! It's not about getting my own way! It's about loving people like God loves them. Being a tool in the hands of God and showing His love to people who don't know what He's really like!” (Christians *and* non-Christians!)
- ✓ Practice putting people first, in small ways. In the grocery store, if two of you are approaching the till at the same time, let the other person go first. If you have your eye on a parking spot, and there's another driver heading for it too, let the other person have it. If you're married, practice outdoing each other in showing love.