

“That Kind of Love”

1 Corinthians 13

Perhaps the most abused phrase in the English language is “I love you.” Instead of communicating unselfish caring, it often expresses enlightened self-interest, manipulative affection or sheer lust. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul not only defines love for us but shows us why this is the most excellent way to relate to anyone—especially to members of the family of God.

Opening Question(s) – Choose one.

- Think of a person who has truly loved you. What were the marks of that person’s way of relating to you?
- What was one of your favourite love songs when you were a teenager?

Study Questions¹

- 1) **Read 1 Corinthians 13.** In verses 1-3, what activities are useless without love? *How can we insure that our presence, words, and deeds are not merely “noise” that obscures Christ rather than conveys Christ?*
- 2) In vv.4-7, what does Paul say love is? What does Paul say love is not? How does the kind of love Paul’s describes compare to love as typically defined in our culture?
- 3) Since Jesus is the expression of God’s love, reread verses 4-7, replacing “love” with “Jesus”. *What fresh picture of Jesus’ care do you gain through this exercise? What examples of this kind of love can you think of in Jesus’ earthly life?*
- 4) Looking at the descriptions of perfect love in verses 4-7, *how would this kind of love have helped the Corinthians with the problems in their church? Which aspect(s) of love do you most need to develop (e.g. keeping no record of wrongs)?*
- 5) In verses 8-13 Paul summarizes the supremacy of love. *Compared with love, why do the spiritual gifts have limited value?*
- 6) In what ways can Christians be “childish” in their faith?² How can we retain the zest of youth with the wisdom of age?
- 7) Why is love greater than faith or hope (v. 13)?
- 8) What do you think is the best way to develop the ability to love others?

¹ Questions often focus either on: observation (what does the passage actually say), *interpretation* (what meaning does the passage have not only then but now), or application (what different can/will it make in my life). In today’s study I’ve changed the fonts/styles to make it clear which kind of question each one is.

² Commentator Anthony Thiselton suggest “such qualities as overdependence, instability, short-term goals, and a desire for instantaneous gratification provide further content to this metaphor.”