
The Character of Love (How Are You Looking?)

Defining Love

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March 1, 2026

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Sermon: Defining Love: The Character of Love (How Are You Looking?)

Lesson Text

1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (KJV)⁴ Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; ⁶ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Introduction

As we stated last week, the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians is universally known as the “Love Chapter.” And so to begin to understand God’s **Agapē** Love, we must study this chapter.

It defines God’s Love in three sections:

- The Contrast of Love: What Love is Greater Than (Tongues, Gifts, and Sacrifice)
- The Character of Love: What Love Looks Like (Grace, Goodness, and Endurance)
- The Constancy of Love: What Love Never Does (Never Fails)

Last week we looked at the Contrast of Love by comparing it to Tongues that say nothing, Prophecy that means nothing, and Sacrifice that profits nothing.

Today we will look at love from the perspective of its Character.

Character is defined as the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. A person’s good reputation.

One’s character enters a room before they arrive, and stays behind long after they have left.

What Paul describes in today’s lesson text is the Character of God’s Love, and by default the character of one who possesses God’s Love.

1 John 4: ⁸ He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Many people are gifted by God, but they do not possess the love of God. Consequently, their gifts take them places that their character can’t keep them.

The Character of God’s love determines how you act when someone frustrates them, how you respond when one succeeds them, how you act when someone has a conflict or disagreement with you, how you behave towards those who have hurt and wounded you.

Today we will define not what love feels like, but what love looks like!

Series and Sermon: Defining Love: The Character of Love (How Are You Looking?)

(The Character of God’s Grace, God’s Goodness, and God’s Endurance)

I. The Character of God’s Grace (How We Respond To People)

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1 Corinthians 13: ⁴Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, ...

The first thing that Love looks like is the Character of God's Grace.

How do you react when people frustrate, disappoint, or disagree with you?

Grace is the unmerited favor of God – It is a gift, it is not earned, it's not based on works.

Ephesians 2: ⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Human love is not based on grace, it's based on work. We love based on a social contract of I love you, you love me; you make me feel good, I make you feel good; you meet my needs, I meet your needs.

In my marriage and pre-marital counseling, I teach couples how to work their love: speaking each other's love languages, meeting each other's emotional needs, resolving conflict,

But what do you do when one or both of you break that social contract. "You no longer make me happy, as a matter of fact you make me unhappy." "You broke my heart!" "You are no longer emotionally invested in the marriage." "I don't even like you anymore!"

And so, we try to fix the people who are breaking the contract; we fight, we argue, we blame, we shut down, and we give up.

When people fail us, God's love responds with Grace!

Stop trying to fix people and just respond with God's grace. When they fail to make us happy, God's grace responds with joy. When they fail to give us security, God's grace responds with peace. When they fail to meet our needs, God grace responds with long suffering.

1 Corinthians 13: (NLT)⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

II. The Character of God's Goodness (How We Show Up For People)

1 Corinthians 13: ⁵... thinketh no evil; ⁶Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

The next thing that Love looks like is the Character of God's Goodness.

How do you deal with past hurts and wounds? How do you feel about people who've hurt you?

To think evil is about keeping count of the evil perpetrated against you. To rejoice in iniquity is about wanting payback against those who've wronged you.

Some people keep receipts of their offenders, tracking how often they've been wronged:

- Matthew 18: ²¹Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

- Keeping receipts on offenses feeds into bitterness and keeps our mind on evil. Eventually we weaponize their wrongs to justify our unforgiveness.

Others rejoice at the downfall or failures of their offenders, thinking they had it coming:

- Romans 12: ¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
- Rejoicing over the downfall of others, gives place for evil and causes us to be overcome by it.

When people do evil against us, God's love responds with Goodness!

The goodness of God's love does not keep count: Matthew 18: ²² Jesus saith unto him, **I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.**

The goodness of God's love does not give in to evil: Romans 12: ²¹ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

And when we respond with the goodness of God's love, we always win. 2 Corinthians 2: ¹⁴ Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, ...

III. The Character of God's Endurance (How We Put Up With People)

1 Corinthians 13: ⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

- When people fail us, God's love responds with Grace (unmerited favor)
- When people do evil against us, God's love responds Goodness (overcoming evil)
- When people refuse to change, God's love responds with Endurance (longsuffering)

One thing that will drive you crazy is trying to fix or change crazy people.

When Jesus told us to love them, his commandment was to bless them, do good to them, and to pray for them. But he never told us that those things would change them.

And so we just get sick and tired of being sick and tired. Eventually we get weary and worn out until we just give up.

But God's love was never intended to change them, it was intended to change us!

When people won't change, God's love responds with Endurance!

God's Love bears all things: Philippians 4: ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

God's Love believes all things: Matthew 17: ²⁰ ... **If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.**

God's Love hopes for all things: Romans 4: ¹⁸ Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

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God's Love endures all things: Galatians 5: ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, ...

Matthew 24: ¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. ¹³ But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

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Midweek Study Lesson Plan (Sermon: The Character of Love (How Are You Looking?))

Lesson Text

- 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

Sermon Outline

- I. *The Character of God's Grace (How We Respond To People)*
- II. *The Character of God's Goodness (How We Show Up For People)*
- III. *The Character of God's Endurance (How We Put Up With People)*

Questions: (What was your main takeaway from this message?)

I. Getting to Know “Me”

1. What college basketball team will you be cheering for this March?
2. If you were a fruit, which one would you be and why?

II. Into The Bible

1. Answer the following questions according to Romans 15:1-7:
 - i) What does it mean to accept someone just as they are without condoning harmful behavior?
 - ii) How does “receiving one another as Christ also received us” reveal the gospel to the world?
 - iii) In what specific ways did Christ not please himself?

II. Life Application

1. Jesus loved people deeply, yet Scripture shows He did not always entrust Himself to everyone or allow the same level of access to His life. How can we release the record of wrongs and forgive, while still setting wise boundaries and being discerning about who has access to us? What might this look like in your relationships right now?
2. How do we balance remembering what has been done to us with choosing not to hold it against others? How can we extend that same grace to ourselves when we fall short?