



LOVE IS _____

15 Devotionals from 1 Corinthians 13
OC Campus Ministry - Winter 2015

Love is at the core of everything we are as followers of God and His Son. God gave the world an example of perfect, unconditional love through Jesus' death on the cross, and it is our calling as disciples of Jesus to reciprocate that love to God and to have this same love for others. But how do we do this? What does a love like this look like in us? As we live in a world with a shallow, provisional and selfish definition of love, we must look to God's Word for an explanation of what love truly is.

In the letter of 1 Corinthians, Paul paints a practical yet challenging picture of the love we must have as God's people. This packet includes 15 devotionals from 1 Corinthians 13, each expanding on a different aspect of true love. Each devotional has scriptures for **study**, **meditation** and **action**. The verses for **study** are those that introduce the concepts of the day and can be expanded upon with cross-references, commentaries and other study tools. Those for **mediation** are great scriptures to pray through, and those for **action** provide practicals we can apply to ourselves as we move forward in our day. We hope this study series on 1 Corinthians 13 will help teach our OC Campus Ministry what it means to truly love God and one another!

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“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. 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. 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.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 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. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 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. 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.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.

But the greatest of these is love.”

--- 1 Corinthians 13 ---

Day 1 - "If I speak...but have not love..."

Study: James 3:1-12

- Verses 3-6 describes the power of the tongue. Like the bridle of a horse or the rudder of a ship, the tongue is small but has tremendous power for either good or evil.
- James here echoes the theme of a number of Proverbs regarding the tongue...
 - Proverbs 10:19-21; 12:25; 16:24; 18:21
- Verses 9 - "With our tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing."
 - James reveals the truth that our words can be used for the highest purpose (to praise our Lord and Father) or for the lowest evil (to curse men).
 - After laying this out, he tells those who follow Jesus that "this should not be." Our speech should be **consistently** glorifying to God.
- Jesus teaches in Matthew 12:33-37 that our words are often a reliable indicator of something much deeper going on at heart level. In order to tame the tongue we must search our hearts for attitudes that aren't glorifying God as well.

Meditation: Psalm 19:14

Action: Ephesians 4:29

Day 2 - If I have knowledge...but have not love..."

Study: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

- Paul addresses a question from the Corinthian Church whether it was OK to accept and eat food that was sacrificed to idols. Some Christians knew that idols and false gods were nothing, and therefore felt fine eating food from a temple or eating at a temple because they knew that food had no spiritual or sinful significance. Other Christians, probably those that had prior knowledge and experience with idols, felt that eating this food or eating at the temple would be idolatrous and therefore sinful. Paul clearly states that "we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do," but makes it a matter of conscience. While it is not sinful for those who know idols and false gods are nothing, those that have the knowledge and feeling that it is wrong should not partake in that practice.
- Paul also stresses the goal of a Christian life is love, not knowledge. Verse 1 says "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." While one group could have said "we're right," they were making the other group stumble by what they were doing. In their case, they had allowed their knowledge to "puff them up" to the point where being right became more important than showing love to family of God. Our actions can never be based *only* on what we know to be right for ourselves. We also need to consider what is right towards our brothers and sisters in Jesus.

Meditation: 1 Corinthians 8:1

Action: James 4:17

Day 3 - "If I give...but have not love..."

Study: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

- Paul is more concerned with the people's **hearts** to give rather than the gift itself. He asks them to be generous, not as an obligation but instead out of thankfulness, love and joy. I believe when we give out of this kind of heart, we will want to be generous in our giving. How could we not be generous when we're focused on remembering what God has given to us?!
- I believe this teaching is to be applied to all types of giving, whether giving our money as an offering to the church, giving our time and energy to serving God's Church, or giving either money or time to meet the needs of the poor. In all of these areas, we must give generously with a loving, cheerful and thankful heart.
- Verses 10-11 - God will work through our love and generosity to "enlarge your harvest of righteousness." Paul says He will enrich our lives even further so that we can continue to be generous to Him and His people.

Meditation: Matthew 23:23-24 - Jesus calls out the Pharisees here for their giving while neglecting "justice, mercy and faithfulness." They probably thought they deserved to be praised for their tithe, but they did so without following the rest (the heart) of the law.

Action: Proverbs 11:24-25

Day 4 - "Love is Patient"

Study: Proverbs 14:29; 15:18; 16:32

- Patience is praised in these verses and comes with great reward!
 - "A patient man has great understanding"
 - "A patient man calms a quarrel"
 - Better a patient man...a man who controls his temper"
- But also notice the opposite of patience...
 - "A quick-tempered man displays folly"
 - "A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension"
- In comparing contrasting these types of people, which do you want to be? Which would others describe you as? What might you need to work on in order to become a more patient man or woman?

Meditation: Proverbs 19:11

Action: Ephesians 4:1-2

Day 5 – “Love is Kind”

Study: Ephesians 4:29 – 5:2

- The chapters of Ephesians 4 and 5 are amazing guides to how to live in unity with our physical and spiritual families. Verse 29 teaches us to only be kind and helpful in our words with others. This is a challenge because many typically speak in order to help themselves and for their opinions to be heard. To be kind in the way we communicate with others is to be put ourselves and our agenda aside, and to carefully consider whether what we want to say will be kind/helpful or not.
- This passage of scripture also calls us to be imitators of God and to “be kind and compassionate towards one another.”
 - How are we to do this? Verse 31 – by getting rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice.
 - Why are we to do this?
 - Verse 4:32 – we forgive because God has forgiven us
 - Verse 5:2 – we live a life of love because Christ loved us and gave himself up for us

Meditation: 1 Thessalonians 5:15

Action: Proverbs 12:25

Day 6 – “It Does Not Envy”

Study: Psalm 73:1-28

- Asaph, the author of Psalm 73, says in verse 3 that he had begun to “envy the prosperity of the wicked.”
 - This might seem like a misprint – “prosperity of the wicked.” But Asaph here is going through something that we can relate to as well. He was looking those *not* following God and was starting to view them as being better off than himself as a servant of God.
 - Looking at the result of this mindset shows us this is a tendency we must watch out for. This “envy of the wicked” had caused Asaph to slip and to nearly lose his foothold in his walk with God.
- Look through Asaph’s description of the wicked in verses 4-12. Have you ever felt the same as Asaph? Have you ever envied those who *don’t* follow God and thought of that life as more desirable for any reason?
- Notice the turning point for Asaph in verse 17. His heart was changed and he was reminded of reality when he “entered the sanctuary of God.”
 - How will entering God’s sanctuary and spending time with God help us in our temptation to envy others or to envy those of this world?

Meditation: Ecclesiastes 4:4

Action: Proverbs 14:30

Day 7 – “It Does Not Boast”

Study: Ephesians 2:1-10

- Notice the various descriptions Paul uses to describe our lives before Christ...
 - “dead in transgressions and sins”
 - “you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air”
 - “gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature”
 - “following [our sinful nature’s] desires and thoughts”
 - “we were by nature objects of wrath”
- Does Paul say this to discourage the people in Ephesus? Of course not. Paul’s aim in this passage of scripture is to teach how we have been alive in Christ, but in order to fully appreciate God’s grace, we must first understand where we were *before* Christ entered our lives.
- Take some time to consider what your life would be like without Jesus and God’s grace.
- A temptation as disciples of Christ can be to see ourselves as worthy of grace. Another can be looking down on others or judging others that may not know what we know or live the life we do now as Christians.
 - We must realize that we were truly DEAD before we were made alive in Christ. God’s grace is a gift, not based on who we are or what we’ve done. Therefore, we have no reason to boast or be self-righteous about what we have and what we’ve been given (verses 8-9).

Meditation: 1 Corinthians 4:7

Action: Proverbs 27:1-2

Day 8 – “It Is Not Proud”

Study: Philippians 2:1-11

- God intends for his people to be “like minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” How are we to obtain this in the body?
 - Paul gives us the answer in verses 3-4...**“3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”**
 - He then calls us to imitate the example of Christ, who voluntarily lived a recognizably humble life, despite being in very nature God.
- EXERCISE: Paul says in verse 3 to “value others above yourselves.” Write out a list of the people who you interact with often (family, friends, other brothers/sisters in your ministry, etc.)
 - Think of and write down ways that those people are *better than you*. What strengths do you see in them? What can you learn from them?
 - Defining people by their strengths can help us consider others better and put their concerns and needs above our own. Continue to practice this throughout the Winter Break!

Meditation: Psalm 10:4

Action: Matthew 11:28-30

Day 9 – “It Is Not Rude”

Study: Isaiah 42:1-4

This passage is a prophecy fulfilled by the life, character and work of Jesus. The following are remarks from David Guzik’s commentary on the book of Isaiah.

- Verse 2 – “He will not cry out, nor raise His voice...”
 - “This doesn’t mean that Jesus never spoke loudly. It refers to His gentle, lowly heart and actions. Jesus didn’t make His way by bluster and loud, overwhelming talk, but by the Spirit of God upon Him.” (Guzik)
 - “He is not self-assertive: probably the three verbs here are cumulative, stressing his quiet, unaggressive demeanour...*shout* (shriek) could suggest that he is not out to startle, *cry out* (raise his voice) not to dominate or shout others down, *raise his voice* (make his voice heard) not out to advertise himself.” (Motyer)

- Verse 3 – “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench...”
 - “This is another reference to the gentle character of Jesus. A reed is a fairly fragile plant, yet if a reed is bruised, He will handle it so gently that He will not break it. And if flax, used for tinder to start a fire, does not flame but only smokes, He will not quench it into extinguishing. Instead, the Servant will gently blow on the smoking flax, fanning it into flame again!
 - Often we feel that God deals roughly with our weaknesses and failures. Just the opposite is true. He deals with them gently, tenderly, helping them along until the bruised reed is strong and the smoking flax is in full flame.

Meditation: Romans 12:18

Action: Proverbs 15:1

Day 10 – “It Is Not Self-Seeking”

Study: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Jesus died so that we would no longer live for ourselves but for Him. However, the temptation to live for ourselves is one we must watch out for at all times. Often due to fear and pride, what we do as disciples of Christ can easily become about people and about preserving our own image than pleasing and glorifying the Lord. We must choose to exalt God only and not ourselves, which will lead to humility, confidence, and a selfless life focused on pleasing God above all else and not ourselves.

See also 1 Corinthians 10:24; James 3:16

Meditation: James 3:14-16

Action: Philippians 2:3-4

Day 11 – “It Is Not Easily Angered”

Study: James 1:19-20

- James reminds God’s people that anger does not glorify God or being about the kind of life God wants us to have and experience. Being slow to become angry requires two other practicals...
 - Quick to listen
 - How good of a listener are you? Are you quick to listen?
 - We must also evaluate what it means to truly *listen* to someone. Listening is not only being silent. Listening is not letting someone speak while formulating a response. Listening is not hearing someone out in order to pick apart their message.
 - Slow to speak
 - Would this describe you? Are you “slow to speak” when it comes to your family members, friends, members of the body, etc?
 - At times being quick to speak can lead to hurtful, ignorant comments that will not only prolong the situation, but may also make it worse! Let us consider others and the situation fully before hastily speaking up.
 - Both of these practicals help us focus on others rather than ourselves. Much of our anger results from being self-centered, holding our agenda and opinion above others’ thoughts and feelings. Being “quick to listen” and “slow to speak” helps us consider others in the moment and can guard us against the sin of anger.

Meditation: Ecclesiastes 7:9

Action: Ephesians 4:26

Day 12 – “It Keeps No Records of Wrong”

Study: Matthew 18:21-35

- The first exchange we see in this parable is between the master (representing God) and the servant who owes him a large debt (representing us). The debt is said to be 10,000 talents, which has been estimated to be between 12 million and 1 billion US dollars – basically meaning the servant owed the master an unpayable debt.
- After being forgiven by the master, the servant then sees a fellow servant who owed him a significantly less amount, and the servant refuses to show compassion.
- Think for a moment of all that we have been forgiven of by God – our “unpayable debt” that God has forgiven through the death of His son. We must remain thankful for the compassion and grace God has shown us. That gratitude must move us to show that same compassion and grace to others.

Meditation: Hebrews 8:12

Action: Colossians 3:13

Day 13 – “It Rejoices with the Truth”

Study:

1. Romans 12:9 – “Love must be sincere.”

- To be sincere means to be free of deceit or falsehood; to be real and genuine. We are called to *sincerely* love others. This goes much further than simply putting up with or getting along with someone. This type of love involves a genuine concern, compassion and empathy for the other person.
- Is your love sincere? Would your family and friends say they feel this genuine love from you? What can you do to be more sincere or express more sincerity in your love for others?

2. Ephesians 4:1-3, 14-16

- The one who loves sincerely also is willing to bear with their brother or sister in love. At times it may be easy to love those around us, but there are also times where we must struggle and fight to love.
- Verse 15 also calls us to speak the truth in love. Those who love sincerely are also willing to be honest with one another, bringing to light truths that will help the person grow and be built up to maturity in their walk with God.

Meditation: 1 John 3:11-20

Action: 1 John 3:18

Day 14 – “It Always Protects, Trusts, Hopes and Perseveres”

Study: Psalm 103:1-22

- Verse 8 of this Psalm describes God’s love as “abounding.” God’s love is remarkable in that has absolutely no boundaries. God loves us despite our sin and shortcomings, and in this way His love always protects us and perseveres for us. Psalm 103 further gives a number of descriptions and examples of God’s unconditional love for us. We must imitate this “abounding love” to the best of our ability.

Meditation: 1 John 4:16

Action: Psalm 118:1-4

Day 15 – “Love Never Fails”

Study: 1 John 4:16-20

- Verses 16 and 17 – “whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us...” God’s love never fails us. In fact, this passage states that it is made “complete in us” if we love Him in return and seek to have this same love for others.
- What might you need to grow in or repent of in order to have a love that never fails?

Meditation: 1 John 4:18

Action: John 13:1-17, 34-35