
THE POWER OF LOVE

Part 4 - Love Defined

We have been talking about the 'The Power of Love', where we are looking at how love is the key to us sailing into uncharted waters to share with people who don't yet know about Jesus.

Love becomes the central motivator, the thing we need to not only know, but experience, in order to go and share this love with others. Love becomes central to both our identity as sons and daughters of God, but also central to how then we live and act and fulfill God's mission.

Love as we will see today becomes a necessity, it's indispensable. You can have all sorts of other gifts and skills, but the best way is the way of love.

Love Defined

How would you define love? Agape love is an exercise of the divine will of God in deliberate choice. It's unconditional, in fact perhaps best described when we love others with God's kind of love as, "a deliberate choice of the will to love someone because of who you are not because of who they are".

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Before this chapter Paul wrote to the Corinthians to teach them that though they have different spiritual gifts, they were dependent on each other. No one was greater than another. They were all parts in the body of Christ and there was not to be any division, there is unity and diversity in the body.

In closing out his argument at the end of chapter 12 Paul is about to continue his train of thought when he interrupts himself to give the proper framework in which the "greater gifts" are to function – and that is love.

Can't Buy Me Love

The “most excellent way”, to work together and to use the gifts God has given us is with the primary fruit of the Spirit - love.

Love becomes the way we go about interacting with one another and using the gifts God has given us. You can do all sorts of things with all sorts of gifts but if you don't have an attitude of love, if they aren't motivated by love, if they aren't done in love, it all adds up to a big fat zero before God!

Paul is saying to the church at Corinth, that their spirituality lacked the evidence of the Holy Spirit – their behaviour could not be described as ‘having love’.

The Character of Love – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35.) The way we love demonstrates who we are. The way we live is the first word we speak about the Gospel and the transformational power of the cross.

Paul reveals the character of love. This is a description of what love does and what love does not do. Love is really only three simple things.

1. It is patient
2. It is kind, and
3. It is honest. It rejoices in truth.

The negatives that are given here are the things we must set aside in order to let the love of God, which is patient and kind and honest, manifest itself. We do not have to produce this love in the Christian life. We only have to get the things that are hindering it out of the way. Those are the negatives that are suggested here.

Love is Patient

The word patience literally means "a great suffering," enduring some suffering in order to let people have a chance to work out their problem.

Love is Kind

Kindness means to be gracious and be pleasant to people. Love exhibits a gentleness and tenderness toward one another.

Love Stoppers

If love is patient and kind, then what are the things that stop that?

- + Jealousy
- + Boastfulness
- + Pride
- + Rudeness
- + Selfishness
- + Stubbornness
- + Anger
- + Unforgiveness

Love is Truthful

Love is willing to hear even the truth about itself. It is not so concerned about being protected from hurt or injury as it is in knowing what is really happening - what reality is.

Love Covers All

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13:7 (NIV)

Some translations will say love bears all things, literally "covers everything." That doesn't mean love is gullible. No cause, no situation, no person is ever regarded as totally hopeless, love doesn't give up. There is always a place to begin again. Love will find it; it never gives up hope it never quits; it never gives up on anyone.

Love is the character of God. That is what the Holy Spirit is seeking to reproduce in us, so that becoming Christlike means becoming a more loving person. Becoming a more loving person, becoming more like Jesus is a measure of our spiritual growth.

Discussion Questions

1. Share testimony from the week that has been about how you were able to share a God kind of love with someone else? How was it received?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Out of the three things where love is defined as patient, kind and truthful – which of these are you doing well in and how is it being displayed in your life?
3. There's a whole bunch of love stoppers – things that get in the road of true love being on display. Think on the list in the notes. Which is an area where Holy Spirit might be showing you that needs to be removed? What is the payoff for keeping this area in your life?
4. Re-read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and as you do put your name in place of the word love. What is Holy Spirit saying to you as you meditate on these verses in this way?
5. Pray for one another that we might grow in Christlike love.