

The Greatest Gift of All - Part 4

1 Corinthians 13; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 11-26-2023

*⁴ Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; **it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,** – 1 Corinthians 13:4-5*

Is God's love, true Christian love, the real goal of your life in all your relationships?

Love [is] ...

- *Patient (to be long suffering or long tempered):* Don't retaliate and give people what they deserve for their sin and failure, but be slow to anger and willing to put up with much grief and suffering for a long time in order to maintain the relationship. Patience is the foundational 'platform' of love.
- *Kind (to mercifully not give others what is deserved but to do them good):* Desire and do good to others regardless of how they treat you. Kindness is the hard-working 'shovel' of love.
- *Not Jealous (to not strive after what others have):* Be happy for the happiness of others and seek to increase it rather than take it away. This is the 'best man' of love.
- *Does Not Brag (to not be a braggart or windbag):* Don't lift yourself up and put others down with your words but seek to lift up and encourage. This is the uplifting 'elevator' of love.
- *Not arrogant (to not be puffed up):* Don't entertain an inflated opinion of yourself that looks down on others but think rightly and humbly by believing what God says is true of you and others. This is the 'mirror' of love.
- *Does Not Act Unbecomingly (to not act dishonorably or disgracefully):* Treat others with common courtesy and decency with regard to what is honorable in the sight of God and man. This is the 'chivalry' of love.

Love does not seek its own (*does not privately seek for itself*): Don't pursue your own selfish ambitions. Seek your own happiness in the happiness of others. Paul moves from the matter of public decorum and decency to what often is the reason for the lack of these: selfish ambition. (John 19:1-16) God is 'not simply self-seeking'! (Philippians 2:3-11) God does not simply pursue His own personal interests with no regard for His creatures and their happiness. So, to image Him, we should not simply pursue our own personal interests without regard to the happiness of others or without also pursuing the happiness of others. (Philippians 2:14-18) This is the 'search party' of love. Love is searching for avenues to increase the happiness of others in pursuing its own happiness. Do you ever have the attitude: 'What I want is what I want' or 'It's my life, I can do with it what I want'? Do you ignore the needs and happiness of others unless it directly affects your own needs and happiness? Or do you habitually consider the needs and happiness of others when considering how to meet your needs and pursue your own happiness? Are you gladly willing to sacrifice for the needs and happiness of others because you recognize that pursuing the happiness of others is pursuing your own happiness?

Love is not provoked (*is not easily angered as if poked with a sharp stick*): Don't be touchy or easily angered. Trust God to be the Defender and Provider and Protector for you and others. Paul moves from the problem of being quick to assert ourselves to the problem of being quick to defend ourselves. (1 Samuel 25:2-17) God is 'not touchy'! (Luke 9:51-56; Mark 14:61-65; Mark 15:16-20) Jesus didn't respond with anger and vengeance when He was provoked with rejection and mocking and spitting and hitting! God doesn't respond that way when He is daily mocked and rejected by unbelievers. So, to image Him, we are not to be easily and quickly angered and retaliatory when 'poked in the eye' or when 'our buttons are pushed'! (Matthew 5:38-42; James 1:19-20) This is the 'thick skin' of love. Love doesn't flinch when prodded. Do you have a short fuse? Are you thin-skinned? In certain areas? With certain topics? With certain people? At certain times of the day? After certain events? During certain activities (driving, sports)? Do people easily push your buttons? Or are you quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger? Does it take a lot to make you angry? Can you respond calmly and with kindness in the face of provocation?

Love does not take into account a wrong suffered (*does not impute evil to*): Don't be ready to blast others with a list of wrongs or credit them with the worst of evils in particular situations; rather, think the best of others even though you are aware of their past sins. Next, Paul mentions what often happens after we are 'provoked' or offended. (Matthew 18:21-35; 1 Samuel 17:23-30) God is 'not ready to blast us with a list of wrongs or credit us with the worst of evils'! (Judges 6:11-12; Job 42:7-9; 1 Peter 3:1-6; Genesis 18:9-15) God said that Job spoke what was right of God! Even though Job said some harsh things about God! God through Peter focused on the one good thing that Sarah did in the account of Genesis 18 and left out all the bad! So, to image God in our relationships, we are to be ready to forgive and forget, to overlook much, and to think the best of others with gracious interpretations of other's words and actions and motives until proven otherwise. (Proverbs 19:11; 1 Corinthians 1:2-9) this is the 'clean slate' of love. Love works with a clean slate whenever possible. Do you keep grudges? Do you keep a record of wrongs that you can bring up in future conflicts? That you can use to punish? That you can use as a basis for the assumption of guilt or evil? Or do you forgive and forget? Do you overlook sins as much as possible? Do you assume the best of others unless there is clear evidence to the contrary? Do you put the best construction on the words and actions and motives of others, as much as possible?

Key to Love: Faith (1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:6) *What do I do if I fail to love like this?*

*We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us.
God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ...
We love, because He first loved us. – 1 John 4:16, 19*

- Believe the Love of God:** We must know and believe the truth of the gospel and see the love of God for us revealed in Jesus. – John 3:16; 1 John 4:16, 19
- Receive Jesus:** We must turn from sin and trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior. – John 1:12
- Rest in Jesus:** We must rest in Jesus for our pardon and perfection. – Galatians 2:20
- Hope in God:** We must hope in God for our help and happiness. – 1 John 4:16-19
- Pursue love:** We must submit to God's Word and to God's sovereign will. – 2 John 1:6