

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, March 25, 2012

Passage: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

Memory Passage: Romans 8:1-11 (Review)

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 1 Cor. 12:1-13:8a.** Our passage this week is 13:1-8a, but we must see it first in its context. What is the relationship between 13:1-8a and chapter 12? Explain how 12:31b functions as a transition between chapters 12 & 13. Explain the main point of 8:1-3 in one short sentence. Explain the main point of 8:4-8a in one short sentence.

(b) What spiritual gifts do you see mentioned in 13:1-3 and what is said about them in 12:4-11 and their use in 12:12-31a? What fact do you consider most important about the giving of these gifts? What fact do you consider most important about the use of these gifts?

(c) When you think of love, do you consider it primarily a noun (a thing) or a verb (an action) and why? What ways do you think you excel in love? In what ways are you in need of improvement with regard to love?

(d) *Family:* Provide paper and crayons/markers. Ask you family to draw pictures of 4 things they love. Give no qualifications about love at this point. Then have each person show their drawings, explain why they love each thing, and try to gather a definition of love derived from all of the reasons they give for loving the objects of their drawings. Then explain that the main word for love in the Bible describes a love that is sacrificial, a love that seeks only after the benefit of its object (the thing loved) rather than its own benefit. It is a love that is the opposite of self-centered. This is the topic of our study this week.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 1 Cor. 13:1-8.** We will not debate (at not least this week!) whether or not some of the gifts listed in this passage are still active today because it is not the point of the text. Notice that Paul is speaking of the abuses of these gifts, and also notice that he uses conditional clauses that begin with “if,” not “since” or “when,” so the situation is hypothetical (though this does not mean it is impossible) to prove the point that love is the “still more excellent way” of exercising the spiritual gifts. Also notice and contemplate that Paul speaks favorably of several of these gifts (14:1-5, 39). To what does Paul refer when he mentions “tongues of angels?” What does Paul describe when he says that if he has tongues but not love he is “a noisy gong or clanging cymbal?”

(b) What is the gift of prophecy as Paul uses it here in chapters 12-14? Is “understanding all mysteries and all knowledge” part of the “prophetic powers” or something else (see 1 Cor. 2:7 & 4:1 for help)?

(c) What kind of faith is Paul speaking of in v. 2: Saving faith or daily faith? Can some people (all people?) really move mountains if they have enough faith, or is this a metaphor for something else, and if so, what (cf. Matt. 17:14-20 & 21:21)? How does one have strong faith and exercise love at the same time? What does it look like if someone has strong faith and no love? Why is a person “nothing” if they live like this?

(d) *Family:* **Read Daniel 3:8-30.** Stop reading after v.18 and ask, “Why did these men decide to risk being delivered up to the furnace?” (Lead them to understand that their obedience flowed from their love for God and desire to obey & worship Him when the king demanded their worship.) Then finish reading the story and emphasize God’s sovereign protection (but also remind them that these men knew they might not be spared, v. 18), and the fact that they gained this protection because they loved God. Then **Read 1 Cor. 13:3** and discuss Paul’s “if” clause in light of the story from Daniel. Remind them that love for God & others are God’s ultimate commands, and if we do anything, even giving away all our possessions or our life, without love we gain nothing!

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 1 Cor. 3:1-8.** Consider v. 3: What does giving away all one’s things, or one’s life, have to do with the spiritual gift context in which Paul writes (i.e. are these spiritual gifts)? By saying that doing these things without love we gain nothing, is he saying that if we do these things *with* love there *is* something to gain? If so, *what* do we gain?

(b) Are the goals expressed in vs. 1-3 attainable or not (i.e., can/should we ever speak in tongues of men & angels, have prophetic powers, understand all mysteries and knowledge, have extreme faith, give away everything we own, or sacrifice our life?)? If they are not, why does Paul use these examples? If they are, have you ever done any of these acts? Did you do them with or without love, and what were the outcomes of either?

(c) Have you ever experienced a situation in which you gave away much to someone, or made a great sacrifice for someone, but did it with motives other than love? What happened? How did God reveal your motives? Did you receive joy from the giving/sacrifice with wrong motives? What did you experience other than joy, and why do you think you felt these feelings? What did you learn from this experience? Be ready to edify your class by sharing what you learned from this experience.

(d) *Family: Read 1 Cor. 3:3.* Ask, “How many of you are ready to give up *everything* you have if it would help someone else? How much would you be willing to give? How did you decide how much you would be willing to give?” Now tell your family a story of a time when you gave something away, or made a sacrifice for someone, but you did it with wrong motives. Explain how you responded (i.e. did you get angry when they did not say, “thank you,” did you look down on them when they did not seem grateful, did you regret giving to them, etc.). Then give them an example of a time when you gave to someone sacrificially and did it with and for love and explain how God blessed this giving and granted you joy in knowing that you carried out God’s plan to meet that person’s needs. Remind them again that living sacrificially for others is a very Biblical thing to do, but doing it without love leads to gaining nothing. Loving someone means you seek their benefit, not your own.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read John 13:34-35, 15:9-10, 17:26, 1 John 4:7-11, & Matt. 22:36-40.** How does Jesus remain in His Father’s love? How do we remain in Jesus’ love? What does it mean to abide in His love and what does it look like? What is the connection between God’s love for His Son and God’s love for us?

(b) What is “new” about the commandment Jesus gives in 10:34? In what way are we to love others? What knowledge is the result of God’s people loving each other, and why is this important?

(c) According to 1 John 4, how did God manifest His love for us? What is the result of this love shown to us? Why is God’s love for us the basis for our love for others? What does our love for others prove about us? What does a lack of love prove?

(d) What are the 2 greatest commandments, and how do these fulfill all of the law? In what ways are you exercising love for your enemies? In what ways will you, that you are not already, seek to love your enemies?

(e) *Family: Read Matt. 22:36-40.* Since we are focusing on love this week, spend this evening writing down ways in which your family can carry out these 2 great commandments. Be specific. Use examples from your own life to show how *you* accomplish this and then give them age-specific ways they can do it as well. Identify who the enemies are, and specific ways you can love them as yourself. Have each person make their own list and save it, for in tomorrow’s lesson you will learn what these loving acts should and should not look like.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 1 Cor. 13:1-8.** Think of the enemies you considered yesterday in (d) and (e) and the ways in which you promised to love them. Now consider each quality mentioned in vs. 4-8a and be specific in the way you will carry out each act of love brimming with the positive descriptions (patient, rejoicing with truth, bearing, believing, hoping, enduring, never ending) and void of the negative descriptions (not envying, boasting, arrogant, rude, self-centered, irritable, resentful, or rejoicing at wrongdoing). Don’t just think *about* this, but write down specific ways that you will apply 13:4-8a in light of Matt. 22:39 and begin carrying out your application today! Be ready to share testimony in class about changes in your relationships with your enemies, changes in the way you think about them, the freedom you gain by not being angry and bitter toward them, etc.

(b) *Family:* Lead your family through (a) above.

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Love is the More Excellent Way