

1 Corinthians 13 (4-7) – What Love Is & What Love's Not

1 Corinthians 13 sits in between chapters 12-14, which are dealing with spiritual gifts. The church had let pride and selfishness get in the way of the right use of their spiritual gifts. And so, Paul set about to reorient them to a proper understanding. The gifts of God's grace are not to be used in self-serving ways, but are intended to be used in a loving way. And in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul paints a masterful picture of love that leaves no doubt as to how love acts.

First, in vs.1-3, Paul shows the primacy of love, because without love, spiritual gifts are empty. The, in vs.4-7 he shows the practice of love, how love is greater than spiritual gifts and must inform spiritual gifts because of its godly, selfless characteristics. Finally, in vs.8-13, he shows the permanence of love, that love is the thing to be most pursued because love outlasts all other gifts.

In vs.4-7, there are 15 words that describe the qualities of godly love. While in English most of these words are predicate adjectives, in Greek they are verbs. Love is a certain attitude that results in certain actions. Love is a principle of thoughtful action rather than overwhelming emotion.

In this passage you see 7 things that love is and 8 things that love is not. As we go through each of these 15 things, I want you to think about each of them carefully and personally. You'll probably want to visit this list again later when you have more time. There is a lot of Scripture in your notes that I will not quote.

And I'll give you a 4-step outline that will help you to grow. The outline is built upon the fact that forgiveness is the basis of fruitfulness. Your understanding of your forgiveness from God causes you to act in love toward others. And so, the deeper your understanding of God's love for you, the deeper your love for others will be.

Love A-C-T-S upon our forgiveness. So, for each of these 15 things...

- 1) **A**cknowledge the standard. Do you understand it?
- 2) **C**onfess how you don't meet the standard. Be specific.
- 3) **T**hank Jesus for meeting the standard for you. He lived for you and paid your sin debt.
- 4) **S**trive after the standard as an act of worship. Not as a *means* of being right with God, but as the *result* of being right with God. Fruitfulness is based upon an understanding of forgiveness.

1) Love is **patient** (longsuffering). This is not primarily about circumstances or events, but about people. It is the ability to be wronged, and while having the power to retaliate, doesn't do it. If in a position of leadership, it is compassionate in its correction of others. Love makes the most of its time and yet love can wait because love knows that all time is in God's hands.

2) Love is **kind**. This is active, useful deeds and availability (Ephesians 4:32 / Titus 3:4 / 1 Peter 2:3). This puts the positive action to the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). We aren't supposed to destroy people (patience) but we aren't supposed to dismiss them either (kindness). We could think we are practicing love by simply not hurting the one who has hurt us, by having patience with them. But if we truly practice love, then we must also help them, this is kindness. Love doesn't strike back, but it does reach out. It is *not* harmful and it *is* helpful.

3) Love is not **envious**. This would include envy, jealousy, and the like. This is thinking that someone has something that should be yours, or wanting something someone else has, or wanting someone else not to have the thing at all. It is resenting a person, being displeased when they have success. These are destructive forces (Proverbs 27:4), which lead to disorder and disaster (James 3:16). Love isn't worried about someone else getting what they want, love knows God has an unlimited supply.

4) Love is not **boastful**. If envy wants something that someone else has, bragging is making someone want what you have. Love does not parade itself around, looking for its own glory. Love doesn't say look at me, it says look at Jesus.

5) Love is not **arrogant**. This may seem like the same thing as "brag" but it is not. Some translations use the term "is not puffed up". Love is not conceited. Love doesn't think of its position, it puts others before itself.

6) Love is not **rude**. This is about a lack of courtesy, civility, consideration, tact, manners, and politeness. A rude person isn't concerned about their bad behavior limiting other's enjoyment. Love looks to be respectful, and it seeks to understand the difference between being bold and being rude, pushy, pugnacious, obnoxious.

7) Love *does not insist on its own way*. In other words, love is not **self-seeking**. Instead of being self-serving, self-centered, and insisting upon one's own rights, love seeks the welfare of others (Romans 12:10 / Philippians 2:4). Love limits liberty (cf. 1 Corinthians 8-10). Love uses liberty as an instrument for loving others (Galatians 5:13), and not as an instrument for pleasing yourself. Love asks what the reasons are for doing an action, and not what the reasons are for prohibiting it.

8) Love is not **irritable**. Love isn't easily angered. It isn't given over to emotional outbursts, it isn't easily annoyed, and it isn't easily offended. Love has a thick skin and a soft heart instead of thin skin and a hard heart. Love is humbly grateful, not grumbly hateful.

9) Love is not **resentful**. Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs, harboring bitterness, contempt, and clinging to the hurts of the past (Proverbs 10:12 / Hebrews 12:14-15 / 1 Peter 4:8). Love is going to seek to forgive and to be forgiven. Love isn't going to let hurts fester into diseases.

10) Love does not joy in **wrongdoing**. It is not glad about iniquity, injury, and injustice. Love is not satisfied by sin, it is unhappy with unrighteousness. This includes your own sin and well as sin perpetrated by and against others. Love is not fascinated with what is false or fervent about what is faithless. Love doesn't laud lairs or listen to lying (Proverbs 17:4). Love doesn't take pleasure in perversity, but in purity. Love doesn't parade around the sins of others for the sake of tearing them down or building itself up (gossip). Instead of approving what is godless (Romans 1:28-32), love approves of what is godly (2 John 1:4 / 3 John 1:3-4).

11) Love joys in the **truth**. True love loves truth. By not rejoicing in what is wrong and rejoicing in what is right, you see that love is *discerning*. Love is not excited about error, or disinterested in doctrine, but actively seeks out the truth. It is a false notion of love that glosses over

unrighteousness (Proverbs 17:15). Love is not simply humanistic and pragmatic. Love wants people to come to the truth, but is also concerned with how they get there.

12) Love *bears all things*. In other words, love is **protective**. Love is a cover. It isn't a tattle tale, but it is like 1 Peter 4:8; love throws a blanket over the wrongs. Love uses *discretion*. It tries to protect people rather than broadcasting bad news and parade its hurt in public. It protects, it doesn't pounce. It bears, not bares, the wrongs (Galatians 6:1). Love endures before it exposes.

13) Love *believes all things*. In other words, love is **trusting**. Love believes the best, it is "can do", in that it will cover the wrong believing that it will be made right. It isn't cynical or suspicious. Love sees wrong and weakness and love rebukes it and deals with it, but instead of trying to simply expose it, love throws a covering over it and believes the best about it.

14) Love is **hopeful**. It has courage; it has confidence in the future. It is not an optimism that ignores reality, and it isn't just the power of positive thinking. It is that love never gives up on people; it refuses to take temporal failure as final, either in oneself or in someone else. It means that we are actively involved in the process and remain faithful even when others remain fallen.

15) Love *endures all things*. In other words, love is **persevering**. This is like a soldier who is surrounded by a superior enemy but carries on anyway, to the end (2 Timothy 2:3). Love perseveres even when hope is dying.

Naturally, we are the opposite of 13:4-7 on every point, but the Holy Spirit can empower you to love like Jesus does. Remember, forgiveness is the basis of fruitfulness. Your understanding of your forgiveness from God causes you to act in love toward others. And so, the deeper your understanding of God's love for you, the deeper your love for others will be.

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- 3) **T**hank Jesus for meeting the standard for you.
- 4) **S**trive after the standard as an act of worship, not as a means of being right with God, but as the result of being right with God. Your fruitfulness is based upon your understanding of forgiveness.

Slides

Slide 1

Vs.1-3 – the PRIMACY of love. Without love, spiritual gifts are empty.

Vs.4-7 – the PRACTICE of love. Love is greater than spiritual gifts and must inform spiritual gifts because of its godly, selfless characteristics.

Vs.8-13 – the PERMANENCE of love. Love is the thing to be most pursued because love outlasts all other gifts.

Slide 2

Acknowledge the standard. Do you understand it?

Confess how you don't meet the standard. Be specific.

Thank Jesus for meeting the standard for you. He lived for you and paid your sin debt.

Strive after the standard as an act of worship. Not as a *means* of being right with God, but as the *result* of being right with God. Fruitfulness is based upon an understanding of forgiveness.

Scripture reading: Luke 7:36-50

Anger

Arrogance

Discernment

Discretion

Envy

Forgiveness

Fruitfulness

Hope

Kindness

Patience

Perseverance

Rudeness

Self-seeking

Trust

Truth

Wisdom

Overview: Forgiveness is the basis of fruitfulness. Your understanding of your forgiveness from God causes you to act in love toward others. And so, the deeper your understanding of God's love for you, the deeper your love for others will be.