

# **THIS IS THE WAY, THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY!**

(Sunday, November 6, 2022)

- I. Introduction (**Slide 1**)
  - A. Songs about love
    1. What the World Needs Now Is Love – Burt Bacharach
    2. All You Need is Love – The Beatles
    3. Seasons of Love - Rent
  - B. 2018 survey = 54% of Americans feel like no one knows them well – 46% feeling lonely – We need LOVE in our world!
  - C. Problem = what is love? - so many different definitions out there, most of which are based on our subjective, selfish feelings, not authoritative truth
    1. Love spouse, children, parents, friends, etc. Also love pizza, that sweater, my car, The Mandalorian, etc. – you don't accept & approve of all I am so you must not love me, you're a hater
    2. "Love is having total acceptance and the ability to trust and openly communicate, without the fear of judgment or rejection. That shouldn't just apply to romantic love but also to love among family and friends."
    3. "Love means enthusiastically answering my many, many questions with an unexpected level of depth, taking care of me when I am sick, indulging my need for spontaneity, making mundane chores manageable (if not fun), and truly seeing my light and looking to amplify rather than dim it."
    4. "Celebrating each other's successes and comforting each other through losses. Feeling like home to each other, like a refuge, a safe place to rest your head. Feeling seen and known, in all your authentic weirdness."
    5. "Love to me is happiness. It's what puts you at peace with yourself and others, what makes you kind, what makes you trust and especially what puts a smile on your face always!" (**SLIDE 2**)
    6. Discussed this topic at EMERGE on Friday night, Oct. 28, & middle school students agreed
  - D. 2 Peter – Sermon series from Andre = problem with false teachers – we see this problem even in the church today regarding love
  - E. Question = **Is love an important part of your life? Who or what defines the way you love?** Let's look at 1 Corinthians 13, what most called the Love Chapter, to get the true definition of love from the one who is love (**Slide 3**)
- II. Context – Letter to the Corinthian church from Paul
  - A. First, Reminder of the importance of love - Greatest Commandment = **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.**

**And the second is like it, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:37-39 – “A new command I give you: As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34 (Slide 4)**

- B. Acts 18:1-18 – Paul visited Corinth for first time on 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary journey; AD 51 – stayed for about a year and a half
- C. Corinth = materialistic, wealthy, immoral; many people from different place were in Corinth; city filled with lots of business
- D. Problems in the church impacted by the culture = divisions & boasting over leaders; feelings of great wisdom & knowledge so puffed up with arrogance; sexual immorality & proud of it; lawsuits among believers; abuses in worship & Lord’s supper; feelings of superiority & envy with spiritual gifts; freedom & responsibility
- E. Ch. 12 – just finished section on spiritual gifts & the Body of Christ being one body, but many parts; all needed for the body to function – continues this topic in Ch. 14 with orderly worship but reminds them of love

### III. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 – Gifts Meaningless Without Love!

- A. **“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.” (Slide 5)**
  - 1. 4 Types of LOVE – AGAPE – Enduring Word Bible Commentary
  - 2. Tongues = ability to speak an unlearned language, a spiritual gift – Corinthian church was fascinated with it; power from the Spirit (Acts 2 – Pentecost) – of men = regular language; of angels = perhaps heavenly language – brag/boast/arrogance
  - 3. Without LOVE = tongues are a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal (Use toy cymbals loudly)
- B. **“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” (Slide 6)**
  - 1. Prophecy = declare a message from God
  - 2. Knowledge = ability to apply doctrinal knowledge to life
  - 3. Wisdom = insight into doctrinal truth
  - 4. Faith = unusual measure of trust in God beyond that measured by most Christians – **“Truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” Matthew 17:20 (Slide )**
  - 5. The goal of gifts is not simply having them in order to look good & spiritual, the goal is love and service to God & others – motivation is love
- C. **“If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not love, I gain nothing.” (Slide 7)**
  - 1. Give everything to help others – many say that serving others made me feel good – the problem is we make it about ourselves, look at me = self-sacrifice can be selfish
  - 2. Persecution/martyrdom – pride to show how much they can suffer for Jesus, became the most important thing – more self-seeking

3. There is nothing to gain in God's eyes without love, no profit or blessing
4. This includes our church values = **ASSIGNMENT = Empowerment & Mission**

IV. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 – TRUE LOVE IN ACTION! (Princess Bride)

A. **“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” (Slide 8)**

1. **Patient = “makrothymeo” = patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging; slow to anger or punish – lawsuits among believers**
2. **Kind = “chresteuomai” = Friendly, tender hearted, compassionate, considerate (story of 4-year old) – leader division; cause to stumble**
3. **Not Envy = “zeloo” = burn with zeal; heated or boil with envy; desire earnestly – Abel; Joseph; Jesus – spiritual gifts; knowledge**
4. **Not Boast = Look at me! Parade oneself – spiritual gifts; leader division**
5. **Not Arrogant = “physioo” = inflate, blow up, bear oneself loftily – I am better than you = gifts, knowledge, leader division**

B. **“It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” (Slide 9)**

1. **Not Dishonor Others = “aschemoneo” = act rude or unbecomingly – Romans 12:10 = “Honor one another above yourselves – cause to stumble; spiritual gifts, abuse in worship**
2. **Not Self-seeking = others-centered, Phil. 2:3b-4 = “Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.” – division, stumble, lawsuits**
3. **Not Easily Angered = “paroxyuo” = irritated, provoked, rouse to anger, James 1:20 = “because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires – lawsuits, division (notice easily angered, there are times for righteous anger and it being love)**
4. **Keeps No Record of Wrongs = does not keep an account or store up in memory of wrongs received – don't cling to the past to weigh you down, be free (BUT, LEARN FROM HURTS SO WE DON'T PUT OURSELVES IN THAT POSITION AGAIN) - lawsuits**

C. **“Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.” (Slide 10)**

1. **Not Delight in Evil = wants the best for others; work on our own sins as well as help others with sin, 1 Cor. 5:12 = “What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?” – we are called to determine from God what is evil so we can help ourselves and others stay away from it (Best friend challenged me in relationship – is that love?)**
2. **Rejoices with the truth – love is pure & good, so is truth; celebrate truth in others, ourselves, the church, etc. – that means we need to judge rightly what truth is, not our own feelings of truth but God's truth – Share the TRUTH of the Gospel**
3. **Love does not just let people do whatever they want to and give full acceptance! – LOVE IS NOT ALWAYS LOVE IN OUR WORLD!**

D. **“It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (Slide 11)**

1. **Protects** = “stego” = cover to keep off something that threatens; hide
2. **Trusts** = “pisteuo” = confidence in the goodness of someone we love
3. **Hopes** = “elpizo” = wait for salvation, with joy & full of confidence; love has confidence in future because confident in God
4. **Perseveres** = “hypomeno” = endure; bear bravely & calmly – LOVE NEVER GIVES UP!
5. ALWAYS – In All Things – with love, these things should always be a given which is why we need help from our Loving Father

V. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 – Love Is Forever! (The Sandlot)

A. (8-10) **“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 prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.” (Slide 12)**

1. **Never Fails** = “pipto” = perish; come to an end; disappear; cease – This true love endures and lasts forever
2. **Spiritual gifts are temporary** – imperfect gifts for an imperfect time
3. **Completeness** = “teleios” = that which is perfect, when Christ returns – we won’t need the prophesy & knowledge in part as we will be complete in Christ’s presence

B. (11-12) **“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.” (Slide 13)**

1. **Illustrations from life to solidify gifts as temporary and love as eternal**
2. **When a child, I did what a child should do (toy cymbals) – But as an adult, childhood disappears** – childish things can be cute on children but not very cute on adults – childhood ceases just like spiritual gifts
3. **Corinth famous for bronze mirrors – not very clear to see in them** – when completeness comes (Jesus), we shall see him face to face – the unclear reflection ceases like the spiritual gifts – have immediate presence & intimacy with Jesus, no need for gifts
4. Now, I just know in part because of sinfulness and not being right in the presence of Jesus; in completeness, we will know fully as we are in the presence of Jesus – no more in part, no more gifts

C. (13) **“And now these three remain: faith hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (Slide 14)**

1. **Priorities for the believer** = faith, hope, & love
2. See these 3 together a lot in the Scriptures
  - a. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the **hope** of righteousness by **faith**. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **faith** working through **love**. (Galatians 5:5-6)

- b. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of **faith** and **love**, and as a helmet the **hope** of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)
  - c. Who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your **faith** and **hope** are in God. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere **love** of the brethren, **love** one another fervently with a pure heart. (1 Peter 1:21-22)
3. **Greatest = Love** – Why? In heaven, faith & hope have done their jobs but love continues; Plus, **love is an attribute of God – He is love (1 John 4:8)**

## VI. Other Important Passages to Understand Love (Slide 15)

- A. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**. - 1 John 4:7-8
- B. We love because he first loved us. - 1 John 4:19
- C. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. – 1 John 4:9-12
- D. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:8
- E. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. - Romans 13:8
- F. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. -1 John 3:16-18
- G. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. - John 13:35

## VII. Conclusion

- A. As we finish, I think of the show I mentioned earlier called “The Mandalorian” – they have a saying which is “This is the Way” referring to their religion/moral code/rules & creed – it’s very important to them
- B. **1 Corinthians 12:31b = “And yet I will show you the most excellent way.” (Slide 16)**
- C. **For the follower of Christ, This is the way, the most, excellent way! LOVE!**
- D. Our society around us knows that “love” is important but we define it with our own subjective, selfish feelings and that’s a problem

- E.** I hope and pray that we all see what LOVE truly is from 1 Corinthians 13 and see it as an important part of any Christian's life, it is the most, excellent way
- F.** I also pray that we will let God who is love define what it is for our lives – He's the only one who truly can
- G.** What do we do now? **(Slide 17)**
1. **Confess & repent to God and the others in our lives for the way we have not truly loved according to Biblical truth (I'm sorry)**
  2. **Turn to the Lord and beg Him to show His mercy and help us love each other as Christ loved us, sacrificially based on truth not selfish feelings**
  3. **Read 1 Corinthians 13 at least once every week as a reminder of God's truth about His love – try to memorize vv. 4-7**
  4. **Write down ways you could love the people in your life: family, work, school, church, activities, friendships, etc.**
  5. **Then, live the most excellent way & LOVE everyone – acts of kindness, words of encouragement, smiles, accountability, patience, honor, etc.**
- H.** **THIS IS THE WAY, THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY! (Slide 18)**