

In our study of 1 Corinthians 13, God is teaching us that sacrificial love is the premier virtue of the Christian faith. In John 13:35, Jesus said, *“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* But if love is not properly defined, it can be a very ambiguous thing.

In the first three verses of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul talks about the *priority* of love. Then in the following verses (4-8), he gives us the *particulars* of love and describes what it looks like (and what it doesn't look like). As Francis de Sales said, *“We learn to love by loving.”* These 15 descriptions of love help us to do just that.

8. Love is not _____.

Some translations say, *“Love does not become easily angered.”* The word here used for provoked means to arouse to anger. In other words, love guards itself against being easily irritated, upset, or angered by things said or done against it. It is not easily provoked.

If you are quick to lose your patience or your temper with those closest to you, it reveals an absence (or at least a severe limitation) of love. Telling our spouse or our children that we love them is not convincing if we continually get upset and angry at everything they say and do. If you were the kind of person that is easily upset, lovelessness is the cause of it, and love is the only cure.

9. Love does not take into _____ a wrong _____.

This phrase, *“take into account,”* is a bookkeeping term that means to calculate or reckon as when figuring an entry into a ledger. The purpose of the entry is to make a permanent record that can be consulted whenever needed. In business, this is very important, but in relationships this is extremely harmful.

This is how love works. It keeps no record of wrongs done against it. Nothing is ever recorded for future reference. Love forgives.

Love does not forgive and forget, but rather _____ and still _____. The reason love keeps no record of wrongs is because it has no place for resentment for grudges. Chrysostom said that a wrong done against love is like a spark that falls into the ocean and is quenched. Love quenches wrongs rather than records them. Just as God has completely and permanently erased the record of our many sins against him, how much more should we forgive and forget the wrongs done against us.

Psalm 130:3-5, *“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.”*

10. Love does not rejoice in _____, but rejoices in the _____.

The only way to be angry and not sin is to be angry at nothing but sin.

Proverbs 10:10 says, *“Someone who holds back the truth will cause trouble. But the one who openly confronts works for peace.”* If you need to confront someone, there are four keys to confronting in love:

1. **Check your own _____.** Ask, *“Why do I need to talk to this person about this issue? Why do I want to confront this person with the truth?”* Some wrong motivations could be jealousy, irritation, anger, frustration, or to feel superior. Proverbs 27:6 says, *“Wounds made by a friend are intended to help.”* In life, there are two kinds of relationships: 1) shallow and superficial or 2) deep, meaningful, and intimate. How do you get from superficial to deep, close, intimate connection with another person? There's only one way: to go down through the tunnel of truth. In the tunnel of truth, you deal with all the issues of the relationship you really don't want to deal with.
2. **You plan your _____.** You think through what you're going to say before you say it. Proverbs 16:23 says, *“Intelligent people think before they speak. What they say then is more persuasive.”* You need to plan three things: **when** you'll say it, **what** you'll say, and **how** you'll say it. Proverbs 12:18 says, *“Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword. Wisely spoken words can heal.”*

Remember: Truth + Tact + Timing = Transformation.

3. **You give them _____.** A healthy, strong relationship is always built on two legs: confronting in truth, affirming in love. If you want to have a healthy relationship, you have to have both. Proverbs 12:25 says, "*A word of encouragement does wonders.*" You want to affirm three things: 1) that you deeply love and care for them, 2) that you'll pray for them and help them, and 3) that you believe they can change. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4 says, "*I have great confidence in you, and I have a lot of reasons to be proud of you.*"
4. **Risk their _____.** It's scary to speak the truth in love. We don't know how they're going to react. And because we don't want to take that risk, we settle for superficial, shallow relationships. Who do you need to have an honest conversation with?

11. Love _____ all things.

The word for "bear" literally means to cover, support, or to protect. Proverbs 10:12 says, "*Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions.*" We can measure our love for a person by how quick we are to cover up their faults.

Love does not justify sin or compromise. But love does not expose or broadcast the failures and wrongs of others. It covers them and protects them. 1 Peter 4:8 says, "*Love covers a multitude of sins.*" Just as the presence of love covers a multitude of sins, the lack of love causes a multitude of sins.

12. Love _____ all things.

The Amplified Bible says: "*Love is ever ready to believe the best of every person.*" It means not jumping to negative conclusions about a person. In other words, love is not suspicious or cynical. When love throws its mantle over a wrong it also believes in the best outcome for the one who has done the wrong. If their loved one is accused of something wrong, love will consider him innocent until proven guilty. Love is a harbor of trust.

13. Love _____ all things.

The Amplified Bible says: "*Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances.*" Love refuses to take failure as being final. The rope of love's hope has no end. As long as there is life, love does not lose hope. When our hope becomes weak, we know our love has become weak.

14. Love _____ all things.

The word for "endures" is the Greek word *hupomeno*, which literally means "to remain under the load." It was a military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs.

One translation says, "*there is nothing love cannot face.*" Love has an incredible resilience that enables it to maintain itself under circumstances that would crush all other commitments.

John MacArthur says, "Love bears what otherwise is unbearable; he believes what otherwise is unbelievable; it hopes and what otherwise is hopeless; and it endures when anything less than love would give up. After love bears it believes. After it believes it hopes. After it hopes it endures. There is no 'after' for endurance, for endurance is the unending climax of love."

15. Love never _____.

True love cannot fail because it shares God's nature and God's eternity. What he is saying here is, "There is never going to come a time when love ceases."

Sometimes God allows us to feel the _____ of human love so we'll appreciate the _____ of His love. (This is what God did for David. When David was alone in the desert, he wrote these words: "*Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you...my soul will be satisfied as with the richest food*" (Psalm 63:3,5).

Romans 5:5 says, "*God has given us the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love.*" The love of God is what allows us to love others! Karl Menninger once said, "Love cures people—both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it."

CHALLENGE: Keep the description of genuine love before your eyes this week. Try to commit 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to memory.

In our study of 1 Corinthians 13, God is teaching us that sacrificial love is the premier virtue of the Christian faith. In John 13:35, Jesus said, *“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* But if love is not properly defined, it can be a very ambiguous thing.

In the first three verses of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul talks about the *priority* of love. Then in the following verses (4-8), he gives us the *particulars* of love and describes what it looks like (and what it doesn't look like). As Francis de Sales said, *“We learn to love by loving.”* These 15 descriptions of love help us to do just that.

8. Love is not easily provoked.

Some translations say, *“Love does not become easily angered.”* The word here used for provoked means to arouse to anger. In other words, love guards itself against being easily irritated, upset, or angered by things said or done against it. It is not easily provoked.

If you are quick to lose your patience or your temper with those closest to you, it reveals an absence (or at least a severe limitation) of love. Telling our spouse or our children that we love them is not convincing if we continually get upset and angry at everything they say and do. If you were the kind of person that is easily upset, lovelessness is the cause of it, and love is the only cure.

9. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered.

This phrase, “take into account,” is a bookkeeping term that means to calculate or reckon as when figuring an entry into a ledger. The purpose of the entry is to make a permanent record that can be consulted whenever needed. In business, this is very important, but in relationships this is extremely harmful.

This is how love works. It keeps no record of wrongs done against it. Nothing is ever recorded for future reference. Love forgives.

Love does not forgive and forget, but rather remembers and still forgives. The reason love keeps no record of wrongs is because it has no place for resentment for grudges. Chrysostom said that a wrong done against love is like a spark that falls into the ocean and is quenched. Love quenches wrongs rather than records them. Just as God has completely and permanently erased the record of our many sins against him, how much more should we forgive and forget the wrongs done against us.

Psalm 130:3-5, *“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.”*

10. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth.

The only way to be angry and not sin is to be angry at nothing but sin.

Proverbs 10:10 says, *“Someone who holds back the truth will cause trouble. But the one who openly confronts works for peace.”* If you need to confront someone, there are four keys to confronting in love:

1. **Check your own motives.** Ask, “Why do I need to talk to this person about this issue? Why do I want to confront this person with the truth?” Some wrong motivations could be jealousy, irritation, anger, frustration, or to feel superior. Proverbs 27:6 says, *“Wounds made by a friend are intended to help.”* In life, there are two kinds of relationships: 1) shallow and superficial or 2) deep, meaningful, and intimate. How do you get from superficial to deep, close, intimate connection with another person? There's only one way: to go down through the tunnel of truth. In the tunnel of truth, you deal with all the issues of the relationship you really don't want to deal with.
2. **You plan your presentation.** You think through what you're going to say before you say it. Proverbs 16:23 says, *“Intelligent people think before they speak. What they say then is more persuasive.”* You need to plan three things: **when** you'll say it, **what** you'll say, and **how** you'll say it. Proverbs 12:18 says, *“Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword. Wisely spoken words can heal.”*

Remember: Truth + Tact + Timing = Transformation.

3. **You give them affirmation**. A healthy, strong relationship is always built on two legs: confronting in truth, affirming in love. If you want to have a healthy relationship, you have to have both. Proverbs 12:25 says, "*A word of encouragement does wonders.*" You want to affirm three things: 1) that you deeply love and care for them, 2) that you'll pray for them and help them, and 3) that you believe they can change. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4 says, "*I have great confidence in you, and I have a lot of reasons to be proud of you.*"
4. **Risk their rejection**. It's scary to speak the truth in love. We don't know how they're going to react. And because we don't want to take that risk, we settle for superficial, shallow relationships. Who do you need to have an honest conversation with?

11. Love bears all things.

The word for "bear" literally means to cover, support, or to protect. Proverbs 10:12 says, "*Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions.*" We can measure our love for a person by how quick we are to cover up their faults.

Love does not justify sin or compromise. But love does not expose or broadcast the failures and wrongs of others. It covers them and protects them. 1 Peter 4:8 says, "*Love covers a multitude of sins.*" Just as the presence of love covers a multitude of sins, the lack of love causes a multitude of sins.

12. Love believes all things.

The Amplified Bible says: "*Love is ever ready to believe the best of every person.*" It means not jumping to negative conclusions about a person. In other words, love is not suspicious or cynical. When love throws its mantle over a wrong it also believes in the best outcome for the one who has done the wrong. If their loved one is accused of something wrong, love will consider him innocent until proven guilty. Love is a harbor of trust.

13. Love hopes all things.

The Amplified Bible says: "*Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances.*" Love refuses to take failure as being final. The rope of love's hope has no end. As long as there is life, love does not lose hope. When our hope becomes weak, we know our love has become weak.

14. Love endures all things.

The word for "endures" is the Greek word *hupomeno*, which literally means "to remain under the load." It was a military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs.

One translation says, "*there is nothing love cannot face.*" Love has an incredible resilience that enables it to maintain itself under circumstances that would crush all other commitments.

John MacArthur says, "Love bears what otherwise is unbearable; he believes what otherwise is unbelievable; it hopes and what otherwise is hopeless; and it endures when anything less than love would give up. After love bears it believes. After it believes it hopes. After it hopes it endures. There is no 'after' for endurance, for endurance is the unending climax of love."

15. Love never fails.

True love cannot fail because it shares God's nature and God's eternity. What he is saying here is, "There is never going to come a time when love ceases."

Sometimes God allows us to feel the frailty of human love so we'll appreciate the fullness of His love. (This is what God did for David. When David was alone in the desert, he wrote these words: "*Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you...my soul will be satisfied as with the richest food*" (Psalm 63:3,5).

Romans 5:5 says, "*God has given us the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love.*" The love of God is what allows us to love others! Karl Menninger once said, "Love cures people—both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it."

CHALLENGE: Keep the description of genuine love before your eyes this week. Try to commit 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to memory.