

1 Corinthians Part Two

Lesson #15, Chapter 13:1-5

Please read all of Chapter 13 as you prepare to do this lesson. Ask the Lord to help you understand and apply His Word.

1. Summarize the point Paul makes in Chapter 12 verses 12-31.
2. Paul concludes the chapter with these words: *But earnestly desire the greater gifts*. How does that admonition reveal a weakness or problem in how the Corinthians viewed the spiritual gifts given to them by God?
3. The end of Chapter 12 verse 31 states, *And I show you a still more excellent way*. What does that bit of information tell you about what is to come?

“Few chapters in the Bible have suffered more misinterpretation and misapplication than 1 Corinthians 13. Divorced from its context, it becomes “a hymn to love” or a sentimental sermon on Christian brotherhood. Many people fail to see that Paul was still dealing with the Corinthians’ problems when he wrote these words: the abuse of the gift of tongues, division in the church, envy of others’ gifts, selfishness (remember the lawsuits?), impatience with one another in the public meetings, and behavior that was disgracing the Lord.” ~Warren Wiersbe¹

4. Let us discover the more excellent way along with the Corinthians as Paul begins Chapter 13 verse 1 with a hypothetical statement about speech. What does it mean to speak with the tongues of men? See Acts 2:4-12; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:10-13.
5. What does it mean to speak with the tongues of angels? See Job 38:7; Heb. 2:2; Rev. 5:11-14.

¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 1 Co 13:1

6. Would speaking with the tongues of men and angels be a good thing, something admirable?
 - a. According to verse 1, what negates that most excellent way of speaking?
 - b. Without that quality, excellent speech actually becomes what (verse 1)?

7. What does it mean to have *the gift of prophecy*? See Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:7; 12:8-10, 28; Eph. 3:3.

8. Would possessing the ability to prophesy, know all mysteries and knowledge, and have all faith be a good thing, something admirable to desire?
 - a. Yet, what negates those most excellent attributes? Verse 2.
 - b. And what is the result according to verse 2?

9. What scenario is devised in verse 3?
 - a. And once again, what negates those admirable actions?

- b. With what results (verse 3)?
10. I think we're starting to see a pattern here! How would you summarize the point of verses 1-3 that we need to understand and apply?
11. This question reminds us of the context and why the famous love section was written. We might be tempted to give a Pilate-like answer and respond, "What is love?" in an effort to wiggle out of our responsibility to show love to the brethren.² But Paul leaves no opportunity for us to respond like that. Verse 4 begins defining true, biblical love. And the first thing we learn is that love is patient. Define *patient* [Strong's #3114 (NKJV *suffers long*)].
- a. How do the following verses add to your understanding of what it means to love with patience? See Matt. 18:26, 29; Heb. 6:15; James 5:7-8; 2 Pet. 3:9.
- b. When do you find it most challenging to love with patience?
- c. What are some ways you can apply the art of "suffering long" in your love for others?
12. Next we learn that love is kind. Define *kind* [Strong's #5541].
- a. How do the following verses add to your understanding of what it means to love with kindness? See Luke 6:35; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12.

² See John 18:33-38 to read how Pilate reacted when Jesus' words affected him.

- b. When do you find it most challenging to love with kindness?
 - c. What are some ways you can apply the art of loving kindly?
13. It's not surprising that love is not jealous toward others either. Define *not jealous* [Strong's #2206 (ESV; NKJV; NIV *not envy*)]. You'll have to supply the “not” when you look up the word's meaning to understand it properly for verse 4.
- a. What added understanding do you gain after seeing how the word is used in the following verses? See Acts 7:9; 17:5; James 4:2.
 - b. When do you find it most challenging to love without jealousy?
 - c. What are some ways you can learn to love without jealousy entering in?
14. Here's an interesting aspect of biblical love. Love does not brag. Define *brag* [Strong's #4068 (ESV *boast*; NKJV *parade itself*)].
- a. This particular word is used only in 1 Cor. 13:4, but a look at its synonyms will help us get a handle on the word's meaning and how we can apply it to our lives. See Ps. 73:9; Ps. 94:4; Prov. 25:14; 2 Cor. 11:17-18; James 3:5; 4:16.

- b. What sins are associated with bragging? See 1 Sam. 2:3; 2 Chron. 25:19; Ps. 49:6; Gal 5:26; 2 Tim. 3:2; 1 Jn. 2:16.

- c. When are you most tempted to brag?

- d. Why is bragging antithetical to loving others?

- e. Who should we brag about? Ps. 20:7; 34:2; Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:30-31.

- f. What are some practical ways you can make sure your love for others doesn't include bragging?

Eager Beaver: Do a little study on biblical boasting. When is it permissible? And what kinds of things are acceptable to brag about? See Rom. 15:17-19; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 8:24; 11:30; 12:9; Gal. 6:14; Heb. 3:6.

15. Next we learn that love is not arrogant. Define *arrogant* [Strong's #5448 (NKJV *puffed up*; NIV *proud*)].
- a. Paul uses the word arrogant frequently in his communications with the Corinthians. What do you learn about the word from the following verses? See 1 Cor. 4:6, 18-19; 8:1.

- b. Now look up these verses to see if you can glean more about its meaning: 1 Sam. 2:3; Neh. 9:16; Ps. 94:4; Prov. 14:16; 30:13; James 4:16.

 - c. When do you find you're most tempted toward arrogance?

 - d. What are some ways you can learn to love others in humility rather than arrogance?
16. Next we learn that love doesn't act unbecomingly. See what you can find out about *unbecomingly* as you define it [Strong's #807 (ESV; NKJV; NIV *rude*)].
- a. This particular word is only used in 1 Cor. 7:36 and 13:5. Can you discover some more about this word's meaning from those verses?

 - b. First Corinthians 7:35; 11:21; 1 Tim. 2:9; and 2 Jn. 10 carry the flavor of this word's meaning. What more do you learn?

 - c. When are you most tempted toward rudeness?

 - d. What are some ways you can make sure your love for others doesn't contain rudeness?

17. Next we learn that love doesn't *seek its own way*. While this part of love's definition is fairly straightforward, it can be tricky to put into practice at times. When are you most tempted to seek your own way?
- a. How did Paul put this admonition into practice in his life? See Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:24, 33; 1 Jn. 3:16-17.

 - b. What are some practical ways you can practice putting others first?
18. Love isn't provoked! Define *provoked* [Strong's #3947 (ESV *irritable*; NIV *easily angered*)]. See also Ps. 78:58; Acts 17:16; Eph. 6:4.
- a. When are you most tempted toward irritation?

 - b. What are some ways you can guard against being provoked?
19. And finally, love *does not take into account a wrong suffered*. When is it the most challenging to live like this?
- a. What do we need to remember if we're ever going to love like this? See Eph. 2:1-7; 4:31-32.

- b. What are some practical ways to live this way? See Col. 3:12-13; 1 Pet. 3:8-9.
20. That's a lot to put into practice! If left to us, are we able to love in the way described here? What do we need to remember when it comes to loving others? See Rom. 6:4-7; 8:8-11; 1 Pet. 5:6-7; 1 Jn. 1:9.
21. Back to our context for this chapter: Why was this discussion about love necessary? See 12:1, 4-7, 27-31.

God grant us grace, then, that we may abound in this most excellent grace of a true Christian life, which is infinitely more essential than the highest gifts or the most remarkable talents that God himself can bestow upon us. ~Charles Spurgeon³

Jn. 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

1 Thess. 3:12 And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you.

1 Pet. 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

³Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermons: Volume 47*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Spurgeon's Sermons (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998).