



Frisco First Baptist Church

SPIRITUAL ADULTING: 1 CORINTHIANS LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

3/29/2026

MAIN POINT

Love is the defining mark of the Christian.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Name three ways you have heard the word “love” used in the past week.

What do those uses of the word reveal about the way people typically view love?

How might our culture define “love” differently than God?

We are a world in love with being in love. We use the word about food, sports, entertainment, and people. But where our culture sees mere affection, God sees something different. Love is the defining mark of the Christian. In the context of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul helps us see the nature of true love and shows us that no matter how gifted church members are, their impact is minimal without love.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12 about different spiritual gifts that God had given to the church. Paul was aware that one of the reasons for division in the Corinthian church was pride and jealousy regarding spiritual gifts. To help the Corinthians use their spiritual gifts well, Paul taught that love should permeate all that a believer in Christ does.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3.

What metaphors did Paul give for using spiritual gifts without love? Why do you think he chose these metaphors?

What happens if people are not motivated to use their gifts out of love?

What do you think the Corinthians felt when they read these words?

Why did all the gifts and power that Paul listed “gain nothing”? What does that tell you about the power of love?

No matter how impressive a spiritual gift may appear, no matter how dedicated a religious act may be, the absence of genuine love renders these actions meaningless. The Corinthians may have felt like Paul was going too far. Paul, however, wanted the church to know that everything they did should come out of love. Greatness without love is at best annoying like a clanging cymbal and at worst completely meaningless.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7.

What attributes of love did Paul list in these verses? Which one stands out to you the most? Why?

Which of these qualities of love is the easiest for you to apply in relationships with others at church? Which is the most difficult?

Based on these verses, how do you think Paul would define the love he talks about in this chapter?

Read Ephesians 5:2. How did Paul define and understand love in this passage? Why must a person know the work of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection to love?

Paul is not talking about an emotional love. The kind of love he described here is above emotion; it’s self-sacrificing for the sake of another. These 15 characteristics describe loving others even when doing so is difficult. Of course, that is when love is most needed. If we love only those who measure up to our standards or who never pose any challenge, then is that really love? This is the kind of love that you can only truly see in Christ. It’s only through experiencing the self-sacrificial love of Jesus that we can truly love others. In the final set of verses in this chapter (vv. 8-13), Paul contrasted love’s permanence and eternal presence with the temporal things of this world.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13.

In what ways do you see the difference between the eternal and the temporary in this passage? How do you see the difference between the eternal and the temporary in your life?

Why is love greater than faith and hope? What will happen to our faith and hope when Christ returns? What will happen to love?

Love will never end as we love God and love others. This type of love can play out practically in our relationships. Loving God and loving others is far more than head knowledge. No real transformation in our church occurs without love being at the center of it. Paul's words are clear that anything we do apart from love will pass away. When we embrace the truth that love is permanent, then we will show it consistently to others, and it will be a defining aspect of our character.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is something you can do this week to show love and respect to your spouse? To someone in your family?

What are some ways you can show your love by giving/service this week?

In what ways have you seen people interrupt their normal routine to take action on behalf of another person? Which people or groups do you find it difficult to love?

How can you use the way God has spiritually gifted you to love others in the church?

PRAYER

Thank God for showing us the nature of true love in Jesus. Ask Him to help your group remember the central place of love in your lives and our church, and to never allow a focus on spiritual giftedness to take the place of genuine love.

COMMENTARY

| 1 CORINTHIANS 13

13:1-3. In this section, Paul focused on some of the spiritual gifts the Corinthians especially valued. In each case he demonstrated that without love these spiritual gifts were meaningless. His first example was human or angelic languages. Paul certainly intended this phrase to include the kinds of “other languages” he addressed in chapters 12 and 14. However, the phrase also included any eloquent human speech. However, Paul pointed out that excellent speech without love was nothing more than empty noise.

Four other spiritual gifts come under scrutiny in this verse. We know from 14:1-5 that Paul highly valued the gift of prophecy and urged the Corinthian Christians to desire this gift above all others. This gift consisted of the clear proclamation of the gospel and may also have included at times the element of foretelling God’s ways.

Extravagant sacrificial acts are Paul’s next two examples. Jesus’ command to the rich young ruler (see Luke 18:22) was at the heart of Paul’s reference to donate all goods to feed the poor. To give one’s body to be burned may point to a believer’s being martyred for the faith. However, there also were stories circulated in the first century about people who immolated themselves to call attention to particular grievances or causes. In any case, Paul was emphasizing out that even extreme acts of self-sacrifice gain nothing if those doing the acts are not driven by agape-love.

Paul listed 15 qualities of Christian love in verses 4-7, the majority of which are stated positively. As we seek to demonstrate agape-love in all we do in our churches, these characteristics can shine through in our actions.

13:4-7. The Greek word for “patient” literally means “to be long (that is, slow) to anger.” Generally speaking, the term refers to the patience we need to have with people as opposed to endurance in difficult circumstances. The word for “kind” refers to an active quality in which we look for opportunities to act with helpful intentions toward others. This is the quality of love in which we seek to do good to others. We derive the English word “zealous” from the Greek term for envy. This word is sometimes used in a positive sense, for we can be appropriately passionate about many good causes. In this case, however, the term refers to a negative desire for gain or jealousy that another person received gain.

To be boastful refers to a tendency to call attention to one’s accomplishments or abilities for selfish reasons. Paul saw this tendency as a particular problem among the Corinthian church members. He included the synonymous “conceited.” This word literally means “to be puffed up” and serves as an apt illustration of the inflated egos of some of the Corinthians.

The phrase “not act improperly” can be literally translated as “not behave against the scheme.” The phrase refers to God’s giving His people a certain pattern of behavior to follow. The phrase “is not selfish” literally means “does not seek its own.” Again, Paul’s emphasis was on avoiding any behavior that constantly puts one’s own desires and preferences above the needs of others. The Greek word behind the phrase “is not provoked” came over into English as the basis of the word “paroxysm” [PAR uhk siz uhm], a violent explosion of anger. The phrase “does not keep a record of wrongs” includes a concept from the world of accounting.

Some people take a perverted delight in the miseries or failures of others, or they find joy in unrighteousness. Most of us can relate too easily to the temptation of listening to a gossip story about another person. Christlike love resists the temptation to delight in others’ wrongdoing and misfortune.

The phrase “rejoices in the truth” expresses the positive, righteous desire of agape-love. Love means to look for the truth instead of looking for the scandal. The phrase “bears all things” comes from a Greek term that means either “to pass over in silence” or “to cover.” In either case, the emphasis is that love refuses to nitpick about others’ shortcomings. The phrase “believes all things” refers to a trusting attitude that expects all things to turn out for the best in light of God’s sovereign purpose. The phrase “hopes all things” also points to confidence about the future. This characteristic of love reminds us that just as God acted faithfully in the past, He can be counted on to act faithfully in the future.

At the heart of the phrase “endures all things” is a Greek word that literally means “to persevere.” The term denotes not merely passively accepting a situation but rather “leaning into the wind.” Endurance is the active anticipation that God will act to bring about His will and enable the believer to express love in difficult circumstances or toward difficult people.

13:8-13. Paul contrasted love’s permanence and eternal impact with the temporal nature of spiritual gifts. Love will always be needed, and love will endure eternally as the bond of believers’ relationship with God and with one another.

Paul included another gentle but firm rebuke of the Corinthians’ immaturity by using an illustration that showed their fascination with spiritual gifts was childish. Continuing to act like a child acts once a person becomes an adult is one of the saddest and most embarrassing forms of immaturity.

Paul used the analogy of a mirror to explain that presently we cannot know everything there is to know about God and His purposes. We can understand many things; in Christ, we can know God in a saving relationship and can understand His expectations for us. Nevertheless, we yet see God indistinctly. One day, however, Christ will return and His saving work will be complete. Then, Paul taught, we will see the Lord face to face.

Likewise at that time, we will know fully that love governs all of God's actions and must also characterize our actions. That we are fully known by God and yet fully loved by Him can drive us to our knees in gratitude. When we know fully, we will be able to express love as we always should have demonstrated it.