

LEADER DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Summer 2022

Week of July 3

1 Corinthians 13

DISCUSSION FOCUS

Read (Primary Text): 1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Supporting Texts: Matthew 22:37–40; John 15:12, 17; 1 John 4:7–21.

MAIN IDEA: Love, the superior quality of the Christian faith, is the manner in which spiritual gifts are to be exercised in the church.

OBSERVE

How does what Paul is describing in this chapter connect with what he says in the previous chapter (1 Corinthians 12)? *In 1 Corinthians 12, he begins writing about spiritual gifts and their value to the body of Christ (the church). In this chapter, he begins to speak about the individual gifts are not valuable in and of themselves but need to be done in a way that reflects love for one another (John 15:12, 17).*

Describe the following: faith, hope, love. Why is love considered the greatest (v. 13)?

1. *Faith is not merely an intellectual acknowledgment but is put in action (I believe this chair will hold me up and I demonstrate this faith by actually sitting in it). See Hebrews 11.*
2. *Hope is not an empty wish but is the certainty of something to come because it is promised. We have placed our hope in Christ (Romans 5:1–5; 8:24–25; Colossians 1:5, 27; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 10:23; 1 Peter 1:3).*
3. *Love is described throughout this chapter of 1 Corinthians 13. The ultimate act of love was demonstrated by Jesus on the cross (John 15:13; 1 John 4:7–21). The other characteristics (faith and hope) are based on the love of God and lived out in the love of God. The greatest commandment centers on love (Matthew 22:37–40).*

INTERPRET

What is Paul's main point in vv. 1–3? *It doesn't matter what "good" things I do, if I don't have love, it is all for nothing. The point of these verses is to say that all of these "spiritual" deeds are completely meaningless without love at the core and as the motivation/manner. Clearly, this was an issue in Corinth. Because division and arrogance had been rampant, Paul spends an entire chapter on this, attempting to get their priorities recalibrated.*

What does Paul mean in vv. 8b–13 and what does "when the perfect comes" (v. 10) refer to?

1. *Paul's point in vv. 8b–13 is that love will outlast everything. He makes special reference to the gifts most elevated by the Corinthians (prophecy, knowledge, tongues) but this list is not exhaustive.*

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2. Some believe that “the perfect” is the completed canon of Scripture. The context does not support this. Instead, it is obvious that “the perfect” has a reference to the Second Coming of Christ. He expounds on this in vv. 11–13 where we will see Him face to face.
 - a. Right now, we understand partially (“like a child”) but one day, the perfect will come so that we walk in maturity (“became a man”) and understand completely (v. 11). The word “perfect” here can also be translated “completion” or “the end” or “the goal” or even “full maturity.”
 - b. “Indistinctly, as in a mirror” (v. 12) is interesting. The KJV says “through a glass, darkly.” The word can either be mirror or glass and the word describing “indistinctly” can be translated as “in a riddle” or “obscurely.” We only have limited understanding of who Christ is now but we will one day see Him “face to face” (scholars see this as a reference to Numbers 12:6- 8 contrasting Moses, who met with God face to face, with other prophets who received revelation through visions and dreams.
 - c. We only have partial knowledge (v. 12) now one day, we will know fully as we are presently fully known by Christ.
 - d. What does not pass away are faith, hope, and love (v. 13). Faith will become sight. Hope will be fulfilled. We will see Love personified face to face.

APPLY

How have you seen love abused in relationships? Churches?

What does a church (body of Christ) look like that recognizes and uses the spiritual gifts of its members in the manner of love? *Every member would understand his or her value and unique gifting, putting it to use to serve the church. Every member would value the other members. Serving the body of Christ (the church) would be done in a way that puts love first. This means that everything done would be for the good of the church, for the love of Christ, and done with humility.*

Why is it important for the church to operate from a position of love to the lost culture around us?

How do we demonstrate love without sacrificing the truth of the gospel?