

DISCUSSION FOCUS

Read (Primary Text): 1 Corinthians 13

Supporting Texts: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; 1 John 4:7-12; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 8:24-25; Philippians 2:5-11; John 13:34-45

MAIN IDEA: The Christian life is useless if love (which is embodied in Christ) isn't the driving force of all that we do.

OBSERVE

Understanding context is incredibly important when approaching the Bible. Before we begin reading and dissecting 1 Corinthians 13, it is necessary to establish context. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. What point is Paul driving home with the Corinthian church? *The body of Christ (the Church) is made up of unique individuals with unique giftings and talents, yet we are unified in Christ as we use these talents to serve God and bring Him glory.*

Now, read 1 Corinthians 13. According to Paul, what is the bedrock of Christian living? *Love.*

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, what three "spiritual gifts" does Paul reference as useless without love? 1) vs. 1: *the gift to preach or teach*, 2) vs. 2: *the gift to prophesy or explain the Scriptures in such a way that illuminates the mind through the Holy Spirit's power*, 3) vs. 3: *the gift of generosity*

What does Christian love do and not do? *Is patient; is kind; rejoices in truth; bears all things (endures always); believes all things (trusts God always); hopes all things (puts hope in God always); endures all things (persevere always); doesn't envy; isn't boastful; isn't conceited; isn't rude; isn't selfish; isn't provoked; doesn't keep a record of wrongs; doesn't find joy in unrighteousness.*

INTERPRET

After discussing how Christians can serve one another with their spiritual gifts, why would Paul segue into a poem/song about love with the statement "and I will show you a better way." (12:31)? *If Christian love isn't the driving force behind believers using their gifts, the gifts AND the believers are useless.*

In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Paul talks about our giftings eventually coming to an end. But he says that love never ends. According to 1 John 4:7-12, why does love never end? *Because God IS love and Jesus Christ is the embodiment of love.*

Paul ends this wonderful passage on love with the statement that "these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." This seems like an odd statement to make when we know that faith and hope are so integral to the Christian life. Based on 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Romans 8:24-25, how can Paul say that love is the greatest? *Faith and hope (attitudes Christians must have but God does not have) will one day cease as they will be realized when the body of Christ is united in Him for all of eternity. Because God IS love and Jesus Christ is the embodiment of love, love, therefore, will never cease.*

RESPOND

Is love for God and love for others the driving force of how you interact with others?

Consider Philippians 2:5-11 and what that means for our understanding of love and how we live a life of love.

APPLY

How is the list of what love does and does not do counter-cultural?

According to John 13:34-35, how do we point others to God? What does that look like practically speaking?