



**Sermon Based Small Group
Leader Discussion Guide**

Sermon Title: "Living A Life of Love"

**Sermon by Pastor Tom Harrington
Week of January 30, 2011**

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<p>Session Objectives (Group Leader)</p>	<p>By the end of the session, group members should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See how the sharing of God's love is an essential element to Christian service and the manifestation of spiritual gifts. • Describe the characteristics of what Biblical Love is and is not as outlined in Scripture. • Identify at least one challenge they will need to overcome in order to love in a more spiritually mature way.
<p>Personal Connection (Group Leader)</p>	<p>How does my story connect to the reading? To prepare to lead this Bible study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the Icebreaker questions. • Consider how God demonstrates His love through the people He has placed in your life both close and strangers. • Mediate on Biblical versus secular definitions of "LOVE." • Pray for each member of your group by name.
<p>Icebreaker</p>	<p>List words or phrases that describe love in your favorite songs, poems, and movies. How did these shaped your expectations of "love?"</p>
<p>Big Idea</p>	<p>God measure spiritual maturity by our ability to love.</p>

<p>Sermon Text</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 13:1-13– New International Version</p> <p><i>1If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.</i></p> <p><i>4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.</i></p> <p><i>8Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.</i></p> <p><i>13And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.</i></p>
<p>Word Study</p>	<p>Ancient Greek has four distinct words for love: agápe, éros, philía, and storgē. However, as with other languages, it has been historically difficult to separate the meanings of these words. Nonetheless, the senses in which these words were generally used are given below.</p> <p>Éros (έρως érōs) is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. The Modern Greek word “erotas” means “intimate love;” however, eros does not have to be sexual in nature. Eros can be interpreted as a love for someone whom you love more than the philia, love of friendship. It can also apply to dating relationships as well as marriage. Plato refined his own definition: Although eros is initially felt for a person, with contemplation it becomes an appreciation of the beauty within that person, or even becomes appreciation of beauty itself.</p> <p>Philia (φιλία philía) means friendship in modern Greek. It is a dispassionate virtuous love, a concept developed by Aristotle. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality and familiarity. In ancient texts, philos denoted a general type of love, used for love between family, between friends, a desire or enjoyment of an activity, as well as between lovers.</p> <p>Storge (στοργή storgē) means “affection” in ancient and modern Greek. It is natural affection, like that felt by parents for offspring. Rarely used in ancient works, and then almost exclusively as a descriptor of relationships within the family. It is also known to express mere acceptance or putting up with situations,</p>

as in “loving” the tyrant.

Agápe (αγάπη agápē) means “love” in modern day Greek, such as in the term *s’agapo* (Σ’αγαπώ), which means “I love you”. In Ancient Greek, it often refers to a general affection or deeper sense of “true love” rather than the attraction suggested by “eros”. Agape is used in this biblical passage known as the “love chapter”, and is described as sacrificial love. Agape is also used in ancient texts to denote feelings for a good meal, one’s children, and the feelings for a spouse. It can be described as the feeling of being content or holding one in high regard

Source: www.netbible.org

Learning more about the lesson

This week our study is one of the most famous chapters of the Bible: 1 Corinthians 13. Let's see what we can learn about love! The whole Bible is summed up by the one word, "love" (see Leviticus 19:17-18; Matthew 19:19). Love sums up the Christian's responsibilities in the New Testament (Romans 13:9). Love is the capstone, the crowning virtue, the consummation of all other virtues (Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-7; Colossians 3:12-14). Love is the goal of Paul's instruction (1 Timothy 1:5). Love is the distinguishing mark of the true Christian (John 13:35). Without love, the value of spiritual gifts is greatly diminished (1 Corinthians 12:1-3). Love is greater than any of the spiritual gifts and is even greater than faith and hope (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love endures suffering under persecution, and Christians will be persecuted (Matthew 24:10; 2 Timothy 3:12).

Love is easily lost, without one's even being aware of it (Revelation 2:1-7). Love is misunderstood and distorted by the unbelieving world. Confusions between sex and love. Love is vitally important to Christians, for it should govern our relationships with other Christians, especially those with whom we strongly disagree. Surely our faith should impact the manner in which we relate to one another in the church and in the home. Christians by the thousands have settled for relationships where they co-exist more as business partners than as husband and wife. Add to that number all those parents and children that are constantly at odds with each other. Somehow, we as a society have begun to believe Tina Turner's tragic commentary that "love is just a second-hand emotion."

In this verse, Paul indicates that true spiritual maturity can be measured by the quality of our relationships rather than our giftedness. The apostle challenges us to apply our faith to our relationships.

1. Why is someone who "speak[s] in the tongues of men and of angels" but who is without love like a "resounding gong or a clanging cymbal?" Reflect on the cheapness of words not backed up by loving conduct.

Leaders: For a spiritual gift to be of value, it must be accompanied by love. Follow question What is the tragedy of possessing gifts but not having any love?

2. What do each of verses 1-3 say about motivation? What are some false motivations that could lead a person to take the actions described in verse 3? How can we tell whether our motivation is really love?

Leaders: The most obvious false motivation to giving to the poor is that some people might think they are earning a position (or a better position) in heaven. Some people make contributions in order to get an income tax deduction. Others contribute for the

recognition. Some people give so they can tell a friend that they support a particular cause or organization. Some people give because they see other people giving and they are ashamed not to give. What kind of person would give all he possesses to the poor and even surrender his body to the flames without love? Why does Apostle Paul say that such a person gains nothing? Is there some experience in my life in which I “sacrificed” without love and felt like I haven’t gained anything?

3. Take the statements of verses 4 through 7. How does my idea of what it means to love and to be loved compare with the description of love in this passage? How is it possible for me to love others in this way (cf. Galatians 5:22-25)? Do you get irritated when waiting in line at the store? How did you react if you were running behind on your way to church and get behind a slow driver?

Love is:

Patient
Kind
Forgets being wronged
Rejoices in the truth
Never gives up, endures
Never loses faith
Always hopeful

Love is not:

Boastful
Proud
Rude
Irritable
Self-seeking
Rejoices in injustice
Gives up, does not endure
Loses faith
Selfish, expects something in return

4. *Relationships require love. Nelson and Virginia Bell were the parents of Ruth Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham. “The Bells had a beautiful and lengthy marriage. When they got older, Dr. Bell had to care for his wife. One day Ruth Graham entered her parents’ home and found her father on his hands and knees putting stockings on Mrs. Bell. Dr. Bell looked up at his daughter and said, ‘You know, the greatest privilege of my life is taking care of your mother.’” (Raymond McHenry, “Something to Think About,” Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, p.157.)*

Who has come the closest to living out verses 4 – 8 toward you personally? What factor(s) enabled that person to demonstrate such love for you? What changes do you need to experience to demonstrate this kind of love for others?

5. What is taught about spiritual gifts and eternity in verses 8-10?

Leaders: Love never fails, but spiritual gifts will cease and in eternity be unnecessary and useless. Paul take of three of the greatest spiritual gifts: prophecy, speaking in tongues, and knowledge, all of which will be partial and incomplete, and will all be unnecessary when complete understanding comes. When will this be? Verse 12 implies that a Christian will understand everything completely and will know the Lord just as

	<p>God now knows—and this will happen at Christ’s second coming.</p> <p>6. On the basis of verse 11 and your own experience, what role does maturity have in one’s ability to love? Describe how mature love differs from childish love.</p> <p>Leaders: Point out that our culture uses the word examples (i.e. “I love my car,” “ I love my iphone,” etc...) How does such usage devalue the concept of love? The Greek language has several words often translated love (eros (romance), phileo (family love), and agape (unconditional love). Clearly, agape love is not something that comes naturally to a child or even a young adult. It is something that grows in you as you turn over more and more of your life over to the Holy Spirit. Childish love has elements of selfishness, of being thankful for protection, warmth, or a gift, and of showing love for what you get in return.</p> <p>7. What does verse 12 teach you about Christian hope? (Hebrews 11:1) What are some things you “see in a mirror dimly” now that you someday hope to see more clearly?</p> <p>Leaders: Side note: mirrors in Paul’s day were polished pieces of bronze and even the best mirror was dull compared to seeing the real thing. Christian hope is an absolute certainty if you have faith. Heb 11:1 - Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.</p>
<p>Taking it Home</p>	<p>How will I live it? Apply it?</p> <p>1. Based on the characteristic of biblical love. Think of a random act of kindness you can perform.</p> <p>2. During your devotional time this week reread 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8 and replace the word love (and its pronouns) with your name.</p> <p>3. Consider any past hurts that you need God’s help in healing in order to share God’s Love more fully?</p> <p>4. What would happen to a church or even your small group if love became our distinctive quality?</p>
<p>Looking Ahead</p>	<p>How can I prepare for the next Small Group meeting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for the week of February 6, read Matthew 5:1-16 on “Don’t Hide Your Joy!” • Reflect on the sources of your joy.

Prayer Focus	<p>How can I connect with God and others through prayer?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whenever you read or listen to Scripture, prayerfully invite the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth to you. 2. How can this group pray for you and/or a need you have identified in this Bible study? <p>Leader: Use the back of this page for recording prayer requests/praises. Encourage a group member to serve as the <u>Care Coordinator</u> by keeping track of these requests in a notebook and, if possible, emailing the list to group members.</p>
Updates	<p>Announcements from:</p> <p>Care Coordinator Outreach Coordinator, Social Coordinator</p>