

Love: The Central Theme of Christianity

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

The Character of Love (4-7)

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁵ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁶ Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

The root to understanding the character of love is knowing that love isn't a noun, but a verb. Love is an action, not merely an idea.

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

“Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did.”

A. LOVE IS:

- **Patient** – another term for patience that is often used is the term “longsuffering.” In other words our love for another, and more especially God’s love for us suffers long to show itself to us. People often say I quit praying for patience, but in fact when we say things of this nature we are asking God to quit teaching us to love.

Patience keeps us in the game within proper boundaries that allows something beautiful to be born out of painful experience. Patience sees life from a 30,000 foot view and now just the immediate or small details. It always keeps the big picture in mind.

Augustine

Patience is the companion of wisdom.

Stephen Charnock

In regard of God, patience is a submission to His sovereignty. To endure a trial, simply because we cannot avoid or resist it, is not Christian patience. But to humbly submit because it is the will of God to inflict the trial, to be silent because the sovereignty of God orders it - is true godly patience.

John Wesley

Humility and patience are the surest proofs of the increase of love.

- **Kind** – to be or become warmhearted, considerate, humane, gentle, and sympathetic; loving and merciful. The motivation to kindness and the desire to be kind is to see a person’s Godgiven value whether you like their actions or not.

Blaise Pascal

Kind words produce their own image in men's souls; and a beautiful image it is. They soothe and quiet and comfort the hearer. They shame him out of his sour, morose, unkind feelings. We have not yet begun to use kind words in such abundance as they ought to be used... Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much.

Frederick W. Faber

Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal, eloquence, or learning.

Alexander MacLaren

Kindness makes a person attractive. If you would win the world, melt it, do not hammer it.

B. LOVE IS NOT/DOES NOT:

- **Envious** - discontented or resentful, a longing aroused by another's possessions, qualities, or luck. Love is never envious because He who has God and everything else has no more than the person who only has God.

2 Corinthians 10:12

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense.

- **Boastful** - showing excessive pride and self-satisfaction in one's achievements, possessions, etc.; Boasting is the action of pride or the fruit off the tree of pride
- **Proud** – it does not boast because again it is not proud or arrogant; love is humble and has a servants heart and perspective.

James 4:1-6

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ² You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder.

And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, "God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶ But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ¹

¹ [1The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Jas 4:1–6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

- **Dishonor/Rude** – it is not offensively impolite or ill-mannered. Rather love chooses to honor, show respect to another, as the response from one Image-Bearer of God to another Image-Bearer of God. Love sees the intrinsic worth of the person in whose presence we stand. This element of love goes beyond racial or cultural biases and sees us not just in the company of another sinner, but in the company of another Image-Bearer.
- **Self-Seeking** – this explanation is pretty “self-explanatory.” Love is not self-seeking the way the psychologists point us today. It is not about the “self” but service.

Philippians 2:1-5

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

Rick Warren

Learning to love unselfishly is not an easy task. It runs counter to our self-centered nature.

- **Easily Angered** – not easily provoked. Love is not hot headed or quick tempered. It reveals within itself self-control and big picture thinking.

James 1:19-20

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.

- **Record Keeper of Wrongs** – Love does not keep a record of our wrongs. How many of us when we are easily angered bring stuff up from the past from 20 years ago so that it seems our wrongs never die. This isn’t the product of love if this is the case.
- **Delight in Evil but rejoices in Truth** – Love doesn’t delight in that which takes opposition to the will of God. Evil by nature is the absence of good, and good is the nature of God.

C. LOVE ALWAYS:

- **Protects** – Love desires to get in the way of that which would have evil intentions to hurt the object of love. It makes sense why a soldier would want to thwart the plans of any enemy, both foreign and domestic, that would seek to harm his country. It makes sense why a man would sacrifice his life to protect his wife and kids from harm because of his love for them. It is this verse that forces us not to become pacifists because by definition love protects.
- **Trusts** – Love desires to trust. There may be some who lack trust because of previous wounds, but those being controlled by the love of God will not let their traumas become their final authority. The fact there is lack of trust shows the work love seeks to heal. Love seeks to trust which is the root of faith.

Proverbs 3:5-7

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and
do not rely on your own insight.

⁶
In all your ways acknowledge him, and
he will make straight your paths.

⁷
Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear
the Lord, and turn away from evil.

- **Hopes** – Love is optimistic by nature. Looking for the good in things and never despairs. This doesn't mean love is blindingly optimistic, but see reality through the lens of God's sovereignty. Christians should never despair of hope.

Colossians 1:26-27

the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

- **Perseveres/Endures** – the reason Love always endures or perseveres is because of what the previous verse just stated about hope. Love endures through hope that this world is not all there is or will be.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with **perseverance** the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set

before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who **endured** such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. **Daniel Fuller**

In Biblical thinking, genuine love exists only when good works are done in a context where God rather than the doer gets the credit.