

1 Corinthians

13:1–13

Introduce

Apart from your parents, who has demonstrated love to you the most? What made their love special? OR Why does love seem to be a difficult subject for guys to address?

Investigate

Background

Paul, in this larger section addressing specific abuses within the services of the Corinthian church, addresses the abuse of spiritual gifts. In Chapter 12 Paul talks about the origin, purpose and role of spiritual gifts as a background to addressing the particulars of the abuse of tongues in Chapter 14. Before he gets there Paul takes a parenthetical look at something greater than any gift that can be given—love.

Explore the Passage [Read the whole chapter; then read each section again before discussing it.]

- Why would a discussion on love be so important for this church? Why would it be important in light of the discussion of spiritual gifts?
- What relationships does the love of this chapter relate most closely to? *[Help them see that this chapter applies more directly to our relationships with other believers than between a husband and wife.]*

13:1-3

- What is the attitude Paul is attacking in this section?
- Why is love so much greater than accomplishments or abilities? What is it about love that makes it so much more critical than ability? *[Make sure they see that love is tied directly to the character of God. When we display love to others we are displaying the very character of God, which brings glory to Him.]*
- Thinking about your relationships with other people, what are accomplishments or abilities that we can emphasize over the love we display to them?

13:4-7

- What does it look like to be patient and kind? Can you think of a real life example of someone that displayed these qualities to you?
- Why do we go towards envy and boasting rather than towards love? What causes us to become arrogant or rude? Why do we insist on our own way or become irritable or resentful?
- What is the relationship between love and rejoicing in the truth?
- How does love bear all things? Believe all things? Hope for all things? Endure all things?

13:8-13

- How is love different than any of the spiritual gifts?
- How are spiritual gifts "partial"?

- What is the perfect? Support your argument. *[There is debate on this point, but in light of the reference of seeing face to face and being fully known (which are very personal actions) it makes most sense to see the perfect as referring to Jesus.]*
- What is Paul's point in the analogy of the child and adult? *[Things like spiritual gifts are appropriate for our time in "childhood" here on earth. When Jesus Christ returns as the Perfect One those "childish" things will no longer be needed.]*
- What does Paul mean that we see in a mirror dimly? *[We see Jesus accurately as we can see our reflection accurately, but we still see Him indirectly.]*
- How does it make you feel to realize you will one day see Jesus face to face?
- What do you see as the significance of the verbs "know fully" and "have been fully known"?
- How do faith hope and love abide? Why will those things last beyond the coming of the Perfect One? Why is love greater than the other two?

Discover the Big Idea

Why is love so essential in the lives of believers?

Summary: Any accomplishment or ability is nothing in comparison to our love for others. Only when we do things in love do we display the character of God and so bring glory to him. Only in bringing glory to Him can we experience true joy and satisfaction.

Respond

- Which negative aspect of love do you most struggle with or which positive aspect do you most need to work into your life?
- What has been a barrier to you living out of love in that aspect of your relationships?
- As you remember the love of the One we will someday see face to face, how can that motivate you to love others in this aspect of your relationships?