

1 Corinthians 13

Love

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
One Corinthian column = **1 CORINTHIANS**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* formed by the shape of the sculptured heart = **CHAPTER 13**
3. The THEME:
A heart symbolizes *love*. = **LOVE**

1 CORINTHIANS 13: BACKGROUND

Many people today use the word *love* to express emotional feelings. The implication is that you can fall into and out of love. In sharp contrast with that definition, the Bible points to “love” as being primarily an *action* word. You have to work at love—and work hard.

Because the word *love* is used in many ways, the Greeks used three different words, *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*.

- *Eros* (not used in the New Testament) described a self-serving type of love, often associated with sex. The major goal of such love was *getting*.
- *Philia* (from which we derive words like philanthropy) emphasized brotherly love. The emphasis is on *sharing*.
- *Agape*, the highest form of love, finds its source in God’s love towards us. This love stresses *giving* even though the object of the love is undeserving. It is a love that is given without counting the cost. When God chose a word to explain why he sent his Son to rescue us from sin, he chose the word *love*. It is this highest form of love, *agape*, a sacrificial giving of love, that makes the Christian a child of god (John 13: 34-35). This form of love is so different from the world’s concept of love that people, seeing sacrificial love in action, will soon discover the source is not human but *divine*.

True love is to love one another as God has loved us (John 15:12).

KEY VERSES OF 1 CORINTHIANS 13

Verses 1-3

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If 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. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Paul makes clear that *love* is the priority. No other gift, no matter how valuable, supersedes it.

Verses 4-7

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

Love is now defined. This purest form of love can only come from God. Since God is love (1 John 4:8), you can even substitute the name of God for the word *love*. God is patient, God is kind, God does not envy, God does not boast, God is not proud.

Verse 8

Love 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.

Love endures. Everything else passes away.

Verse 11

When 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.

A new Christian may not understand the importance of love, but a mature Christian *should* understand it has top priority.

Verse 12

Now 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.

We can't understand it all now. Someday we will, when we are face to face with Jesus.

Verse 13

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

To review: Faith and hope will not be needed in heaven; they will pass. Only love—the greatest—is eternal!

THOUGHTS ON LOVE

Day 1

Love, like most other virtues, is easy to speak about but difficult to implement.

* * *

“Eros” love is easily corrupted. In itself, it is not bad. God created sex. It is good. But Satan works hard to corrupt the good. The essence of most sexual sin is satisfying sexual desire outside of marriage.

* * *

Without the motivation of love, the gift has no value. Even the sacrifice of martyrdom would have no point or meaning if it were not motivated by love (1 Corinthians 13: 1-3).

* * *

We cannot know Jesus fully and completely until we are with him and see him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).

* * *

John, in his first Epistle, gives us some examples to explain love:

1. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us (1 John 3:16).
2. Those who are able to help should help anyone in need (1 John 3:17).
3. We are to obey God’s command to love (1 John 3:23).

* * *

Paul had just discussed spiritual gifts in detail in 1 Corinthians 12. Now he stresses that such gifts are meant to be used *in love* for the benefit of the whole body (the church) (1 Corinthians 12:7).

* * *

People are capable of having degrees of physical love and friendship without knowing God; but to have a deeper (giving, sacrificial) love one *must* know God, the *source* of such love.

* * *

The Old Testament book Hosea shows a forgiving type of love. Though the prophet’s wife was unfaithful, he loved her and wanted her back.

* * *

John 13:35: By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

* * *

Let's examine ourselves. What about the cursing, swearing, yelling, and fighting that takes place in our homes? What about the alienation of affection and the silent treatment? The truth is that we not only find these things present in many of the homes of church members, but we also quite frequently find it in the church itself.

What a fantastic warmth, acceptance, and love would be found in the church if those who claim Christ as their Lord would show and practice more love toward one another.

Day 2

The love of God is so far beyond our comprehension that we cannot begin to fathom its depths. Any human effort explain or define the love of God is bound to fall short. Yet the first letter of John strives to identify and help us comprehend the love of God. In the fourth chapter, from verse 7 to the end, we see some of the elements of God love.

Primary point: *God's love saves*. Imagine yourself in deep debt and, at the same time, destitute. Imagine your hopeless feeling. Then imagine that a millionaire, unknown to you, paid your entire debt and, in addition, placed a million dollars in our account. Not only would he have solved your problem of past debt, but he would have already guaranteed your future security. In a small way, this illustrates the human condition before God.

We are totally in debt to sin. Our condition was hopeless. There was no possibility of us paying our debt. Then God in his mercy sent his Son to redeem us. He paid the debt—not only for the past but also for all eternity. Amazing! God's love saves us.

God's love provides. God has promised that he will always supply the *needs* of his people. In our materialistic society, it is important to point out that this does not mean *wants*. There is a vast difference between needs and wants. God is aware of the things we need and he has promised to supply them. A beautiful verse, Philippians 4:19, stresses this great truth. Matthew 6:33 also reminds us of God's promise to always provide for his children.

God's love disciplines. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline (Revelation 3:19). God's love is not the wishy-washy love of a parent who does not love a child enough to discipline him or her. God's love is firm—it is tough, requiring obedience. God expects his people to respond to the love he has shown them. Our response is not only to worship him and be obedient to him, but it is also to have a loving relationship toward one another. We see that theme also stressed in the fourth chapter of 1 John: If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar (vs. 20). The reason Scripture can be so

pointed is that the enabling power of god's love is what produces in us the ability to love one another. Therefore, if we do not love one another, it proves that God's love is not present in us.

God's love comforts. God often comforts people beyond their comprehension and understanding. Frequently, they will confess that their troubled hearts have been brought to overwhelming peace. The power of god's Spirit to heal and soothe the troubled soul is well known to the child of God.

God's love is eternal. Nearly everyone recalls an experience from their teenage years when love was not returned. But as we mature, we discover that even adult love can be fickle. Many couples stand before a church altar and pledge their love for a lifetime, yet their marriages end in divorce. Nearly half of the marriages taking place today will end in divorce.

God's love is not fickle! He loves eternally. Faith, hope, and love—these three, and the greatest of these is love. Love is eternal because God is eternal. God's love is a saving love, a providing love, a disciplining love, a comforting love, and an eternal love. Nothing can compare to the love that God has shown us in sending his Son to be our Savior.

* * *

Day 3

Our love is to be unselfish (Matthew 22:39).

* * *

Jesus gives us the example of love in himself (John 15:9, 12; Galatians 2:20).

* * *

Just as our ability to use spiritual gifts grows, so also our love will grow as we follow Christ and receive the fillings of the Holy Spirit in our lives. (See Ephesians 5:18; Hebrews 13:1, James 2:8; Galatians 5: 22-23. See also Key Chapter booklet *James 2: Works*).

* * *

Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8: 35-39).

* * *

The supreme sacrifice of love is to lay down your life for someone who doesn't deserve it. We should all be willing to be martyrs; yet, not all will be called upon to be martyred (1 John 3:16; Romans 5:8).

* * *

Love produces the desire to obey. We *want* to please those we love (John 14: 15, 23).

* * *

The first three commandments, which speak of our relationship with god are summarized in Deuteronomy 6:5, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all our soul and with all your strength.

* * *

The love of Christ for us is so great, it is beyond our human understanding (Ephesians 3: 17-19).

* * *

Those who love their fellow human beings will oppose prejudice and other injustices and uphold truth and goodness (1 Corinthians 13:6).

* * *

Corinth was a port city, with a temple that housed prostitutes who used sexual love as a means of “worshipping” pagan gods. The Corinthians people were well aware of the carnal love that people had towards each other. Paul, in this letter, shows the Corinthians a higher type of love—a love that centered on Christ instead of themselves. A love based on erotic feelings will fail and mislead. A love based on faith in Christ will encourage, strengthen, and bring fulfillment, purity, and joy—and will be *eternal*.

Day 4

God is patient and long-suffering. Remember the parable of the forgiving father (prodigal son) in Luke 15: 11-32? God inspired, God motivated love is also patient (1 Corinthians 13:4). Wait upon the Lord.

* * *

The biological urge to respond to sexual stimulation outside of marriage is lust, not love (Matthew 5: 27-30). Love involves the mind, heart, and will. Love does not merely respond to a biological urge or feeling. Love is a choice. Passion passes. Love lasts.

* * *

Love does not envy. Consider how John the Baptist urged his followers to follow Jesus (John 3:30). Remember also how Jonathan loved David even though he knew David would get the throne instead of himself.

* * *

Pagan religions have a fear of their deities. Christians have a *love* relationship with the true God. To know god is to know love (1 John 4: 7-8).

* * *

Love from God enables us to love even our enemies. To do so, we must see them through the “eyes” of God. He loves them and is willing to forgive them (Matthew 5:44).

* * *

The theme and phrase, “God’s steadfast love”, occurs more than 170 times in the Old Testament. In Psalm 136, a special thanksgiving hymn, it occurs 26 times.

* * *

“Charity” is sometimes used as a synonym for God-given love. No doubt because it stresses giving.

* * *

God loved and loves the world. He *so loved* us that he sent his Son to be our Savior. God’s love in us prompts us to go to the world with the saving news about Jesus. (See Key Chapter booklet *Matthew 28: Go*).

* * *

One thing we owe one another: love (Romans 13:8).

* * *

Our understanding of God’s love for us is tied directly to our understanding of our forgiveness (Luke 7: 40-50).

* * *

Day 5

Peter, who had denied Jesus three times, was asked by Jesus to reaffirm his love three times (John 21: 15-19).

* * *

Love in Jesus is the glue that holds everything together (Colossians 3:14). This is true of relationships, homes, and the church.

* * *

Those who believe in Jesus have their sins forgiven. They are no longer afraid of God (1 John 4:18).

* * *

Jesus demonstrated that love does not seek to be served; rather, love serves (John 13: 1-17). Jesus had taught this truth in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37).

* * *

We cannot separate worship from love. One flows from the other.

* * *

God's love is absolutely supreme, absolutely complete, and absolutely permanent.

* * *

1 John 4:8: God is love.

* * *

1 Corinthians 13:8: Love never fails.

* * *

God is the driving force behind every loving act of faith.

* * *

“Love much, and you can do much. Impossibilities disappear when zeal is fervent” (C.H. Spurgeon).

* * *

Lovers argue at times. You can't make an omelet without breaking the eggs.

* * *

Young people need to know the difference between lust and love. Lust sees the other person as a sexual object. Love sees the other person as a companion. Lust asks, “What do I want?” Love asks, “What is right and pleasing to God?” Lust produces shame after it's over. Love produces more love.

