

Joyful Life Bible Studies

I Corinthians 13

A more excellent way

Lesson 19

FIRST DAY: Review and Overview

1. If you were sitting in the congregation at Corinth listening to this letter from Paul, what particular part of I Corinthians 11, 12 would you want to talk over with a friend as soon as possible?
 - a. Think of a task you could not have accomplished this week if your hand and foot had not cooperated with each other. Write it here.
 - (1.) Relate this to the body of Christ and the importance of each member.
2. I Corinthians 13 is one of the most cherished chapters in the Bible. It has been called a *Hymn* or *Psalm of Love*. In the midst of a corrupt and disintegrating first century culture and into a Christian congregation characterized by division, dissension, and disorder, this thirteenth chapter shines as the beauty and brightness of a morning sunrise on a cloudless day. It introduces us to a quality of life that could never be known or experienced outside of Jesus Christ. This chapter describes the kind of love Jesus said we are to have for God and others (Matthew 22:37-39). Take as much time for this chapter as you are able, it will be *time well spent*. Keep in mind the phrase from I Corinthians 12:31 *a more excellent way* as you note and mark the paragraph divisions. Summarize the theme of each by supplying one word that completes the following phrases:
 - a. I Corinthians 13:1-3 _____ of love (charity)
 - b. I Corinthians 13:4-7 _____ of love (charity)
 - c. I Corinthians 13:8-13 _____ of love (charity)
3. The word *charity* used in this chapter is better translated *love*. Charity in our time refers almost exclusively to giving to the poor. The Greek word translated *love* in Chapter 13 is *agape*. There was no Greek word in common use in the First Century to accurately describe the *love* that the gospel declares. The apostles therefore were compelled to find another word for this *love*. *Agape* expressed the love of God exemplified by and through Christ. No heathen writer had ever used it. *This word is absolutely unstained with any evil association*. What do you see in John 3:16 that helps you to better understand this kind of *love (agape)*?
4. This *love (agape)* is more than an emotion; it is love in our will. It is not natural affection which is often conditional on our moods and other people's behavior towards us. *Agape* is divine, supernatural *love*. Who is the source of this *love* in our hearts? Romans 5:5, Galatians 5:22a

- a. What does that mean in practical experience in our life? Use an example from your life for your answer if you desire.

*Love one another for love is of God,
he who loves is born of God, and knows God.
He who does not love, does not know God.
For God is love.*

SECOND DAY: Read I Corinthians 13:1-3

1. The context of Chapter 13 is linked primarily to I Corinthians 12 and 14. In those chapters Paul deals with *spiritual gifts* and the proper use of them in public worship services. Now in chapter 13 he instructs the believer in *a more excellent way* in the exercising of these gifts. I Corinthians 13 is in no way limited to the first century Corinthian church, or to the exercising of spiritual gifts. This chapter challenges every believer to a walk in love that transcends any spiritual gift, ministry, or natural love and authenticates the *gospel* we proclaim. Keep this in mind as you study I Corinthians 13. Observe by filling in the following chart (verses 1-3) the utter worthlessness of Christian service if it is not motivated by and exercised in love.

Though I	and have not love (<i>agape</i>)	I am
vs. 1		
vs. 2		
vs. 3		

2. *If I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without learning them, and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making noise. If I had the gift of prophecy and knew all about what is going to happen in the future, knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would it do? Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love. If I gave everything I have to poor people, and if I were burned alive for preaching the Gospel but didn't love others, it would be of no value whatever. I Corinthians 13:1-3 TLB Underline or highlight each of the gifts or services recorded in the above paraphrase of I Corinthians 13:1-3.*

- a. Which one seems most spectacular or admirable to you? Why?

(1.) Comment on the consequences if it is not done in love (*agape*).

3. What impact do these verses have on your ministry or service for the Lord?

4. *And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Mark 12:33 Explain how this verse coincides with I Corinthians 13:1-3.*

THIRD DAY: Read I Corinthians 13:4,5

1. It has been said that I Corinthians 13:4-7 describes fifteen facets of love. List nine of these from I Corinthians 13:4,5 in the left hand column of the following chart. Define each facet or characteristic of love by using other versions of the Bible or in your own words. You may use the version at the end of this day to help you.

facet of love	definition
vs. 4	
vs. 4	
vs. 4	
vs. 4	
vs. 4	
vs. 5	
vs. 5	
vs. 5	
vs. 5	

2. According to Colossians 1:11 how are we enabled to be *patient, long-suffering and kind*?

a. Observe and print the attitude that accompanies *patience* and *longsuffering* in Colossians 1:11.

3. What do you learn from Ephesians 3:(16-19)20 that encourages you in your desire to have this love (*agape*) manifested in and through your life?

4. In which facet of I Corinthians 13:4,5 do you find yourself most deficient?

a. What is the remedy for this? Support your answer by scripture if possible.

Challenge: Using a Bible dictionary or Strong's Concordance or any other resource, do a word study on each of these facets of *love*.

5. Share a specific incident in your life when someone showed you one particular facet of this love.

a. What affect did this have on you?

6. The characteristics of *love* revealed in I Corinthians 13:4-7 are not separate aspects of *love* that we are to pick and choose. All should be resident and flowing through our life. We recognize in these verses that only Jesus consistently loves this way but we also recall from Romans 8:28, 29 that His predestined purpose is that we be *conformed to His image* (to be molded into the likeness of His Son). In light of Romans 8:28 what tools is God using in your life to chip away the unloving areas so that you are growing more and more like Him?

*Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious,
never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude.
Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy.
It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.*
I Corinthians 13:4,5 TLB

FOURTH DAY: Read I Corinthians 13:6,7

1. Review the first nine facets or attributes of *love (agape)* from I Corinthians 13:4,5. Are these evident in your life? In what situations or circumstances do you find it most easy to *love (agape)*?
 - a. When is it most difficult?

2. Continue your list of these facets of *love (agape)* by adding the remaining six from I Corinthians 13:6,7. Define these by using other versions of the Bible or in your own words.

facet of love	definition
vs. 6	
vs. 6	
vs. 7	
vs. 7	
vs. 7	
vs. 7	

3. Human nature often takes more pleasure in hearing of someone's misfortune or failure than in their good fortune. *Love (agape)* rejoices in hearing good reports about others. Why do you think human nature takes pleasure in hearing about others' failures?
 - a. Report the consequences of gloating over someone's failures or calamities from Proverbs 17:5b.
 - (1.) What does Proverbs 24:17,18 add to this?

4. Think about the phrase *love beareth all things*. We think of *bearing* as carrying someone's burden. The Greek word translated *beareth* is literally *roof, to roof over or cover*, so love builds a cover over. Write what I Peter 4:8 says about this.

Optional: When is it appropriate to cover a sin and when is it necessary to expose it?
Warning: you must examine your motive.

5. *Love hopeth all things*. Perhaps your hope has grown dim. Use Romans 15:13 to rekindle the flame of *hope* within you. Write this verse here phrase by phrase whether your hope is weak or strong. Notice, we are to *abound in hope*.
6. If you are struggling with any of these fifteen facets of *love (agape)* today return to Romans 5:(1-4)5. Connect this verse with your need.
 - a. This *love* is a *fruit* or product of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence. What does John 15:5 teach us about this?

Our love for Him is manifested in our love for others.

FIFTH DAY: Read I Corinthians 13:8-13

1. *Love never fails - never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end* (verse 8). Again we see the superiority of *love (agape)* over any spiritual gifts. What will happen to these gifts? I Corinthians 13:8,9
 - a. When will this happen? I Corinthians 13:10

Note: *Perfect* has been defined by Thayer, one of the most respected authorities in the Biblical Greek language, this way: *the perfect state of all things to be ushered in by the return of Christ from heaven. I Corinthians 13:10*

2. When Jesus returns for the church the gifts will no longer be needed. Why? Answer from the following verses:
 - a. Philippians 3:(20)21a
 - b. I John 3:2
3. How could the illustration of a child and a mature adult relate to us *now* and *then*? Answer in your own words using the following verses as a guideline.

Now	a. Ephesians 4:(11,12)13-16
Then	b. I Corinthians 15:49,51b

4. What do you learn about *now* and *then* from I Corinthians 13:12? Answer by filling in the following chart:

NOW	THEN

- a. The word *glass* used in this verse is translated elsewhere *mirror*. Corinth was famous for its mirrors - probably polished metal. Contrast the difference between seeing something reflected in a mirror and viewing something *face to face*.
- b. Reflect on what it will mean to see our Lord *face to face*. Write your thoughts here.

*Face to face with Christ my Savior
Face to face what will it be
When with rapture I behold Him
Jesus Christ Who died for me.*

5. Relate from I Corinthians 13:13 the things that will last eternally.
- a. Of the three, which is the *greatest*?
- (1.) *Faith* and *hope* are inward qualities, but *love* is relational. It flows towards God and others. Can you begin to imagine what it will be like to live forever in an atmosphere of this kind of *love*? Comment on this.
6. I Corinthians 14:1a has been paraphrased *make love your quest*. In recognition of the necessity of *love*, the nature of *love*, and the permanence of *love*, how do we do this?

SIXTH DAY: Review I Corinthians 13

1. What impact has I Corinthians 13 had on your life this week?
2. Share one insight from this chapter that has worked in your life to change your attitudes or actions.
3. Compare I Corinthians 13:4-7 with Galatians 5:22,23. What do you see?

4. How do the difficult relationships and adverse circumstances provide opportunity for growth in *love* (*agape* - Christ-like love)?
5. Read I Corinthians 13:4-7 aloud substituting your name for the word charity. How truthful does it sound? Read it again substituting the name Jesus; notice how it flows. This gives us a good indication of the work yet to be done in our lives by the Holy Spirit as He conforms us to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.
6. In what way does I Corinthians 13 challenge you to examine your motives, thoughts and behavior?
7. This passage, I Corinthians 13:1-7 has power to transform our life. Continue to read verses 4-7 over daily, if possible, until you sense your actions and reactions, attitudes and thoughts being governed and molded by this *love*. What is necessary for our application of these verses to our life?
8. In light of this chapter, why is *love* the *more excellent way*?
 - a. How does living this kind of *love* open doors of witness?
9. What encourages and blesses you the most in this chapter?
10. Whom shall we see *face to face*? Revelation 22:3,4

*Get these ingredients into your life.
It is worth giving time to.
No man can become a saint in his sleep.
To fulfill the condition required demands
prayer, meditation and time,
just as improvements in any direction,
bodily or mentally, requires preparation and care.*
Henry Drummond