

## A Picture of Love



### SABBATH—AUGUST 8

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22, 23; John 13:1, 34; 1 John 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:7, 13.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The three most important things to have are faith, hope and love. But the greatest [most important] of them is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV).



**What is love? How does love behave? The life of Jesus fully shows us the answers to these questions.**

**LOVE** is very powerful. That's why Paul wrote so much about this topic. 'Agapaō' is a word for 'love' in the Greek language. Paul uses 'agapaō' (or other words for love connected with it) more than 135 times in his letters. That's almost half of all the words for love in the New Testament. Wow! That should tell us that 'love' is an important topic in Paul's letters to the Corinthians.

We can read many wonderful verses about love in the New Testament. Some of these verses include Romans 8:35–39; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, and more.

But none of these verses compares to 1 Corinthians 13.

Last week, we saw that without love, everything we have is worth nothing. That includes our spiritual gifts. This week, we will look closely at 1 Corinthians 13 and the beautiful picture of love it shows us.

As we will see, love is more than a feeling. We must show love in our lives. We show love with the words we say and the things we do. Without love, our words and actions have no worth.

What is love? How does love behave? The life of Jesus fully shows us the answers to these questions.

**WHY LOVE MATTERS (1 Corinthians 13)**

Last week we looked at the topic of love in 1 Corinthians 13. This week we are going to study Paul's words on the topic more deeply.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13. What is Paul saying in this chapter about love?**

Paul isn't saying that the gift of speaking in different languages isn't important (1 Corinthians 13:1). Paul also isn't saying that special messages from God, spiritual understanding, wise words, faith, and helping people are useless gifts (1 Corinthians 13:2, 3). But those skills do not help anyone if we don't have love in our hearts.

What type of love is Paul talking about in 1 Corinthians 13? Is it the same as the love in the sentence, "I love strawberries"? Or "I love my friends or children"? Paul isn't talking about these types of love. Yes, 1 Corinthians 13 often is read at many weddings. But Paul is not talking about the love between a husband and wife.

The love that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13 is more than a feeling, good behavior, or helping people. For sure, these things show us some part of the love Paul talks about. But the love in 1 Corinthians 13 is a special gift from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit also helps us to be loving and not selfish. Real love includes giving our thoughts, feelings, and actions completely to Jesus. Then He will live in us and help us to love other people.

**What warning does Jesus give us in Matthew 24:12?**

As this verse shows, love is so important and necessary. We must not let the love in our hearts for other people grow 'cold.' We need Jesus' help to keep our hearts 'warm' and filled with love for our families, churches, and neighbors. Jesus is our example. He died for us on the cross. What better and more powerful example of love can there be? Of course, we can't match Jesus' love. But with His help, we can do our best to show His love in our lives.

**Think of times when people need to see an example of Jesus' love more than they need anything else. What are some of these times?**



**Jesus is our example.  
He died for us  
on the cross.**

## WHAT LOVE DOES

(1 Corinthians 13:4–7; Galatians 5:22, 23)

In 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, Paul helps us understand what love does and doesn't do. In Paul's 'picture' of love, he uses words of action. For Paul, love is more about actions than feelings.

So, what does love do? How does it behave?

**1. Love is patient ('makrothymeō').** 'Makrothymeō' means to be patient, even in hard times. We must be patient with each other (Ephesians 4:2).

**2. Love is kind ('chrēsteuomai').** The only time that the New Testament uses the word 'chrēsteuomai' is in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. Elsewhere in the New Testament, writers use words connected with 'chrēsteuomai.' In the Greek language Bible, writers of the Psalms often use words connected with 'chrēsteuomai' to talk about God's love (Psalm 145:9). Paul wants us to understand that our love for other people must show God's love and forgiveness for us.

**3. Love is happy ('synchairō') when good things happen.** The word 'synchairō' means that we can feel happy for other people when good things happen to them (Luke 1:58; Luke 15:6, 9; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Philippians 2:17, 18).

**4. Love never gives up ('stegō') on people.** 'Stegō' can mean to keep something private and not tell anyone. 'Stegō' also can mean to stay strong to the end. We see this second idea in 1 Corinthians 9:12. So, most Bible thinkers believe that in this verse 'stegō' means to stay strong to the end.

**5. Love never stops trusting or believing ('pisteuō').** 'Pisteuō' comes from the same Greek word for faith ('pistis'). In 1 Corinthians 13, love never stops believing the best about God and each other.

**6. Love never loses hope ('elpizō').** In the New Testament, the word 'elpizō' always means that we will believe or expect that something good will happen.

**7. Love never quits ('hypomenō').** How is the word 'hypomenō' different from 'stegō'? We just saw 'stegō' means "to stay strong to the end." The two words are not very different. They mean much the same thing: to stay strong during hard times. Paul uses a new word to teach the same idea and to help us pay attention to how love stays strong. Love stays strong when it believes and hopes.

**Compare 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 to Galatians 5:22, 23. What same ideas do you see in both sets of verses? How can we show this love in our own lives?**



Paul wants us to understand that our love for other people must show God's love and forgiveness for us.

## WHAT LOVE DOES NOT DO (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)

Read again 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. In these verses, why does Paul tell us what love doesn't do?

Yesterday, we looked at seven things that love does. Today, we will look at eight things love doesn't do.

What does love **not** do?

**1. Love doesn't get jealous ('zēloō').** 'Zēloō' can mean something good: "But above all, you should want ['zēloō'] the more important gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31, NIV). Also, "Brothers and sisters, you should want ['zēloō'] to prophesy [to speak special messages from God]" (1 Corinthians 14:39, NIV). But in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, and also in Acts 7:9, the word 'zēloō' is used to show us what we shouldn't do. So, we should want spiritual gifts. But we should not be jealous of people and their spiritual gifts. Jealousy causes separation (1 Corinthians 3:3).

**2. Love doesn't brag ('perpereuomai').** Bible writers use 'perpereuomai' to show us someone whose heart is filled with pride. This person also wants praise from other people. Real love isn't selfish in that way.

**3. Love doesn't say, "I am important! ('physioō')."** Paul also uses the word 'physioō' in 1 Corinthians 8:1: "When you know about something, that can make you proud" [EASY]. 'Physioō' shows us someone who feels he is very important.

**4. Love isn't mean ('aschēmoneō').** 'Aschēmoneō' can mean many different things. Often it means to misbehave or do what is wrong. Paul may be talking about the mean behavior of strong church members toward weak members in the church (1 Corinthians 4:10; 1 Corinthians 8).

**5. Love isn't selfish ('zēteo').** Love tries to do what is good for other people, not just for self (read 1 Corinthians 10:24). Love helps other people (read Lesson 5). When everyone tries to do what is best for other people, we all win.

**6. Love doesn't get mad easily ('paroxynō').** Paul uses 'paroxynō' to show us someone who gets mad easily.

**7. Love doesn't remember ('logizomai') the wrong things people do.** The word 'logizomai' means that we don't keep a record of the wrong things that other people do. So, love means to forgive.

**8. Love isn't happy ('chairō') when people do wrong.** When we really love other people, we aren't happy when they make mistakes. We try to help them.



When everyone tries to do what is best for other people, we all win.

## A PICTURE OF JESUS (John 13:1, 34)

We may get upset with ourselves when we don't always show love in all the ways that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13. For sure, Paul was thinking about Jesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians 13. Only Jesus can show love in all the ways Paul talks about. So, Paul's picture of love is really a picture of Jesus.



Jesus felt joy when He followed His Father's plan and felt His Father's love for Him (John 15:9–11; John 17:12–14).

**Read John 13:1, 34; John 15:9, 12; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Timothy 1:7, 13; 1 John 3:16; and 1 John 4:7–12, 19–21. What can we learn about love from these verses?**

God is love (1 John 4:8). God loves us so much that He gave us His only Son (John 3:16). Jesus shows us this love (Hebrews 1:3). If we want to know how to show love, we must look at Jesus. Then we will see that Jesus shows us the love in 1 Corinthians 13.

**Jesus is patient.** Paul says, "Christ Jesus showed that he was completely patient ['makrothymia'] with me, the worst person. That was an example to those people who would later believe in him. They would believe and receive [get] life for ever with God" (1 Timothy 1:16, EASY).

**Jesus is kind.** The Bible says that "the Lord is kind" (1 Peter 2:3, LEB). The word "Lord" in this verse is Jesus.

The word "kind" in this verse is also connected to the Greek word for being kind in 1 Corinthians 13:4.

**Jesus is happy when good things happen.** Jesus felt joy when He followed His Father's plan and felt His Father's love for Him (John 15:9–11; John 17:12–14).

**Jesus stays strong to the end.** Hebrews 12:3 says, "Think carefully about how Jesus lived on earth. Bad people did very bad things against him, but he continued to be strong" (EASY). Jesus suffered more than anyone else (Philippians 2:8). Jesus did these things because He wanted to do what He needed to do so that we could live with Him forever. That thought filled Him with joy!

**Jesus always trusts and believes.** When Ananias wondered if Paul was really a Christian, Jesus answered, " 'I have chosen him to work for me!' " (Acts 9:15, EASY). Jesus sees people for who they really are. More than that, He sees who they can become with His love.

**What are other ways that Jesus shows us what love is?**

**FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE**  
**(1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 John 4:8)**

So far, we learned that love is patient, kind, joyful, trusting, and hopeful. Love never quits and stays strong. Jesus is all these things. When we understand these things about Jesus, our next job is to copy His life. Paul wanted the Corinthians to copy Jesus.

But the Corinthians needed to learn a lot. So do we. After Paul tells us what love does and doesn't do, he ends with a talk about how real love is everlasting. Paul wants to encourage us to show this love in our lives.

The time will come when we won't need special messages about the future anymore. We will speak only one language. Human wisdom will be replaced with God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 13:12). The gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us will stop when we finish the work that God gave us the gifts to do (1 Corinthians 13:10). But "love will always continue" (1 Corinthians 13:8, EASY).

In the same way, faith will be replaced with sight when Jesus comes back (2 Corinthians 5:7). We will finally have everything we hoped for (Romans 8:24). Most of all, love will continue. Love shows us the heart of our Three-in-One God. The Three-in-One God is God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At the same time, faith and hope will also continue forever in a way. God's people will always remember the faith and hope they had in their hearts. They had faith that Jesus would save them (Romans 4:3). They hoped for a better life in the new earth. God's love is the strongest gift of all. God's love will continue forever.

Very soon, we will see our Lord face-to-face (1 Corinthians 13:12). Until that day comes, we must show these three things in our lives: faith, hope, and love. These three gifts show us the life we can have with God's Spirit. These three gifts were very important to the Christian life (Romans 5:1–5; Galatians 5:5, 6; Ephesians 1:15, 18; Ephesians 4:1–5). Love is the most important gift of all (1 Corinthians 13:13). That's because God is love (1 John 4:8).

**Think about the idea that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, ERV). What does this idea mean exactly? We can understand this idea only in part now. At the same time, why is this verse very good news for us?**



**Very soon, we will see our Lord face-to-face (1 Corinthians 13:12).**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Need of Love,” pages 545, 546, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 28, 1888.

“If you say you are a Christian, then your heart will be filled with love for God and for people. If your heart isn’t filled with this love, then you aren’t a true follower of Jesus. Maybe you have enough faith and power to do miracles. But without love, your faith is useless. Maybe you give big offerings to the church and help many people. But if you don’t have love in your heart, then all your gifts won’t earn you God’s favor. Even if you gave away all of your belongings to feed the poor. Maybe you are willing to die for God. But if you don’t have love for God in your heart, God will not reward you for giving up your life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 318, 319, adapted.

“We have many sermons. What we need most is love for people who are lost. This love comes from the throne of God. Real Christianity will fill our whole lives with love. Love changes every part of us: our brain, the heart, our helping hands, and the feet. Love helps us to stand strong for God. Love keeps us from being weak or walking on the wrong road in life. Jesus’ love for lost people gives strength to the whole Christian life.”—Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, page 134, adapted.

“What is the only love that can heal? The love that comes from the heart of Jesus. Only Jesus can heal our hurting and suffering hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 114, adapted.



**“Only Jesus can heal our hurting and suffering hearts.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Do you think Paul’s list about love is complete? If no, what else would you add to the list?
- ② What do you think Paul meant when he said, “Love is the thing you should want more than anything else” (1 Corinthians 14:1, WE)? How does this command help us to understand what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7?
- ③ Which parts of love do you need to show more in your daily life? Which parts of love does your local church need to show? Why do you think Paul compares love with the gifts of special messages; different languages; and wise words (1 Corinthians 13:8)?

## MEETING THE GENERAL

*(To protect the people in the story, we are not sharing their names, the name of the writer, or where the story happens.)*

That morning, I prayed longer than I often did. My wife and I were trying to get permission to stay in a country whose name we can't share with you. We had many problems trying to get permission. Finally, we were told that we could try to get a special card to stay in the country for six months. But we needed to go talk to the people in charge of deciding who could visit and stay in the country.

We knew that my wife's passport could be a problem. When the people in charge saw the information on her passport, they would tell her she couldn't stay. I didn't know any person who could help us. So, I asked God for help.

At the office for visitors to that country, we filled out papers and waited. We were nervous. The woman who helped us accepted my passport and papers. But she didn't accept my wife's passport. The woman asked us many questions about my wife's passport. None of my explanations convinced the woman. She waved us away and said, "You go see the general."

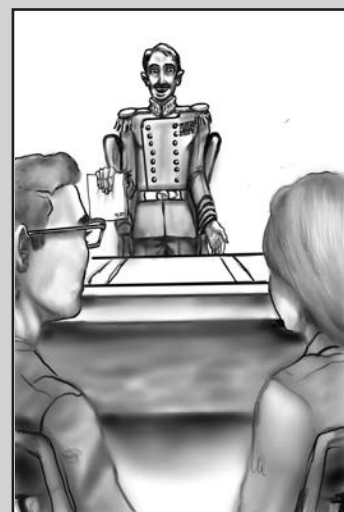
My heart pumped hard in my chest. I said a quick prayer. Someone showed us to an office at the end of a long hall. In the office, a young man sat behind a large desk. He smiled and said, "I am the general." He took our passports. Then he told us cheerfully that he was studying English. He hoped to serve soon in the United Nations. He didn't ask why we were sent to see him.

After a few minutes of filling out papers, he stood and announced, "The work is done. Come back tomorrow for your cards." I was surprised and happy. I felt the Holy Spirit tell me to give him my phone number. I wrote it down on a piece of paper and gave it to the general. I told him to call me anytime he wanted to meet and practice English. I would be happy to come visit him.

Later that day, the general sent me a text message. He said that he finished our cards early. We could come pick them up. We were so surprised and happy. God helped us—and so fast! We understood now that He used our problems to help us meet the general.

The general and I continue to talk. We have met many times. We talk about life and our beliefs. As the general's English gets better, our friendship grows. God continues to bless the work that my wife and I came to do in this country. We came to God when we were in need. We asked Him to help us do His work. God answered our prayer. He helped us remember the real reason we work for Him: to lead other people to Jesus.

## INSIDE Story



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