

What Love Does

Introduction. The apostle Paul knew the Corinthian church well. He laid the foundation of Christ Jesus there. He knew the terrible influence their culture had upon them. He saw the awful effects of the wisdom which does not descend from above but is earthly, sensual, and devilish (James 3:14-16). The church contained divisions, carnality, lawsuits, problems in marriages, uncaring attitudes, false doctrines, abuses of the Lord's Supper, and even misuses of spiritual gifts. To these brethren he said, "Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

I. The Importance And Definition Of Love

- A. One does not have to work hard to find the importance of love in the New Testament (Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 4:8, 16). There is nothing greater for us to understand and incorporate love into our lives. Love must provide the energy, motivation, and atmosphere for all we do.
 - 1. Christians in Corinth were endowed with spiritual gifts, but gifts exercised without love were nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
 - 2. A loveless person is himself of no value ("I am nothing"), he produces nothing of value ("sounding brass"), and he receives nothing of value ("it profiteth me nothing").
- B. Many poems, songs, and books have been written about love and what it means, but love is from God — clearly He can tell us the true essence of love (1 John 4:7). The most complete description of love is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, but technically God does not define love in terms of attitudes, feelings, or ideology — He only describes love in action. It is not obvious in English, but in Greek all 15 properties of love are verbs. If love were a person, this is what it would do.

II. The Properties Of Love And Practical Applications

- A. Love suffereth long.
 - 1. The word here means "long temper." Vine defines it as "The quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish." This term describes patience with people; the ability to be wronged and wronged again; to have the power to retaliate, but never consider retaliation as an option.
 - 2. To the Greeks it was a virtue to refuse to tolerate any insult or injury, to be ready to strike back at the least provocation. We see the same worldly philosophy in many of our heroes of the movies and television: tell someone off, put him in his place, and stand up for your rights!

B. Love is kind.

1. Kindness is the complement of patience. Patience endures the injuries of others, kindness pays them back only with good deeds.
2. Patience says, "I will take anything even from my enemies." Kindness says, "I will give anything, even to my enemies, to meet their needs."
3. The expression means "to show oneself useful." This is not an abstract quality or a sweet attitude, but the doing of deeds to help someone (Titus 3:4-5).

C. Love envieth not.

1. Envy is closely related to jealousy. Jealousy wants what another has. Envy wishes the other did not have it either. Zelos comes from a root word which means "to boil." Thus one who envies is seething over someone else's success (Proverbs 14:30).
2. The church at Corinth was infected with this disease (1 Corinthians 3:3). Other scriptures confirm how many sins are connected with envy — the first sin (Genesis 3:5-6); Cain's killing of Abel (Genesis 4:1-8); the mistreatment of Joseph by his brothers (Genesis 37:18-36); the elder brother's bad attitude (Luke 15:11-32); the chief priests and elders' murderous mistreatment of Jesus (Matthew 27:18).

D. Love vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up.

1. The first of these expressions represents the speech or action of pride while the second represents the attitude of pride. The root word for the first expression means "wind-bag," while the root word for the second means "bellows." Behind the "windy" display of boasting is the prideful, inflated view of oneself.
2. Conceit says, "I am better than you." Love says the opposite. The braggart wants others to feel he is superior; love esteems others better than himself (Philippians 2:3). The Corinthians were puffed up against one another (4:6); boasting of one teacher over another (3:1-7); puffed up in their knowledge instead of considering the weaker brother (8:1); and vying over spiritual gifts (14:1-40).
3. When John the Baptist learned that Jesus was drawing away his followers, he reacted in a gracious way (John 3:30). John's role as the one who prepared the way for the Messiah was a vital role. His popularity had soared, but he did not lose sight of his lowly position before God.

E. Love does not behave itself unseemly.

1. At first glance this property seems too insignificant to be connected with the great concept of divine love. But careful thought reveals the beauty and necessity of this part of the spectrum of love.

2. Rudeness or poor manners says, "I do not love you because I do not care what affects you. I will do what I like whether you like it or not!" It is easy to see how an inflated view of our own importance would lead us to be rude to others and contemptuous of their feelings. Love is always concerned over how it affects someone else.
- F. Love seeketh not her own.
1. Our world would teach us otherwise with its emphasis on personal rights, self-centeredness, and self-indulgence.
 2. It takes a genuine renewing of our minds to fulfill this property of love (Romans 12:1-2; cp. Romans 6:16-22; Galatians 2:20). We are to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-8), Timothy (Philippians 2:19-24), and Paul (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).
- G. Love is not easily provoked.
1. The word here means "to sharpen, to stimulate, or to stir up." It came to be used metaphorically of rousing or provoking anger.
 2. Love does not readily or suddenly become upset or irritated. It is never ready to fight (James 1:19-20). The dangerous emotion of anger is controlled and directed only toward what is offensive to God (cp. Acts 17:16).
- H. Love thinketh no evil.
1. This word was used of the keeping of an inventory by a bookkeeper. Essential items were recorded in a ledger so as to not be forgotten. Love does not keep an account of evil done to it. When God forgives us, He keeps no record of our sin (Hebrews 8:12).
 2. Husbands and wives or brethren in the Lord sometimes drag up past mistakes which we store in our hearts, ready to spew them out at strategic moments. Love makes no memories of evil — it forgets quickly.
- I. Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.
1. Some people rejoice in their own sin. We see it in men and women as they brag about their sexual exploits. Some rejoice in the sins of others (Romans 1:32). Some rejoice when others sin because it makes them feel holier. Some even wish for others to sin so it will hurt them. But love does not rejoice when someone is lost in sin.
 2. Love would never say, "I don't want to make an issue out of what he believes, I just want to love him" (2 John 6). The slightest compromise with iniquity takes the joy out of love. The ecumenical spirit of compromising with error is not love as God describes it (2 Thessalonians 3:5-6; 2 John 10-11).

- J. Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
1. These four properties of love are exaggerated statements. They do not mean all things in a universal sense. Love must discriminate (1 John 4:1-3). They must mean all things that fall within the limits of proper biblical boundaries.
 2. "Bear" means "to protect or preserve by covering." Out of regard and honest concern for the value of another person, love will do everything it can to cover up the sin of that person. Love will warn, rebuke, and discipline as needed, but it will protect as much as possible.
 3. Love does not ignore sin, but it believes in people until grudgingly shown otherwise. Love does not have suspicious motives, nor is it ready to believe the worst of others. It wants to see the best in all.
 4. What happens when you have covered sin in love, believed the best, and it does not turn out the way you wanted? The wayward child, the stubborn husband, or the disciplined member does not repent and turn. Love hangs on to hope.
 5. When love has borne, believed, and hoped all things and is disappointed, it endures anyway. "Endureth" is a military term that has to do with being positioned in battle against incredible opposition. Love cares too much to give up — it refuses to accept failure as final.

Conclusion. Paul had partaken of this divine love. He knew his own sinfulness (1 Timothy 1:12-15), but he also knew the power that works in a Christian (Ephesians 3:17-21). If there was hope for the Corinthians to act in love, there is hope for us. Start today in your life to do what love does. Then will come to pass what Christ truly desires (John 13:35).