

Weekly Devotionals: 1 Corinthians 13 | February 12, 2023

INTRODUCTION

For this week's devotionals, we're engaging God and the scriptures with our head, our hearts, and our hands.

Each week you'll have an opportunity to use your mind to learn (head), to engage how the scripture passage feels emotionally (heart), and be prompted with some action in response (hands).

Our hope is that this devotional will help you love God, love people, and make disciples.

HEAD

As you prepare to engage **1 Corinthians 13**, take some time to look through **1 Corinthians 8-12** and answer the following questions:

1. What are the themes Paul has addressed in the Corinthian church in these chapters that precede today's text?
2. From the themes you listed, what is the common thread for the Corinthian church? What are they experiencing as a body of Christ at the time of Paul's letter? What, if any, warnings did Paul give to them?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 slowly. Take time to read through the passage in two different translations.

This passage is often read apart from the context of the letter to the Corinthians, often taking away from the original meaning. While the text itself is a powerful description of love, reading these verses without an understanding of the previous chapters in Paul's letter can diminish the importance of his words here.



Theologian Warren Wiersbe writes,

“Few chapters in the Bible have suffered more misinterpretation and misapplication than 1 Corinthians 13. Divorced from its context, it becomes “a hymn to love” or a sentimental sermon on Christian brotherhood. Many people fail to see that Paul was still dealing with the Corinthians’ problems when he wrote these words: the abuse of the gift of tongues, division in the church, envy of others’ gifts, selfishness (remember the lawsuits?), impatience with one another in the public meetings, and behavior that was disgracing the Lord. The only way spiritual gifts can be used creatively is when Christians are motivated by love.”

The Greek word for love in this passage is *agape*. This word has a powerful meaning that isn’t romantic or sexual in nature but refers to a sacrificial love that wills the good of another. *Agape* reflects the love of God through the humility and sacrifice of Christ.

In *Gulliver’s Travels*, satirical author Jonathan Swift wrote,

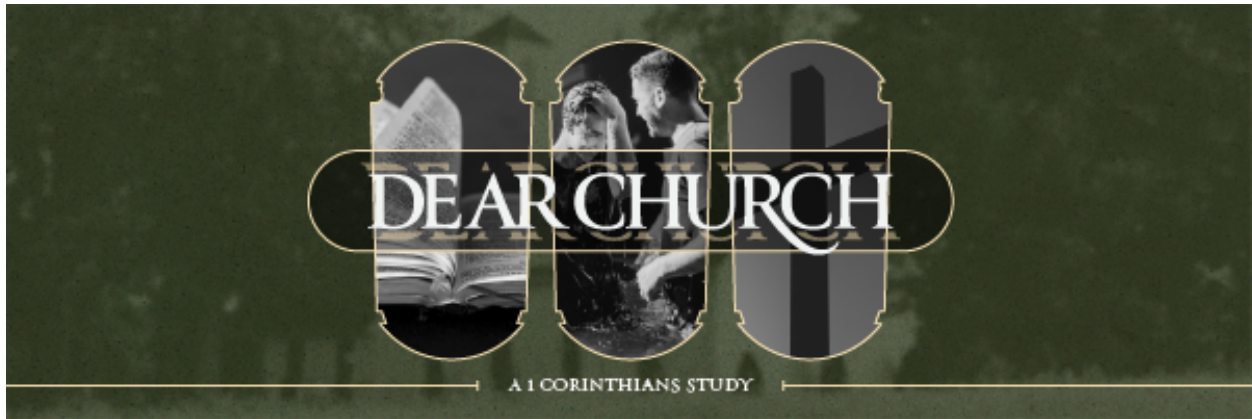
“We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.”

Anything we do for God that isn’t rooted in love can be destructive to the Kingdom of God, and is perhaps, even useless. In each of Paul’s passages on the body of Christ, there is an emphasis on love, displaying that the Christian life contains an inevitable growing love for others. Our passage this week demonstrates what that kind of mature Christian love looks like in action.

HEART

As you engage with the passage using your heart this week, consider these three questions:

1. Where is it easy for you to display the kind of love Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13? Who is easy to love? Where or to whom do you find it easy to sacrifice your preferences in love?
2. Is there a particular part of this passage that makes you feel as though you’re not loving well? If you examine your heart, how true is this list in you? Take some time to explain your answer.



3. Take a moment to re-read the passage, asking God to examine your heart. Invite him to speak to you. What are his invitations as you read the passage? Who might he be inviting you to love? What might he be inviting you to do in love?

Lastly, take a moment to write out 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, replacing the word “love” with your own name. Put it somewhere where you can easily read through it each morning as you’re getting ready. Invite God to grow these attributes of love in you every day.

HANDS

As you love others with the kind of love Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13, consider these action-oriented steps to help you apply this text to your life:

1. Who is one person you would like to “love” better this week? Write their name down.
2. Which 2-3 aspects of love from Paul’s list would you like to grow in and show to the person you identified?
3. What are 2-3 practical ways you can exemplify love to the person you identified in the ways that you identified this week?

Finally, spend time in prayer, asking God to help mold you into a more loving person.