

# Love, Love, Love

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Date: 10 March 2013

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, it would be great if you could keep your Bibles open at that passage. There's also an outline which hopefully you got on the way in and you might find that helpful. But first, let me lead us in prayer.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thanks for your word, the Bible. Thank you that you continue to speak to us through it and what you have to say to us is still relevant for us today.

So we pray, Heavenly Father, that you might give us ears to hear and hearts to live in light of what we learned tonight for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. So, love.

It's one of those topics that everyone has encountered, I'm sure. There's millions of books and songs. If I started... I'm not going to sing because I can't.

But if I started singing a song, I wonder if you could finish it. It's love, love me do. I love... Oh, thank you. All you need is...

[ 0 : 5 8 ] Yeah. There's plenty of them, isn't there? I'm not sure if that's all we need. We need food and things like that and so on. But there are thousands of love songs out there.

The world knows that love is an important thing. In fact, it's not just songs and books but movies. If I asked you what is the greatest love film of all time, I wonder what you'd say.

I mean, there's plenty to choose from, isn't there? What about this one on the next slide? Maybe that could be up there or the next one. Or what about this one?

I didn't get this one. My wife, Michelle, blubbered and I was bored all the way through. I didn't get it. Or how about this one? This one's a classic. Now, apparently, there's one particular scene.

It's called Darcy's Doting Glaze. I could hear it. My wife does the same thing. Oh. Ah. Now, but for me, this next one's my kind of love movie.

[ 2 : 0 1 ] Now, when you're thinking, how on earth can this be a love movie? It's the love the father has for his daughter. So, the next slide. See, there it is. Arnie, in all his glory.

And just in case, I think there's another love story which is a bit tamer. Yeah, the Nemo. I think that's it. You see, when most people think of love, they think of this romantic kind of love. But as I said, there are other types of love, of course, like between a parent and a child.

And it all begs the question, what exactly then is love? Well, tonight, as we come to the most famous chapter, one of the most famous chapters on love, I read at weddings all around the world, Paul is going to, we're going to get a bit of an idea of what love is as we look at it, at its character in particular.

But first, I want us to remember what the context is. We've missed a week with camp in between. So, let me remind you where we're up to in the letter of 1 Corinthians. I have a look at chapter 12, verse 31, because you could actually read the letter of 1 Corinthians without chapter 13 and you wouldn't skip a beat.

And so, we want to understand the context to understand why it's here. So, chapter 12, verse 31, Paul says, But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And then skip all the love bit and go down to chapter 14, verse 1.

[ 3 : 13 ] We'll come back to the love bits, all right. Eagerly desire the spiritual gifts. It says the same thing, especially the gift of prophecy. And on he goes. And so, you could, technically, you could skip chapter 13 completely and you wouldn't skip a beat.

So, why on earth has Paul put it here? Why is this chapter on love here? And the answer is, it's because the Corinthians weren't loving one another with their gifts. You see, the church in Corinth was about what was, they were on about what was flashy and impressive, what made them spiritually cool and look spiritually good.

And if you could speak in tongues, well, that made you pretty spiro. You look pretty cool, spiritually speaking. And Paul actually writes three chapters to get them thinking about how to use their gifts, particularly the gifts of tongues, properly.

It's a three-chapter argument, chapter 12, chapter 13 and chapter 14. And for those who weren't here, he began in chapter 12, verses 1 to 3, by saying that if you acknowledge Jesus as Lord, then you have the Spirit.

And just because you cannot speak in tongues doesn't make you less spiritual. No, no. Believing in Jesus makes you spiritual. Because believing in Jesus gives you the Spirit, full stop.

[ 4 : 24 ] That's what makes you spiritual. And then he said God gives us different gifts in chapter 12. We're not actually all supposed to speak in tongues. And just because you can't doesn't make you any less important to the church.

And so to illustrate that, if you've got your Bibles there, chapter 12, verse 14, he said, Now the body is not made up of one part but many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body.

It belongs. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be?

If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? And on he goes. And Paul's point is, no matter what gift or ability you have, you belong to the body. That is, you have every right to be part of the body, the church.

And so those who have so-called impressive gifts, speaking in tongues, which it was for the Corinthians, they can't say to others who have the so-called unimpressive gifts, we don't need you, you're not that important.

[ 5 : 29 ] No, no, they belong to the body. In fact, Paul writes in chapter 12, verse 21, the eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you. And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you.

We need each other. As Mark pointed out a couple of weeks ago, we as a church need you. We don't, when you come to church, sorry, when you don't come to church, the body suffers.

We need you. But you also need us. Just like an eye or an arm detached from the body doesn't survive very long, so also a Christian detached from a church won't survive on their own.

God has given us each other and given us different gifts to help each other grow as the body of Christ. The problem was, this is not how some of the Corinthians were thinking. They thought they needed just the so-called impressive ones, the gifts like speaking in tongues and so on.

And it would seem they looked down on those who had perhaps boring gifts, like administration or whatever. And Paul writes, sorry if you've got this. That's the Corinthians, that's not God.

[ 6 : 35 ] And so Paul, after reminding them that they all belong to the body equally, he then inserts chapter 13 to highlight a key principle, the principle of love.

Love for one another ought to determine which gifts are greater, not how cool or spiro they look. And so he begins by highlighting the importance of love, point one on the outlines.

He says at the end of chapter 12, he says, but eagerly desire the greater gifts and now I will show you the most excellent way. Notice here that Paul describes love as a most excellent way.

In other words, it is not a gift. It's not a spiritual gift that some Christians have and others don't have. No, no, love is described as a way, an excellent way of life that every Christian is to have, regardless of what gifts you may or may not have.

In fact, he says, if you don't have love, then your so-called impressive gifts actually count for nothing. Have a look at verses 1 to 3 of chapter 13. He says, 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.

[ 7 : 46 ] If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can even 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 in martyrdom, but have not love, I gain nothing.

It's very clear, isn't it? Paul exaggerates some gifts here, I think. You know, faith that is so strong that it can move mountains or being able to speak in the tongues of angels or whatever it is. But he exaggerates these things to make the point that even if you have the most impressive gift there is and have not love, then it counts for nothing.

It's all in vain. Some time ago when I was younger, I was at a conference and I heard this guy speak. Let's call him Bill. Bill was an impressive speaker.

He helped me understand the Bible. I had some great jokes as well, so that was pretty cool, and so on. And I saw him afterwards standing in a queue to get a coffee. As I said, I was a younger guy, I was a bit shy at the time, so I plucked up the courage to go over and thank him for his talks.

So I went up and said, oh, hi Bill, just wanted to say thanks for this morning. I... And then he interrupted me. He kind of just turned around and said, yeah, thanks, and put his back to me and stood in line to get the coffee.

[ 9 : 04 ] Didn't let me continue the conversation. And then I kind of stood there, you know, for 10 seconds or so going, oh. And then he saw a friend come and then he went over to meet them and say hello and it was all smiles for them.

At that point, all the good work he had done became undone because he had not love. I realise, of course, everyone doesn't function well without coffee.

I get that. But as I said, all the good work he had done during his talk came undone. As a younger guy, I had trouble actually listening to him for the rest of the conference because of how he treated me.

You see, you can have the most impressive gift of speaking or whatever it is, but without love, it counts for nothing. In fact, it's stronger than that here in verses 1 to 3. Paul says, not that the gift counts for nothing, but the person is nothing.

Nothing themselves. Do you notice? He says, I am nothing. It's very strong. Without love, even the person is nothing. So, what is love? Well, in verses 4 to 7, Paul describes its character which brings us to point 2.

[ 10 : 09 ] Have a look in your Bibles at verses 4 to 7. He says, 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.

Love always protects, or better is, bears up. Always trusts. Always hopes. Always perseveres. Notice here that love often leads to action.

Do you notice that? It's more than just a feeling or saying, I love you. Though, if we've got a couple married guys here tonight, I'd like to remind you, as my wife reminds me, it does include saying, I love you, from time to time.

But it's much more than that, isn't it? It's about being patient and kind, and not being rude or improper. It's not self-seeking. It doesn't, and rather, it seeks the good of others.

[ 11 : 10 ] It forgives and it keeps no record of wrongs. These are actions. And notice verse 6, it rejoices with the truth. So many people these days are afraid to speak about what is true.

But in the end, that is actually unloving, to not stand up for the truth. No, no, we are to speak the truth in love. If we know the truth about Jesus and don't pray for others or take opportunities that come up to speak about Jesus, then we are actually being unloving.

Love also, verse 7, protects or literally bears all things. That is, love moves us to bear with people, even when they do something that's wrong to us or hurt us or just downright annoy us.

Love bears with them and it always trusts. If a relationship doesn't have trust, then it does not have love. They go hand in hand, together. Of course, you can lose trust, but love also always hopes, always perseveres, it says.

And so love leads us to keep trying to maintain relationships, hopes for the best, perseveres, doesn't keep record of wrongs, but forgives and so on. This is the character of love.

[ 12 : 24 ] It's all about action. It's not any old action. I received an email about an Aussie bloke a couple of weeks ago. It said this, it's on the slide. It said, the missus and I walked past a swanky new restaurant last night.

Did you smell that food? It smelled incredible, she said. Being the good Aussie bloke that I am, I thought, blow it, why not? I'll give her a treat. So we walked past it again. Now, that's an action, but is that love?

See, love is not just any old action. It's an action that seeks the good of the other person, even if it costs you.

To love is to be patient with them, even if it costs you lots of effort and self-control. Love is not being self-seeking, it's being other person seeking, if you like.

Perhaps the best definition of love is found in 1 John chapter 4. I'm not sure if it's on the slide. Yep, great. It says this, this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

[ 13 : 30 ] See, love here is defined as a sacrificial action, God giving at great cost for our good. That's what love fundamentally is, sacrificially giving for the good of others.

It may not always cost us much, but giving will always cost us something. But that's love, sacrificially giving for the good of others. That's how God loves us, that's how Jesus loves us.

In fact, many have pointed out that you can actually substitute the word or the name Jesus for the word love in these verses and it rings true and it rings true every time. So, Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind, Jesus does not boast, He is not proud, Jesus is not rude nor self-seeking and so on.

It rings true every time, doesn't it? But I wonder if we inserted our name for the word love, if it would ring true every time. Maybe sometimes for some of these things, but I strike out of the first one, Andrew is patient.

No, I've got three kids, three kids. No, I don't always have patience. What about you? How far would you get if you inserted your name in those verses? The reality is we are not always patient and kind with others and instead we do envy what others have and are often self-seeking and so on.

[ 14 : 50 ] Most married couples, non-Christian married couples that I've married, ask for this passage at their wedding more than any other passage because they think it's such a wonderful passage about love and it is that.

But the irony is it is also a mirror that shows us how unloving we are because when we look at it we realise how far short of this ideal of love we fall.

But, that's what makes God's love so great, doesn't it? Because it not only tells us what love is, it also brings us forgiveness for in love God sacrificially gave His Son for our good to die for our sins which is good for us, to give us the assurance of heaven which is good for us.

He died for us for all the times we have not loved others or God as we ought. He died for our good and to receive all this good we simply believe or trust in Jesus.

forgiveness. And so I need to ask at this point do you? Do you trust in Jesus? Have you benefited from God's love for you?

[ 16 : 02 ] If you haven't and would like to it's simple you pray something like thank you for your love I believe Jesus died for me help me to follow Him something simple like that and if you pray something like that God will hear you and give you those things that are for your good forgiveness assurance of heaven His presence with us now.

Of course although this passage points to God's love and how we are to love Paul's point here was to get the Corinthians to use their gifts in love and he's been doing this by showing how great or excellent love is firstly by talking about its importance secondly by talking about its character and thirdly about its permanence so point three we're up to verse eight he says love never fails or literally never ends but where there are prophecies they will cease where there are tongues they will be stilled where there is knowledge it will pass away you see love never fails or literally never ends in other words it is permanent that's what he's saying here but their gifts of prophecy or tongues or knowledge they are not permanent now he says they will all pass away and in verses nine to twelve explains why they will pass away so verse nine he says for or because we know in part and we prophesy in part but when perfection comes the imperfect disappears he says and the second half of verse twelve he also says now I know in part then I shall know fully even as I am fully known and what he's talking about here is the reason the gifts will pass away is because we won't need them in heaven

Paul is saying the partial we experience now here on earth will give way to the complete we'll experience then in heaven at the moment we only know in part which means we can only prophesy or speak in part but when perfection comes well the partial gives way to the complete that is when we are fully in heaven then we'll all fully know and understand just as God fully knows and understands us verse twelve and then we won't need some people with the gift of prophecy to tell us because well we'll fully know in fact when heaven comes we'll no longer need any gift to help us grow as Christians because we'll be all fully grown in Christ's likeness and to illustrate his point Paul gives us two analogies so have a look at verse eleven he says when I was a child I talked like a child I thought like a child I reasoned like a child but when I became a man you know when the partial gives way to the complete I put childish ways behind me or verse twelve is the second one now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror so it's partial then in heaven we will see face to face see what Paul's saying when you're a kid you naturally act like a kid but when you grow up you're supposed to put childish ways behind you well likewise the gifts while you're on earth we're supposed to use our gifts to help each other grow as Christians but when we're in heaven we'll all be fully grown so we won't need the gifts anymore instead we're to put them behind us he says or as in the mirror you know we see God through the mirror of scripture it shows us what he is like but then in heaven we'll see him face to face that is we'll know him fully and so we won't need the gifts to help us know God more because we'll all know him completely you see because the partial gives way to the complete then the gifts have a limited lifespan that's his point our kids are really into bike riding at the moment and the sunny weather was good although this is too hot at the moment and Tim when he started off he started off with training wheels as I'm sure many of you did but then his partial bike riding has given way to complete and so the training wheels jettison they go off don't they it's the same with spiritual gifts spiritual gifts are like the training wheels we need while we're here on earth we need them now to help us grow as the body of Christ but when heaven comes then well we'll no longer need them because we'll all know God we'll all see him face to face and we'll all be fully grown as Christians like Christ and so Paul says to the

Corinthians don't get caught up with these spiritual gifts they're not as important as you think they are because they're not going to last in fact they won't even exist in their current form in heaven they will all pass away but love no no love never passes away love will never end it will always remain see verse 13 and now these three remain faith hope and love but the greatest of these is love Paul says once in heaven the gifts will pass away and only faith hope and love will remain and the greatest of those three is love why is love the greatest well it could be because God's love gave us faith and hope in Christ but I wonder also if it's the greatest because it's the one out of all three that remains unchanged see faith for example you know trusting God faith is about trusting God even when we cannot see as one song says we walk by faith not by sight but in heaven we will still trust God but we will also see

God and so we will walk by faith and by sight and so it has changed a bit you see we'll still trust God we'll still have faith still remains but it's a little changed so also hope hope in the Bible is about a certain expectation it's not like earthly hopes that are uncertain and the great Christian hope is heaven in all its fullness and so if we are in heaven then we no longer it's no longer just an expectation is it it's also a reality it's changed but we still have some expectation that it will continue for eternity so we have the reality and the expectation it's changed a little but love it changes at nothing at all it is the one thing that never changes it's more permanent you see it won't need any modification in heaven not one aspect of it will pass away the way we have to love God and love others now is the way we'll love God and love others for eternity and so it says Paul is the greatest so says

[ 22 : 25 ] Paul love one another that's his point which I'm sure you've gotten by now for this the Corinthians it means for them that they ought to be more concerned about doing what was loving towards one another than simply pursuing gifts that seemed impressive or cool and that's why Paul goes and says in chapter 14 he says follow the way of love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts especially the gift of prophecy for anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God indeed no one understands him he utters mysteries with his spirit but everyone who prophesies speaks to others for their strengthening encouragement and comfort and so prophecy is more loving but more of that next week for us today I hope you've seen the greatness of love its importance its character its permanence as a virtue among God's people and so the obvious application for us is are we loving one another and the Corinthians weren't they were pursuing what was important to them the impressive gifts rather than loving one another and sometimes we can do the same actually we can pursue what is important to us the things that are important to us rather than loving the new person or the person we know not so well but we're to love one another which means using our gifts to encourage others and build others up to seek their good above our own

I know of one guy who used to come to 6pm church and I think he has the gift of encouragement because he always is positive he's always smiling when he sees you he's always asking how you're going and so on and he used this gift to drive people home one person in particular even when he was tired and exhausted and he'd used the car trip home to talk to this person about what they'd heard in the sermon that night and so this person who got the lift home was encouraged and built up both by the conversation and by the practical expression love love you see we have to keep loving one another that's just one example of course this is not always easy and so if you need motivation to keep loving if you are finding it hard and tiring then look back at the cross and see God's love for you remember his deep deep love for you his love that cost him so dearly his love that gave his son for us for at the cross we not only find forgiveness a model of love but we also find the motivation to keep loving in fact 1 John chapter 4 the very next verse says that so it's on the screen says this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins dear friends since God so loved us we also ought to love one another let's pray that we would let's pray our gracious heavenly father we thank you for this reminder tonight of the need to love to love others above ourselves even if it costs us father we thank you for your sacrificial love towards us that you did not spare your own son but gave him up for us all in light of your love for us help us to keep loving one another we pray in Jesus name amen