

True **Love**

1 Corinthians 13

Love Stories...

The airwaves are full of love songs. Magazines and newspapers are full of “love stories” - usually involving celebrities. The fact is, everybody loves a good romance. Usually, the emphasis is on “how you make me feel.” After all, love is the greatest feeling of all! But is that the whole story? What is real love? And how does it influence the way we live?

It all starts with LOVE!

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13. How does the context provided by 12:27-31 save chapter 13 from being “just a nice sentimental passage to read at weddings?”

2. Linking 12:31 and 13:1 with the rest of chapter 13, what will the “greater” gifts involve?

3. How do verses 1 to 3 put the gifts mentioned in chapter 11 into perspective?

4. If you had a friend who “spoke in tongues”, had the “gift of prophecy”, had a brilliant understanding of Christian theology, had huge faith and was incredibly generous to the poor, where would they rate on your “scale of spirituality”?

Where would a person like that rate on Paul’s scale?

In summary, Paul says, if there’s no love involved, you’re a nobody... no matter what other fancy gifts you’ve got. You can go all the way and martyr yourself... and if you have no love, you’ve gained nothing.

5. So what is love all about? This famous passage spells it out. Fill in the details below...

v4 Love is a)
 b)

v4 Love does not a)
 b)

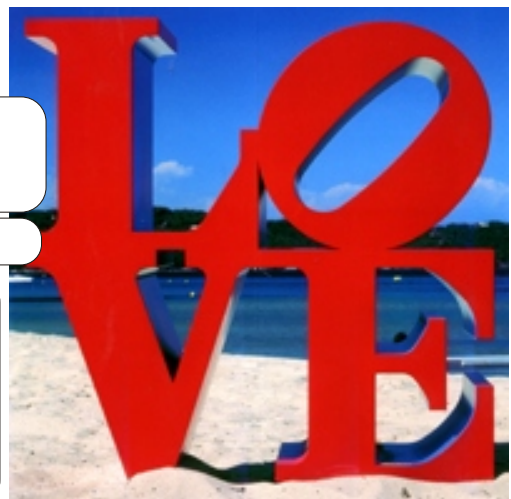
v5 Love is not a)
 b)
 c)

v5,6 Love does not a)
 b)

v6 Love rejoices with

v7 Love always a)
 b)
 c)
 d)

v8 Love never



6. Paul is saying these things because the Corinthians need to hear them. Write out a REVERSE LIST. What would it be like to be part of a church family that demonstrated THESE qualities?

Can you think back to any examples earlier in the letter that show the Corinthian Christians needed this reminder?

7. How will a love that is not *envious, self seeking, proud or boastful* translate into the way we seek to use our spiritual gifts as part of a church family?

8. According to verse 8 to 12, when we're finally in heaven, a number of things the Corinthians seem to value will pass away. What are they, and why will they be gone?

When the smoke clears, what will be left standing?

9. Note the similar wording between 13:11 and 14:18-20. What point is Paul making about the Corinthians priorities and behaviour?

10. Follow Paul's train of thought...

12:31 **Eagerly desire** the **greater gifts**... now I will show you the most excellent way.

13:13 These three remain - faith, hope and love. But the **greatest** of these is love.

14:1 Follow the way of **love**, and **eagerly desire spiritual gifts**.

11. Paul has laid all the ground-work for what he's going to say in chapter 14. For now, though - without reading any of chapter 14 - what sort of gifts do you *expect* him to encourage the Corinthians to specialise in?

12. What could make some gifts more "loving" than others?

What sort of lover are YOU?

How are you going as a "lover"? Love, as Paul defines it, isn't simply a warm and fuzzy feeling. It's all about putting others first. Real love is about following the example of Jesus (11:1). Read the description of love again, and replace the word "love" with "Jesus." Now... in private... read it again, and substitute YOUR OWN name. Which bits made you feel most like a fraud? Where do you need to change?