

Love Is...

1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13

Key Verse: 13:4

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.”

* Without love (1-3)

1. While teaching the Corinthians about spiritual gifts, what did Paul pause to show them? (12:31b) In verses 1-3, how many times does Paul use the expression, "If I"? What gifts does he mention? Why do Christians crave such gifts? What happens when these are practiced without love?

* What love is (4-7)

2. Read verses 4-7. In Greek, the word for love here is "agape." It is derived from God's love and means selfless, sacrificial and unconditional. In verses 4-6, what does Paul say love is? And what is it not? Of all the characteristics of love, why does Paul mention patience and kindness first? (Ro 2:4)

3. Without love, what are we human beings inclined to do? (4b-6a; Ge6:5; 8:21) How can we overcome these sinful tendencies within us? (Ro8:5-9; Gal5:16ff.) How does love relate to the truth? (6b; Ro12:9)

4. Read verse 7. How are the verbs "protects," "trusts," "hopes" and "perseveres" related to building up others? What is the progression here? See the following illustrations: "protects": Mk2:23-26; Jn17:15; "trusts": Ac 9:26-28; "hopes": Jn1:42; Lk22:32; "perseveres": Lk15:20.

5. In light of verse 7, what one thing can you try to improve in the relationships in your personal life and fellowship?

* Love never fails (8-13)

6. How is love different from all other spiritual gifts? (8-10) What is most valuable, and how does this help us in using our gifts? How did God's love affect Paul's way of thinking and lead to his maturity? (11)

7. What is our hope, and what was Paul's hope? (12) What are the three essentials in Christian life, and which is the greatest? (13) What should be most important to us in our struggle to grow as Christians?