

Week 24 LEADER Discussion Questions

Text: 1 Cor 13 (This week's passage is focusing on verses 4-7.)

Icebreaker: What are some popular ideas about what love is? *(For bonus points, consider singing a few lyrics from a cheesy love song!)*

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

2. The description of love in verses 4-7 includes both what love is and of what love is not. How might the situation in the Corinthian church be different if they exhibited these traits more consistently?

It's not difficult to imagine how they would have lacked these qualities as they were divided over things like social status, different convictions over food, and the desire to outdo one another in demonstrating their spiritual gifts. Each of these qualities of love would have served as a guard against self-advancing, self-seeking behavior.

Application: While they're all important, do you find some of these most essential for a healthy church? Why?

3. Acting in love is "a still more excellent way" (see 12:31) with regard to spiritual gifts. With verses 4-7 in mind, why is love essential even in a church where people have been wonderfully gifted by God's Spirit?

The gifts are incredible examples of God's grace that are meant for the good of the church overall. Without love, they can so easily be misused and become instruments of division rather than unity. A lack of love can lead to comparison, competitiveness, and the elevating of individuals rather than seeking the common good of all.

Application: Have you witnessed spiritually gifted people employing their gifts in ways that contrasted the kind of attributes in this passage? What happened?

4. *Application:* It's often pointed out that these descriptions of love are also descriptions of God. Pick one or two of these attributes and share about how God has displayed them in your life. For example, how have you experienced God's patience and kindness?

5. *Application:* Verse 7 includes the words “bears,” “believes,” “hopes,” and “endures.” Why is it important, as we think about life in the church, for love to include these kinds of rugged or resilient qualities?

It's not hard to find messages in our culture about love that present it as being merely soft and sentimental. Instead, the portrayal of love here suggests that love is able to withstand difficulty and strain. “Bears” and “believes” can each be interpreted a couple different ways, but both likely relate to facing difficulties of the moment. Meanwhile, “hopes” and “endures” are forward-looking, knowing that the future is determined by God's sovereign and good purposes. Love, then, doesn't exist in isolation but is deeply rooted and reinforced by what we believe to be true about God. This is critical in the church as we, like the Corinthians, often face challenges, both internally and externally. In all, love doesn't make the church soft; it makes the church strong and resilient.

How does this compare with the popular idea that love is primarily a feeling or emotion?