

SERIES: DARE TO LOVE
"CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE"

SERIES FOCUS: Love is the foundation of our relationship with God and others. We must learn to love as Christ loves.

LESSON FOCUS: There are many characteristics of love that we should strive to learn and to show others. When we understand love's characteristics we can apply it to our lives.

Scripture Passage: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV) – "4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends."

- A. Because God's greatest attribute is love and we strive to be like Christ, then we must strive to love like Christ loves.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 13:13 (ESV)** – "13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."
 - b. As Christians, sometimes it is hard for us to love like Christ because we do not always relate the concept of love to Christ's love. We relate to love however love has been given and shown to us.
 - c. For some – not all – but some, the concept of love is difficult to understand and believe in, much less to give to others, because of our bad experiences with love.
 - d. But as we discussed last week, as the children of God, we must have the courage to love – to love God, to love ourselves and to love others.
- B. Things brings the question – what is Godly love? What are the attributes and characteristics of God's love? 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 explains the characteristics of Godly love – let's go through each characteristic.

a. Love is **patient**...

- i. The word patient is interchangeable with the words steadfast and enduring.
- ii. **Application:** This means love is willing to endure emotional discomfort and suffering. It is the opposite of demanding what we want right now and being easily angered.
- iii. **James 5:7-9 (ESV)** – “7 Be patient, therefore, brothers,[a] until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”

b. Love is **kind**...

- i. The word kind is interchangeable with the words good and pleasant.
- ii. **Application:** This insinuates a love that always seeks the best for the other person. A love that is willing to go the extra mile. It's the opposite of being mean, angry and rude.
- iii. **Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)** – “32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

c. Love is **rejoicing with truth**...

- i. This phrase, “rejoicing with truth”, indicates that Godly love embraces honesty and openness. It also delights and celebrates.
- ii. **Application:** This means a love that is happy to know the truth – it's the opposite of delighting in evil. God, who is love, delights in what is true and just. God's love does not ignore our sin, but it provides a way for justification through truth and love.

- iii. **1 John 4:10 (ESV)** – “10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.”

d. Love **always protects and preserves...**

- i. The desire and impulse to protect is rooted in Godly love.
- ii. **Application:** This is demonstrated through love that reassures others that their heart, and the things that matter to them, are safe with us. This is the opposite of keeping a record of wrongs. Love does not necessarily forget – but it most definitely forgives. We learn from mistakes and we strive to protect and preserve those whom we love.
- iii. **Galatians 6:1-2 (ESV)** – “Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. 2 Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

e. Love **always trusts, believes and is faithful...**

- i. Trust is difficult for many people because through bad experiences with others who we have loved, or who have loved us, we have experienced broken trust. People have failed us. But to love like Christ is to continue to place faith and belief in someone – even with their failures...to rebuild trust.
- ii. **Application:** This type of love – one that trusts and is faithful is necessary for an intimate relationship. When someone opens their heart to us, they must feel safe and trust that you will love and care for them. That there is confidence found in you. It is the opposite of self-seeking motives.
- iii. **Proverbs 10:9 (ESV)** – “Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.”

f. Love is **always hopeful**...

- i. This word hopeful is comparable to the word expectant. It is to choose to see the positive in everything – to give the benefit of the doubt – to see things not as they are, but for what they can become.
- ii. **Application:** Hopeful love, loves despite sin and mistakes and expects a greater outcome. It is hopeful that even if someone abuses our love, that God will remain faithful to His promises and guide us. This is the opposite of cynicism and an angry outlook.
- iii. **Romans 15:13 (ESV)** – “13 I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

g. Love **always perseveres**...

- i. The word perseveres means the same thing as the word “survives”. No matter what, Godly love cannot be stopped – it can never die. It survives whatever it faces.
- ii. **Application:** Persevering love is one that loves despite wrongdoings, mistakes, trials, and pain. This type of love loves in every season, at every moment, to everyone. It makes us available to others because no matter what, we love them.
- iii. **Romans 12:12** – “12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.”

C. As we have understood what the characteristics of God’s love are through 1 Corinthians 13, this passage also teaches us what Godly love *is not*.

a. Love is **not envious**...

- i. This word envious is the same as jealousy or coveting. Godly love does not cause us to desire what we cannot have.

- ii. **Application:** Godly love gives us fulfillment and contentment. We cannot desire and be jealous of what others have. We cannot become possessive to the point of obsession with others. We must be content in what God has given us.
- iii. **Job 5:2 (ESV)** – “Surely resentment destroys the fool, and jealousy kills the simple.”

b. Love is **not boastful**...

- i. This means that love does not cause us to be bragging or conceited.
- ii. **Application:** Godly love pushes us towards humility. Humility is not boastful. Humility does not cause us to constantly elevate ourselves and push others down. Godly love will not allow us to brag and bring glory to ourselves and have a conceited spirit.
- iii. **James 4:16 (ESV)** – “16 Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil.”

c. Love is **not proud**...

- i. This means that love does not allow us to be egotistical, or arrogant.
- ii. **Application:** Love causes us to hear others. To be concerned with others. To listen to others – not to live as if only our opinion matters. We must strive not to be egotistical.
- iii. **1 Peter 5:5 (ESV)** – “5 In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

d. Love is **not rude**...

- i. This word rude is comparable to immodest, disgraceful.

- ii. **Application:** Godly love demonstrates consideration for other's feelings. If we are purposefully inconsiderate, or even offensive, of others then we are displaying selfishness and a lack of Godly love. This is the opposite of kindness. Even if you are right – right does not give you the authority to be rude.
- iii. **Proverbs 10:32 (ESV)** – “The lips of the godly speak helpful words, but the mouth of the wicked speaks perverse words.”

e. Love is **not self-seeking**...

- i. This means the ideology, “Always look out for number 1” is not truly centered in Godly love. This mentality is self-serving.
- ii. **Application:** Godly love looks out for others first. It puts others wellbeing above our own. It is being concerned not only with my needs, but the needs of others. To be self-seeking is the opposite of a life that depends on God.
- iii. **Philippians 2:4 (ESV)** – “4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.”

f. Love is **not easily angered**...

- i. This means that when we have Godly love it is not coupled with irritableness.
- ii. **Application:** Godly love does not seek to argue. Some are always ready to argue – always ready to go against – always angered. But one who displays this has not learned patience and kindness.
- iii. **Ecclesiastes 7:9 (ESV)** – “Control your temper, for anger labels you a fool.”

g. Love does **not keep records of wrong**...

- i. This means that love forgives – it does not resent.

- ii. **Application:** Godly love empowers us to let go of past injustices. It prevents us from planning revenge, or reminding others how they have failed us before. Instead it forgives.
- iii. **Proverbs 24:29 (ESV)** – “And don’t say, “Now I can pay them back for what they’ve done to me! I’ll get even with them!”

D. As we strive to be more like Christ, we must examine these areas in our lives. How do we measure and compare to the characteristics of God’s love?

- a. Are we easily angered or are we patient?
- b. Are we boastful or do we lift up others?
- c. Are we resentful or do we forgive?
- d. Are we prideful or are we clothed in humility?
- e. Are we envious or are we content?
- f. Are we concerned with ourselves or are we concerned with others?

- g. God desires for all of us to learn to love as He loves us!