

“Loving Like Jesus”

– Part 2, **What it isn't...**

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1 Corinthians 13:1-8a ...*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and*

understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails...

(John 13:34), “***A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.***”

A preacher once asked a class, “What do you do with the commandments in the Bible?” A little old lady raised her hand and answered, “I underline them in blue.”

Well, that’s nice. But **then** what do you do with them? Underlining all the commandments in blue may help you spot them as you read your Bible. But the point of the commands in the Bible is that we obey them, not just underline them in blue.

If we all were to rate ourselves on a scale of 1-10 on how well we obey the biblical command to love others, probably most of us would put down a 7 or 8. Maybe a few would dare to score a 9. But a 10? Hey, no one’s perfect! But I have a hunch that most of us think, “*You know, I’m a basically loving person, but I sure wish my roommate, my spouse, my neighbor...would be more loving.*”

But when you stop to think about the fine print in Jesus’ command, your ratings will plummet. He said that we are to love one another, ***even as He has loved us...*** Note the “fine print” is that phrase, “***even as I have loved you.***” That bumps His command up to a Mt. Everest kind of command! A very few may make the summit of Everest, but no one lives up there. On rare occasions, we may succeed in loving others as Christ loved us, but none of us live there consistently. It’s the same as Paul’s command (Eph. 5:25), “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*” You never reach a point where you can say, “I’ve got that one down! Let’s move on to other things!” These are commands that we’ve got to keep working on.

You may wonder, in what sense is Jesus’ command a new commandment? After all, Leviticus 19:18 commands, “... *you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” The entire Old Testament law is summed up by the two commandments, ***love God and love your neighbor.*** So how is Jesus’ command new? I agree with most scholars who say that the newness of Jesus’ command is the new **standard** that He gives, “even as I have loved you.”



Jesus' sacrificial love in going to the cross for us is the new standard...one that is quite impossible to live out consistently apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Love is a big word in everyone's vocabulary, but not everyone means the same thing when we use the word. The problem we face as believers is not that we live in a cave and have never dealt with this issue of love. The struggle is that we tend to let the world dictate the definition and the manifest of this thing "love" and the modern world has adopted a notion of love that is completely different from the love taught and modeled by Jesus Christ.

For one thing, worldly love is profoundly fickle. Those who claim they love us are there during the good times, but are conspicuously absent when the going gets rough. God will not leave us in the tough times. Jesus' promise is, "I *will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5 ESV).

Worldly love oftentimes attempts to present a righteous love but it is most often merely a knock-off, a pale shadow compared to the real love that only God knows. For example, worldly love will be more apt to throw some money at a problem instead of offering someone a life to lean on. It calls itself 'tolerant' while overlooking all kinds of sinful and destructive behavior in the name of 'love'.

Worldly love is based upon the experience. It happens to a person when the "chemistry is right," while Jesus love is based on a decision wherein we decide to invest ourselves in another by giving of ourselves to meet his or her needs. Christ was the supreme example...deciding to die for us *before we even existed*. (Ephesians 1:3)

Worldly love is defined by feelings. "I love you" means I feel a certain warmth, desire, or affinity for you. Christ centered love will hopefully involve those nice feelings too but are not defined by such nor is such necessary, but it always contains a commitment to serve the other person. Jesus may not have felt a fuzzy warmth toward the soldiers who flogged him, but he died for them anyway.

Worldly love can't be controlled so I can't be *expected* to love someone. Jesus love *can* be controlled and is ultimately based on personal choice and commitment.

Worldly love depends on the other person. He or she must be attractive or lovely enough to elicit a love response from me. Jesus loved depends on God and me. I can love the unlovely, like Christ did when he died for us while we were enemies of God (Romans 5:10)

Worldly love is self-affirming. It is a good feeling and must be two-way. If a relationship is not rewarding to me, I have the right to leave and find another. Self-sacrificial Christian love is uni-directional and seeks only to give and keeps no record of whether the other person gives back. (I Corinthians 13:5)

Worldly love often seeks to please others'...*albeit, often ultimately manifested in such a manner so I feel good by the exercise of such*. Effort is extended to please or pacify others by doing what they want. But Jesus love acts in a manner that is *best* for the other person, not with what the other wants. This love recognizes that what people want and what they need are often different. The other person may need confrontation even if he or she doesn't want it, and may be the best exercise of love we can pursue.

So if we aspire to love like Jesus, what attributes should we be seeking in order to be more like Him and less like the world? As Christians, we seek to imitate Jesus in all ways, including how we love. But what does that mean in our practical day-to-day living? First John 4:8 says, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." This verse shows us that if we know God, we *will* be loving. Since Jesus is God's love embodied, what does it mean for us to love like Jesus? We looked last week at what Jesus love *was*, let's look at what it is *not*: **Love isn't envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, selfish, irritable, resentful, rejoiceful in wrong.**

1. envious

The envy addressed in 1 Corinthians 13 is of the virulent variety. It poisons relationships and damages our hearts. It can lead us to treat people poorly or to overlook the blessings in our own lives. The more we are gripped by a desire for the possessions and attributes of others, the less we are able to be thankful for our own lives. Such envy ultimately keeps us from loving others . . . and even from loving God. In fact, jealousy is connected to one of the oldest human sins, Cain's murder of his brother Abel in Genesis 4.

What will help us become free from jealousy? First, we must own it in ourselves. Sometimes we try to pretend that we're not jealous because it isn't a pretty emotion. At other times, jealousy reflects a deep sense of our own inadequacy, a woundedness for which we need God's healing.

Second, we should confess our jealousy, asking the Lord to forgive and deliver us. Third, we should reflect upon the blessings in our lives, all the ways God has been good to us. The more we are content, the less we will envy others. Fourth, we must resolve not to wallow in feelings of jealousy. When such emotions return, turn them over to the Lord. Fifth, we can share our struggles with a trusted Christian friend who can pray for us, encourage us, and hold us accountable.

Christ-centered love is not envious. It celebrates the good fortune of others and smiles when someone succeeds because His love is an envy eraser. It can't wait for someone else to reach their goals and get the attention and accolades, for it is emotionally secure and mature.

2. boastful

The word that Paul uses here in 1 Corinthians 13, translated as a 'boast,' is only used here in the New Testament. It means to "heap praise on oneself" or to be a "windbag." It seems that Paul is referring to a specific type of boasting, a boasting in speech.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament refers to this as "the aesthetic, rhetorical form of boasting, which wounds others, causes unrest and discord, and represents unfounded presumption." In other words, to "boast" in 1 Corinthians 13 is to "talk smack." It's to speak in such a way that you wound others as you exalt yourself.

The theologian Gordon Fee says it well: *"It is not possible to 'boast' and love at the same time. The one action wants others to think highly of oneself, whether deserving or not; the other cares for none of that, but only for the good of the community as a whole."*

If the Corinthians to whom Paul was writing truly dug into and pursued loving one another, there would be no room for their boastful attitudes. They would not use their rhetorical skill to abuse opponents and win in arguments. Rather, they would use their rhetorical skill to build up others. Paul is trying to remind all of us that none of us is "all that." Call it bragging or boasting; when we carry an air of our ways being better than others', it shows no love for them.

3. arrogant

The word means to be conceited and desirous of the praise of men. Paul's uses this word 6x in this letter. In their pride, the Corinthian believers chose one favorite leader over against another. They were puffed up with knowledge. They were expressly proud of their own gifts. Their arrogance went so far as to allow a man

committing serious sexual sin to carry on in their midst. They even acted arrogantly by taunting the authority of the Apostle Paul.

To be full of oneself is to diminish the importance of others. Obadiah 1:3 says “*The pride of your heart has deceived you.*” Jesus love is not arrogant; it rather humbles itself in the light of the glorious Christ. Love is not rude; it does not behave in ways that diminishes the importance of others in the Christian community; it rather gives itself to the concerns of others in a Christ like way.

Love does not leave you feeling ‘less than.’ Love does the very opposite. Love seeks to make you feel important and valued. Love seeks to meet the needs of others without pride or judgment. Love leaves you feeling stronger, not weaker or beat down. Jesus came in the most humble of forms. God himself stepped out of heaven and into the womb of a young unknown and unmarried girl. He was born into our broken and fallen world and He did life here as a mere human. He walked our dusty earth, displaying humility with each and every step and He experienced adolescence, hunger, hot and cold, receptivity and condemnation. He was God but He came and He put us first. He healed all who came to Him and He washed the feet of His imperfect disciple's feet. He died a painful and humiliating death to make us whole and new. That's how much you and I are loved.

You are not better than anyone else. Your sin is not less atrocious than anyone else's. You are not perfect but you are loved perfectly just the same. That is how you live your life humbly and without arrogance. You remember that you were once lost, blind, naked, ashamed and dirty and God stepped in without a moment of hesitation and He picked you up and made you new. He loved us at our darkest so how dare us judge and think ourselves better than others?

4. Rude

The Greek word for “rude” could literally be translated to “act unbecomingly” or to “act inappropriately.” Christian love does not seek to cause problems and division but goes out of its way to create harmony and unity. Christian love involves choosing appropriate actions and responses that bless others and creates peace and corporate forward motion for the body of Christ.

Rudeness is finding more and more acceptance in today's culture. Public behavior and words that were unthinkable a generation ago are now commonplace. We live in what essayist Merrill Markoe in the *Wall Street Journal* calls a “renaissance of rudeness.” The point is that being rude is unbecoming of a child of God and out of place in Christian community. Love rejects rudeness because rudeness is reserved for the insensitive and the insecure. Rudeness is impolite and disrespectful.

Love expunges rudeness like a healthy body does a virus. It will often require a tough love to escort rudeness out the door. Because you love them and those they influence, you need to be very direct and matter-of-fact in your communication with a rude person. Direct conversation is often the only way they begin to “get it.” Love takes the time to be very candid and clear with rude people who run roughshod over others. However, we must also be careful not to be rude in dealing with the rude. We cannot lower our standards to theirs. Be prayed up and filled up with the Spirit before you encounter the rude with truth, and be aware of what is coming out of your own mouth. Does it bless and built up or needlessly tear down and humiliate?

5. selfish

Worldly love is selfish, self-serving, and cares more for what it *gets* from a relationship than what it *gives* to that relationship. Many marriages and friendships fail because this is the type of love the participants exhibit. Only when relationships are built on God's love will they flourish and endure. We must remember that Paul was writing all of this letter...this *chapter*, to *believers*, not the world at large! So these negative displays were not just found *out there* on the street, but inside the church...amongst the community of believers. Paul was after them because they clearly were exercising unloving attitude towards each other. Having their own agendas and satisfying selfish attitudes.

A selfish spirit is the antithesis of Christ and Christianity. Our spiritual rebirth innately brings us an other-centered and corporate familial mentality toward those around us. Maybe the best translation is The Message which says, "Love isn't always me first."

The Corinthian church had a serious problem with selfishness. In chapter 6, we saw that they were dragging each other into court so that they could get what they thought they deserved. In chapter 10, we saw them eating meat offered to idols with absolutely no regard for how that might affect a weaker brother. In chapter 11, they ate their so called "love feast" with every man for himself. In chapter 12, we saw how they used their spiritual gifts as an opportunity to make themselves more important rather than working together for the common good. Everything the Christians in this church did seemed to be motivated by selfishness

But that's really not surprising, because the Corinthians were letting the world influence the way they were acting toward one another, and selfishness has always been the way of this world. Today we live in an age so succinctly dubbed the "Me" generation. Looking at our society as a whole, we see an entire culture that puts "me first" — that doesn't understand at all the concept of concern for others. One need merely to observe the political realm to witness this up close. The focus is all on me, and clearly *love "worldly-style"* is the norm. But it is never to be so in the church.

6. Irritable

Irritability is related to our sense of being pushed beyond what is reasonable for a normal human being to have to endure. If anybody ever had a justifier for being irritable it was Jesus. Over and over again, the Pharisees criticized Him, and the people He came to save mocked Him and wanted a different kind of "King." The people always wanted to be fed and to have immediate attention. Instead of giving into irritability, Jesus exercised self-control, patience, and kindness.

J.B. Phillips translates this as "Love is not touchy." That's a good definition. Let's say this right up front: *no one is immune to moments of irritation*. We will be provoked, no matter how mature, no matter how humble. Moses was a humble man to be sure; Numbers 12:3 says "*Now Moses was very humble — more humble than any other person on earth.*" Then a few chapters later you hear Moses say to the children of Israel, "*Listen, you rebels!*" he shouted. "*Must we bring you water from this rock?*" Then Moses struck the rock in anger, *twice*, disobeying God in the process. The humblest man on earth was provoked to anger and his irritable display cost him a trip to the Promised Land. Certainly that was not a great example of humble loving.

Jesus love is not irritable. If you are an irritable person, you have developed a habit of responding to provocations in a sinful way. You either get angry and blow up, or you get quiet and close up. Either way puts roadblocks in the way of loving "christ-center" relationships.

A great hedge against irritability is to develop a grateful heart. We already mentioned that the lack of thankfulness is a harbinger of doom as far as you are concerned with others in your world...a.k.a. *those you call*

your brothers and sisters, not to mention your church participation as a whole. We must foster and nurture a thankful heart every day of our lives. Giving thanks every day for the blessings God has given, and that even includes the people in your life who tend to provoke you. It is hard to be irritated with someone when you are thinking of all the reasons why you are profoundly grateful for them.

7. Resentful

The origin of the word “resentful” comes out of the accounting world. It means “to credit to someone account” and was a word used in a bookkeeper’s ledger. It is holding something against another person when we shouldn’t be. Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love doesn’t make a memory out of evil; he is quick to forgive and not resent someone who has sinned against him. If we are the most forgiven people in the world, and we are, then we should be the most forgiving people in the world. As we have already pointed out, the Corinthian believers were clearly resentful toward each other.

Did Philemon show resentment his former slave that had run off? In Laodicea, which was not far from Colossae, there was an inscription found in an archeological dig that dedicated by a slave to the master who freed him. You want to guess the master’s name? The master’s name is Marcus Sestius Philemon. Church history tells us that a few decades after Paul wrote the letter to Philemon, Ignatius of Rome wrote three epistles to the Ephesian church. He addressed them to their pastor as “Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love.

8. rejoiceful in wrong

Believe it or not—Jesus style love discriminates. His kind of love chooses what and what not to rejoice in, delight in, and celebrate. In 1 Corinthians 13:6, Paul tells us that love does not rejoice in wrong. The word is “iniquity” in the English and it speaks of injustice, an unrighteousness act, or a deed violating law and justice. But such also plays into our oft, albeit most often secret, joy in seeing someone take a fall for what we deem is righteous payback.

Have you ever secretly rejoiced when you heard that someone you didn’t like or someone you disapproved of had gotten into some kind of trouble? Upon hearing of that person’s difficulty or hardship, perhaps you were tempted to think, *Serves him right! He deserves what he’s getting! After what he did to me and to so many others, he deserves a little punishment!* If this describes you, let me tell you — this is *not* the way God’s love reacts to such situations!

The Corinthian believers were no doubt familiar with this. They were at first quite happy and satisfied in the presence of the sexual sin that was openly existing in their midst, and were then smugly staunch in their position over the one who was guilty of the sin after he was booted from their church. These believers were wrong twice.

Proverbs 24:17-18 says “*Don’t rejoice when your enemies fall; don’t be happy when they stumble. For the LORD will be displeased with you and will turn his anger away from them.*”

Our western culture is experiencing some of the results of this in our modern version of “love, and because such has crept into the church, we are experiencing it also. Instead of embracing the full and encompassing God agape, we get a “fluffy niceness” in our modern western Christianity. The result: a Church that ultimately embraces, endorses, and celebrates unrighteousness, (all under the guise of “love”) which can only condemn the world...and ultimately the church also, to a hopeless future.

We are called to embrace a version of God's love that does not delight in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. What we need to do is reclaim the love—God's love—that rejoices, *and stands by*, the truth.

What Paul saying is saying in this chapter is "Love like Jesus." In order to do that, one must actually know Jesus, have an ongoing and daily relationship with Him, and moreover to put everything that we have, everything we are, everything that makes us us, *on the table*.

"Jesus offers unconditional grace; we are to offer unconditional grace. The mercy of Christ preceded our mistakes; our mercy must precede the mistakes of others. Those in the circle of Christ had no doubt of his love; those in our circles should have no doubts about ours. What does it mean to have a heart like his? It means to kneel as Jesus knelt, touching the grimy parts of the people we are stuck with and washing away their unkindnesses with kindness. Or as Paul wrote, "Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ" (Eph. 4:32)." — Max Lucado,