

1 Corinthians - United in Love

Text: 1 Corinthians 13

Purpose: In everything, love should characterize a church that professes Jesus as savior and Lord. 1 Corinthians 13 explains that love is most important, uniquely relational, and deeply theological. Verses 1-3 explain that even the best Christian behavior, when it lacks love, amounts to nothing at all. Verses 4-9 describe what real love is and is not. And, verses 10-13 famously conclude, "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Keeping this chapter in context (between church issues described from chapters 8-14), the picture becomes clear. Because we profess faith in Jesus, we ought to be united in love.

Opening Interaction: Play a game with your group - go around the group three times, naming as many lines from songs that include the word "love." Bonus points if anyone sings the line ;-)

Read and Discuss:

- In this passage, what details seem important? Does anything jump out at you?
 - What is the author communicating to the audience?
 - What does this passage teach us about God?
1. Read John 13:35. Why, do you think, love between believers is a witness to the world?
 2. Read Matthew 5:43-48. Read verse 48 in at least three other versions (ESV has "be perfect," some others have "be holy"). How does the full passage (5:43-48) color our understanding of perfection (or holiness)?
 3. Read 1 John 4:7-12. How would you describe the truth of this passage to someone who is not yet a believer? Or, to someone who has been a believer for a long time, but seems to lack love?

Calvary Season of Prayer: Anticipation

Have you ever anticipated experiencing God's love? Confession is the Christian practice of naming what's true in our lives - the bad as well as the good. Connecting confession with anticipation is very appropriate. For when we confess our sins, we anticipate not only forgiveness but also God working in our hearts to change us. Or when we confess good things - like God changing us, or providing for us - we are anticipating blessings coming through transformation.

Invite your group to a time of silent reflection, confessing what is true about ourselves to Jesus, whose love we anticipate in all things. Ask if anyone is comfortable praying out loud in anticipation of experiencing God's love.

Conclude with praying for your church.