

The Qualities of True Love, Part 3

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:5c–6

Code: 1866

INTRODUCTION

It is said that in a churchyard near the old village of Leamington, England, there stands a tombstone with the following inscription: "Here lies a miser who lived for himself, and cared for nothing but gathering wealth; now where he is or how he fares, nobody knows and nobody cares." In contrast, there's a plain tombstone at St. Paul's Cathedral in London with an inscription that reads, "Sacred to the memory of General Charles George Gordon, who at all times and everywhere gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, his heart to God."

Two epitaphs...two distinct opposites. One life shows lovelessness; the other life shows love. And really, in the last analysis of it all, the only people who really contribute to the world are the unselfish ones. Stated another way, the only time anybody contributes is when they do something that is unselfish. The only useful people in the world are those who have given their strength to the weak, their substance to the poor, their sympathy to the suffering, and their hearts to God. That's what love does.

I don't know what the commentary's going to be on my life. I've often thought that the smart thing to do would be to write my own epitaph, like Benjamin Franklin, so they have to put it on my tombstone. But certainly it would be tragic if at the time of our death it was made public that we were spending our entire life flaunting our selfishness. Nothing is sufficient in the life of a Christian except love. It must take a prominent place.

REVIEW

I. THE PROMINENCE OF LOVE (vv. 1-3)

The Corinthian assembly didn't have love, so Paul had to write some strong words to them. The Corinthians had received everything from the Lord that He could give. He had given them salvation, the Holy Spirit, the hope of heaven, security, the truth of sound doctrine, spiritual gifts, leaders, abilities, teachers, and gracious blessings. But in spite of it all, they were selfish and loveless. They were self-indulgent and self-centered--wounding each other with their arrogant displays. Spiritual gifts are designed to be used to minister to others, but the Corinthians were using them as a selfish, arrogant, egotistic display. So, between two chapters on spiritual gifts (12 and 14), the Holy Spirit writes this great, great chapter describing love, to show them that without love all their ministries were nothing but noise...worthless.

II. THE PERFECTIONS OF LOVE (vv. 4-7)

Before we review the characteristics of love that we have already discussed, I want to review three things that must be understood before verses 4-7 can be understood. First, love can only be described by observing it in action. That's why all the terms in this passage describing love are verbs...not adjectives. Love is not just something you define, it is something you do. Second, love is not a feeling or an attitude; it is an action. Third, love is always related to somebody else, never to self.

In these verses, Paul splits love into all of its components--fifteen qualities. It's as if the great light of God's love hits the prism of Scripture and shatters it into all of the various colors. We have already

studied several of these qualities:

A. Love Is Patient (v. 4a)

B. Love Is Kind (v. 4b)

C. Love Is Not Jealous (v. 4c)

D. Love Is Not Boastful (v. 4d)

E. Love Is Not Conceited (v. 4e)

F. Love Is Not Rude (v. 5a)

G. Love Is Not Selfish (v. 5b)

H. Love Is Not Provoked (v. 5c)

We ended our last lesson by discussing this eighth quality of love. Verse 5 tells us that love "is not easily provoked." The word "provoked" literally means "irritated, upset, or angry." So, love never gets irritated, upset, or angry.

1. Spiritual Anger

The word translated "provoked" in verse 5 (Gk. *paroxuno*), can also be used in a good sense to refer to righteous indignation. For example, in Acts 17:16 it says, "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." When it says that Paul's "spirit was stirred," the same Greek word (*paroxuno*) is used. Paul was upset, he was irritated, and he was angry about idolatry. That's righteous indignation! He was angry because something was an affront to God.

2. Self-Centered Anger

Paul is not talking about righteous indignation in 1 Corinthians 13:5. He is saying, "Love never gets angry when somebody offends you." He's not talking about God's character being brought into ill repute, or defending the righteous nature of God; he's simply talking about personal relationships. Love doesn't get irritated, upset, or angry when it is offended by another person.

William Barclay said, "There are in this world only two kinds of people: those who are continually thinking of their rights and those who are continually thinking of their duties." Our duty is to love.

a. The Defense of Personal Rights

If you have a problem with getting irritated, upset, and angry--getting mad and losing your temper--it's because you have a mind-set that is selfish. In other words, your whole preoccupation is self-centered. For example, what happens when you're driving down the road and someone cuts you off--squeezing into the little space between you and the car in front of you? What is your reaction? If you get angry, do you know why? Because you wanted that territory you were driving in. Your attitude was, "That's mine!" and somebody took away your rights. You got mad because you had a preset mind to determine that you are the one who matters. It doesn't matter that the person who cut in front of you had to go somewhere, too; and that what he did was a possible option that he had.

The same type of self-centered response is easily seen when two lanes of traffic merge into one.

Have you ever noticed that people aren't willing to let you move over into their lane in front of them?

They stay one inch off the bumper of the car in front of them just so you can't change lanes. After all, it's their space! Well, how do you handle that? Do you mind, or do you find yourself getting angry?

How you respond indicates whether your mind-set is selfish or selfless. It's that simple.

Now, if you get angry, upset, and irritated, and then blame it on your circumstances, you're deceiving yourself. The problem isn't your circumstances, it's the preoccupation of your mind that you're important...that your rights matter...that your territory is invincible. When somebody steps into your territory or violates your rights, they trigger that anger because you've already predetermined that you have those rights. In the Corinthian church, for example, if you did something to offend a Christian brother, you could end up in court being sued by him (1 Cor. 6:1-8). The Corinthians were busy defending their rights.

b. The Duty to Practice Love

If you consider everything your duty and nothing your right, you'll never have a problem with anger. If

people offend you again and again, your only response will be, "Since my duty is to love them, this is just another wonderful opportunity." The Apostle Paul, for example, was a man who never retaliated. Why? Because he was always busy defending God's righteousness. He never cursed the people who stoned him. He never got mad at people who got in his way when he was trying to preach a sermon. He never lambasted the people who threw him in jail. He never said nasty things about the Jewish people who finally had him imprisoned. He never cursed the people who chained him in Rome. Why? Because he never saw anybody as violating his personal rights. Rather, he considered everything in view of his duty to love. You see, love bears the injuries suffered at the hands of others without any irritation. Love is so totally selfless that it never gets on the defensive-- it never defends itself.

Now, I'm not saying that you're to be ridiculously insensitive to offensive behavior. It's normal to be sensitive and to feel some pain. But for that sensitivity to issue in irritation, upset, anger, and uncontrolled conduct is not Christlike. In fact, I believe that one of the number one reasons for mental and physical illness, particularly in our society, is that everybody is fighting for their own rights instead of looking for the privileged opportunity to perform duties of love.

So, Paul isn't saying that we aren't to get provoked about some things. Christians better get provoked about that which offends God, or they'll never do anything significant against the devil. But at the same time, there's no sense in getting mad at each other. To be angry and out of control because of what people do or say about you, poisons love. Granville Walker said, "Love is the only cure for irritability; for irritability is only another manifestation of self-centeredness. And love that takes a man outside himself and centers the focus of his attention on the well-being of others is its only cure." The sooner we realize that others matter, the less problem we're going to have with what happens to our own rights.

Most of that was review. Let's look, now, at Paul's ninth quality of love:

I. Love Thinks No Evil (v. 5d)

"...[love] thinketh no evil"

1. Logizomai Defined

The word translated "thinketh" (Gk. *logizomai*) is an accountant's word which literally means "to keep a mathematical calculation." It is a word that is used to refer to the writing of something in a bookkeeper's ledger. Now the reason a bookkeeper writes things in a ledger is so that he won't forget them, right? So, what Paul is saying here is, "Love never keeps books on the evil done to it. Love never keeps a running record of everybody's offense. Love never holds others accountable for some wrong, evil, or injury that they have done. Love just forgives and forgets."

Chrysostom, the early church father, had a beautiful thought on this subject. What he said went something like this: As a spark is quenched when it falls into the sea, an injury that falls upon a loving Christian is just as surely drowned. That's the way it ought to be. Offenses ought to be drowned in the sea of love.

2. Logizomai Discussed

Now, to illustrate what Paul is saying here in 1 Corinthians 13:5, we simply need to look at the word *logizomai*. This word is the same verb that is used in the New Testament to speak of the pardoning act of God. So, since God has not kept any books on our sin, we are not to keep any books on the evils of others. In fact, *logizomai* is often translated in the New Testament with the word imputed. For example:

a. What Is Not Imputed¹) Romans 4:8--"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." In the language of 1 Corinthians 13:5 it would read, "Blessed is the man of whom the Lord keeps no record of evil." People say, "Well, someday when we get to heaven we're going to face the record of our evil." No, there is no record of our evil. The only thing that's written in each one of our books is the fact that we are declared righteous. Then it's closed and put in the file. Why? Because the Lord

does not mathematically add up our sin. He does not keep an accounting of sin. That's a great truth. I'm happy about that, aren't you? 2) 2 Corinthians 5:19a--"To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them...." In other words, God does not keep a record of evil on those who come to Christ. God doesn't keep an accounting, nor does He think evil of them. It's a great reality to realize that God never accounts evil to a believer. You say, "Well what is on the ledger?" b. What Is Imputed 1) Romans 4:6--"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness apart from works." 2) Romans 4:22--"And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." 3) James 2:23a--"And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness...." In other words, God only keeps account of righteousness, never evil. Have you ever offended God as a Christian? I have. In fact, I do it all the time. But do you know what? Even though I offend God, He doesn't say, "I'm getting sick of that MacArthur! I'm going to start writing his sins down if he doesn't shape up." He doesn't say that, because He keeps no account. He gives us absolute forgiveness because He loves us, right? God so loves us that He doesn't keep account of our sin; He just forgives it all and keeps on forgiving, and keeps on forgiving, and keeps on forgiving. Resentment, however, keeps the books on other's offences.

Reminders of Hate

Oftentimes we keep the books on other's offenses. We brood over the record--reading and rereading it--so that the molehill of somebody's offense turns into a mountain of hostility. I've read that in some of the Polynesian Islands, where the natives spend a lot of their time warring and fighting, it is customary for every man to keep visible reminders of his hatred. They do this by suspending little articles from the roof of their huts--with each article representing something about somebody that they hate. You say, "That's incredible! Can you imagine that in our own society? Can you imagine everybody's house decorated like that?" Well, it's not untrue to say that most of our minds have some of those articles of hate hanging in them. That's not something we'd like to admit, but I'm afraid it's true.

Love never makes memories out of evils. Love fast forgets and sees past a person's sin to their potential--the fact that God loves them. Love hesitates to believe any rumor. Love always forgives. Love never keeps account of wrong, never gets irritated, and is never resentful. Do you love like that? Well, that's the way Jesus loved, and that's the way we're to love, too.

Tenth in Paul's list of the qualities of true love is...

J. Love Does Not Rejoice In Unrighteousness (v. 6a)

"[Love] rejoiceth not in iniquity..."

The word "iniquity" simply means "unrighteousness." It is the word that talks about sin. Love never rejoices in sin.

1. The Ways to Rejoice in Sin

a. Rejoicing in Your Own Sin There are many, many different ways that people rejoice in sin. Some people rejoice in their own sin and think they're getting away with it. Have you ever heard people brag about sin? They say, "Boy, you know what I did? I did this, and this, and this...." That's one way to rejoice in iniquity-- just brag about your sin. You say, "Well, certainly Christians would never do that." Oh really? The Corinthians did. Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-6. Incest was being committed in their midst, and they were proud of it. According to verse 2, they were boasting about it.

Are There Consequences for Sin?

Eternity magazine had an article about Ernest Hemingway a few years ago. In that article he said that people can sin and get away with it. He also said that the old idea of the prudishness of sin, and the Victorian, fundamentalist's viewpoint that there are consequences of sin, was a bunch of baloney. The article went on to say that Hemingway was living proof of the fact that you can sin and

get away with it. Ironically, ten years later to the very day that article was written, Hemingway took a bullet and blew his brains out. He rejoiced over sin only so long.

There are many people who think that the thing to do is to rejoice in their sin. They think it proves their masculinity or gives them a certain invincibility. They see themselves as bigger than God. Now that's one way to rejoice in sin. But there's another way:

b. Rejoicing in Somebody Else's Sin

People rejoice over somebody else's iniquity because it makes them feel quasi-holy. In other words, it justifies their own sin if someone else is sinning--especially if the other person's sin is more obvious. For example:

1) The Salability of Newspapers

The salability of newspapers is predicated on the recounting of iniquity, right? The local newspapers would be more appropriately named, the Los Angeles Unrighteousness and the Herald Iniquity. When you open up the newspaper, what do you read about? So-and-so left his wife, so-and-so was raped, so-and-so committed a crime, so-and-so was murdered, there's corruption over here and corruption over there, and so on. How do we respond to all of that? Unfortunately, we have a tendency to say, "Tsk, ts, ts. There they go again," while we gloat in our sanctimonious shell. What we're really doing is trying to convince ourselves that we're holy because we don't do those things. And the fact that somebody does do those things gives us a standard to compare ourselves with. That's rejoicing in iniquity.

2) The Search for Legitimate Grounds

I've known Christians who have divorced without scriptural grounds. Oftentimes, one partner will eventually realize, after studying the Bible, that the only biblical grounds for the divorce was fornication. But since there wasn't any, they are not biblically free to remarry. That partner then begins to hope that the other person will commit adultery. That happens more times than I'd like to talk about. They will say to me, "Well, I don't know for sure if they've committed adultery, but I think they have." Then, when they're sure of it, they call me on the phone and excitedly say, "Listen, I just found out that he's committing adultery. I'm free now, right?" It's almost as if they've been praying, "Lord, help him to commit adultery." You say, "Has that really happened?" Yes, I've seen it happen many times. I've seen people get a down-deep wish that their partner would commit adultery, just so they'd have legitimate grounds to remarry. That's rejoicing in the iniquity of someone else, isn't it?

You can rejoice over evil by wishing someone would sin, or by being glad someone does so you look better, or by just enjoying the fact that you sense a certain invincibility when you sin. I've even heard Christians say to me, "I've been committing that sin for a long time, and God hasn't done anything about it yet." Well, God's wheels grind slow, but they grind small!

2. The Wrongness of Rejoicing in Sin

You can't rejoice in iniquity if you love. Do you know why?

a. How it Affronts God

Since iniquity affronts God, you won't want to sin. Why? Because if you love God, you won't want Him to be affronted, right? What do you think David meant in Psalm 69:9b when he said, "...the reproaches of those who reproached Thee are fallen upon me"? He meant, "When You're dishonored, God, I'm in agony." And so you can't rejoice in sin that affronts God.

Look around at what our society does for entertainment, and notice the amount of sin that is tolerated. In fact, our society flaunts outright, overt sin. Now a Christian who rejoices in that sin, or even tolerates it, doesn't understand what it means to love God. Sin is so offensive to the holiness and purity of God, that if you really love God, the sin of others will make you feel cold inside. There certainly would be no place for rejoicing.

So, someone who loves God doesn't rejoice in iniquity because of how it affronts God. Secondly, there's no thought of rejoicing over evil because of...

b. How it Affects Sinners

How could you rejoice over someone's sin when you know the consequences that their sin is going to bring? In the same way that sin grieves the heart that loves God, it grieves the heart that loves the sinner--thinking only of how that sinner will suffer chastening and judgment.

The Love of Church Discipline

Christians are never to rejoice in the sin of someone else...especially another Christian. That's why believers are so anxious to correct sin. People say, "Well, if you love everybody, why do you

exercise church discipline?" Because loving them is hating their sinfulness. Let me show you an illustration of this in 2 Thessalonians 3. Verse 5a gives us the context. Paul says, "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God...." In other words, Paul is saying, "I want you to be characterized by love." Then Paul shows us love in action: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us....And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (vv. 6, 14-15).

In other words, Paul says, "If a believer persists in sin and won't turn from it, you're to put him out of the church. You're to cut your fellowship off and not have anything to do with him." Why? Because that's part of letting the love of God control your life. Since love hates sin, it goes to the sinner and says, "That isn't right." Love also purifies the fellowship, and removes the sin that might taint the remainder of the people. So, when somebody comes along and says, "Your church disciplines? Don't you think that's less than loving?" I say, "No. That is loving." You see, love doesn't tolerate evil. Love doesn't rejoice in sin. Why? Because sin affronts God and it brings punishment on the sinner.

3. The Wagging Tongue That Rejoices in Sin

First Corinthians 13:6a also addresses the issue of gossip, because love doesn't even recount evil things. I have often wondered how much of our conversation would be silenced if we never gossiped about the faults and sins of others. What would we do? If we didn't read the paper about all the evil that is happening around the world, and if we didn't talk about the failures, faults, and sins of the people around us, what would we talk about? This subject is often missed in discussions of 1 Corinthians 13:6, yet this passage, next to James 3, is probably the most stringent indictment in the New Testament against gossiping. Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity." And if it doesn't rejoice in it, it isn't happy to hear it or to pass it on. Some people say, "I'm just telling the truth. I know this to be a fact." Well, that doesn't mean you have to say it.

There's a teaching going around today called sensitivity training that says, "Tell everybody the truth, be completely open and transparent, and never be afraid to spill your guts ...regardless of how it will affect someone else." Well, since love doesn't rejoice in somebody's evil, it doesn't go passing it around either. Why would you pass around something that affronts God? Why would you pass around something that wounds and injures the sinner who did it? If you were loving to God and loving to that individual, you wouldn't.

The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth

There was a country newspaper editor who got tired of people who were always writing to the paper and saying, "You don't report the news with enough honesty. You're too biased, and you're always too kind." He decided to respond to such complaints, and announced that in the next issue he would tell the whole truth about everybody and everything. Well, the people were so eager to get the paper, it sold out immediately. Let me share with you three sample articles that were in this paper:

"Dave Conkey died at his home last Friday evening, and there was a big funeral Sunday afternoon. The minister said it was a loss to the community, but I doubt it. The community is better off without him. The doctor said he died of a heart attack. Nonsense! Whiskey killed him."

Another article: "The Wednesday Literary Club met at the home of Mrs. Gadabout. The program stated they were going to study Shakespeare's play Much Ado About Nothing. Well, they didn't. The lady who was assigned to present the paper had never read the play, and so they had no program. But they made up for it by gossiping about every member that wasn't there, and the whole afternoon was really like the play--much ado about nothing.

Another article went like this: "Winnifred Jones and Jim Smith were married Saturday at the Methodist Parsonage. The bride is a very ordinary girl who doesn't know any more about cooking than a jackrabbit and never helped her mother three days in her whole life. She is not a beauty by

any means and has a gait like a duck. The groom is an up-to-date loafer. He spends most of his time hanging around the pool hall. He has been living off his old folks at home all his life and is not worth shucks. It will be a hard life for both of them." Well, so much for the paper.

The following letter was written by a woman who had decided not to lie when asked to give a recommendation for someone who had worked for her. This was her recommendation: "The bearer of this letter was in our employ for one month. We engaged her to do light housework and she couldn't have done it any lighter. We found her extremely careful to break only our best dishes and glassware. She was neat about the house, always hiding the sweepings under the rug where they would not be seen. In serving meals she exhibited good training by never putting her thumb in the soup when it was too hot and never spilled it except on our company. Her cooking was exceptional; in fact, we took daily exception to it. We shall always gratefully remember her stay with us; it was so short." Well, there's something to be said for a little veiled honesty, isn't there?

You see, love isn't looking to parade everybody's evil. Love doesn't laugh and make scorn. Love hides those kinds of things gently. Love rejoices not in iniquity. I like the definition of gossip that says this: "Gossip is vice enjoyed vicariously." But love doesn't do that. Love hates the sin, the way it hurts God, and the way it hurts the sinner.

Granville Walker said, "There are times when silence is yellow....times when we ought to stand on our feet, and regardless of the consequences, challenge the gross evils of the time; and times when not to do so is the most blatant form of cowardice. But there are other times when silence is golden, when to tell the truth is to make many hearts bleed needlessly and when nothing is accomplished and everything is hurt by a loose tongue." He's right, isn't he?

Love never rejoices in iniquity. It never rejoices in what offends God or in what harms the sinner. Therefore, it never likes to hear it or pass it on.

You say, "Well, what does love rejoice in?" The end of verse 6 tells us, and gives us the eleventh characteristic of love:

K. Love Rejoices With The Truth (v. 6b)

"...[love] rejoiceth in [lit. 'with'] the truth..."

Love doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, it rejoices with the truth. Now that's an interesting comparison. Why does Paul compare those two? Why doesn't he say, "Love rejoices with righteousness"? Because it is clear that righteousness is predicated on truth. You can't be righteous until you behave yourself in accord with God's truth.

1. Its Basis

a. Identified There are two things I want you to see: Love only rejoices with truth as it is taught and as it is lived. Love can't rejoice with error or false teaching. Love can't tolerate wrong doctrine. Yet you hear people say today, "Well, we don't want to make an issue out of what they believe. We just want to love them." This is the attitude behind what is commonly known as the "Ecumenical Movement." This kind of thinking is what has stimulated all kinds of people getting together under the name of love. I talked to a well-known Christian leader, and I asked him, "How can you compromise yourself with people who do not believe the Word of God in the way we know it to be true?" "Well," he said, "we are instructed in the Word of God to love them." My answer to that is this: "Love rejoices with the truth." That is the only basis on which love can work. I can't put my arms around and love somebody who teaches things other than what the Bible teaches, nor can I put my arms around and love somebody, in the truest sense, who lives a life that does not behave itself according to the truth. Love will rejoice when truth is taught and when truth is lived. It will not rejoice when those are absent. And believe me, the slightest compromise will take the joy out of love. I may love you, but when you teach error or when you live error, I will not rejoice. The slightest compromise robs that joy.

b. Illustrated In 2 John, we find a very helpful illustration of this. Beginning in verse 6 it says, "And this is love, that we walk after His commandments...." What does John say love is? Well, it's not a feeling or an attitude;

it's obedience to the truth. Verse 6 continues, "...This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it." Love is obedience and living in the truth. Love doesn't disregard the truth and say, "Oh well, it doesn't matter what you believe or how you live; I love you anyway." No! Love walks after the commandments. You say, "Well, what if somebody varies just a little bit in their doctrine?" Verse 7 moves right into that: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh...." In other words, they throw doubts on the incarnation in some way or another. "...This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that [you] lose not those things which [you] have wrought, but that [you] receive a full reward" (v. 8) He's saying that we can lose our reward by fooling around with such people. Continuing on, John says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God....If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (vv. 9a, 10-11). John's just talking about love here, but he's saying that love is no excuse for indiscriminate behavior in regard to truth. Do you see? Love operates in the area of the commandments and love responds toward the people who teach the truth. So, love rejoices in those who teach the truth and with those who live the truth. But love doesn't rejoice indiscriminately with anybody and anything who just happen to throw the name God or Jesus around. The Bible, you see, is very stern in dealing with sin in behavior and with sin in doctrine. Let's look, now, at the positive aspect of rejoicing with the truth:

2. Its Benefits

Do you know what love does? Instead of parading somebody's evil, love finds the good in people and talks about that. I love to be around people like that, don't you? They help me so much. I call that kind of person a "plus" person. A "minus" person is somebody who goes around subtracting from people's reputations. I want to be a plus person. I want to add to people instead of subtracting from them.

You say, "But what if there isn't something good in a certain individual to talk about?" There's always something good! If Jesus could see some potential in Peter, He was definitely a plus person. Most of us would have fired Peter at the beginning of his ministry, but Jesus didn't. Jesus could see a plus in the life of a harlot who washed His feet with penitent tears, when the Pharisee could see nothing but a minus. Jesus could see a plus in a half-breed Samaritan. Jesus could see a plus in a Roman soldier standing at His crucifixion, when He acknowledged that he had greater faith than all those who professed the name of God. Jesus was a plus person. He added to people; He didn't subtract from people. Love is a plus-- it's positive. It encourages goodness, finds the best in a person, and then exalts it.

I hope you teach your children to be plus people. I hope they grow up learning to say good things about others. You'll find that children will bloom in the sunshine of the spirit that encourages, helps, and builds them up.

There was a dear Scottish minister who all his life loved the simple people in Scotland. When he died, someone said of him, "Now there is no one left in our village to appreciate the triumphs of ordinary folks." I hope there's somebody in your family to appreciate the triumphs of ordinary folks. Love does, you know. It looks for the truth and the true behavior, and then rejoices with it. And by rejoicing when there's good behavior, it encourages more good behavior. But if all you ever do is depreciate others, that's the kind of response you'll get. If people find that you are lifting them up when truth exists, then they'll want and seek the truth. Love always rejoices in the truth.

Let's sum up what we've discussed in this lesson: Love is so selfless, that it never gets irritated or upset; it is so concerned about the welfare of somebody else, that it never keeps books on any evil done to it; it is so zealous for the holiness of God and the health of a person, that it never rejoices in unrighteousness; and it knows that since the standard of joy is always the truth, it rejoices when the truth is taught and lived. Love is not for the halfhearted, the sentimental, or the weakling. To live by love is one of the most difficult things there is. It takes the most strength, the most discipline, the

most commitment, and the most faith of anything I've ever discovered in the Bible. But without it we're nothing!

Focusing on the Facts

1. What three facts about love must be understood before the specific qualities of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 can be properly understood?
2. How is Paul described in Acts 17:16? What was he reacting to? What caused him to respond this way? According to the characteristic of love in 1 Corinthians 13:5, was Paul not loving the Athenians? Explain.
3. As Christians, should we be thinking more about our rights or our duties? What is produced in our lives when we concentrate on our rights? What's produced when we concentrate on our duties?
4. In one word, what is the Christian's duty to others? How did Paul exemplify this in his own life?
5. At the end of 1 Corinthians 13:5, Paul says that love "thinketh no evil." How does the definition of the Greek word for "thinketh" (logizomai) clarify this quality of divine love?
6. The Greek word logizomai is used throughout the New Testament to speak of what important act of God? What English word is logizomai often translated into?
7. According to Romans 4:8 and 2 Corinthians 5:19, does God keep a record of the sins of believers? What word in these verses refers to God's record keeping?
8. In regard to sin, what is written on the ledger of every Christian?
9. What are some synonyms for the word "iniquity" in 1 Corinthians 13:6?
10. What are the two basic ways that people rejoice in sin? Which is the most common for Christians? Why?
11. What are some examples of the different ways that Christians rejoice in somebody else's iniquity?
12. A Christian who is characterized by the divine love of God can't rejoice in iniquity for two major reasons. What are they?
13. What's wrong with the view that sees church discipline as an unloving practice?
14. Apart from James 3, what passage in the New Testament is the most stringent indictment against gossiping?
15. As Christians, we are to be truthful (Eph. 4:15a, 25). How does this relate to the "truthfulness" of sensitivity training, which advocates saying whatever you are thinking, regardless of how it will affect someone else?
16. Love rejoices with truth as it is t_____ and as it is l_____.
17. What is wrong with the following statement: "Everybody needs to put aside their doctrinal differences and love one another."?
18. According to 2 John 6-11, how does love respond to someone who doesn't walk according to the truth or to someone who doesn't teach the truth?
19. Define what it means to be a "plus" person. What does it mean to be a "minus" person? How would you classify Jesus in this regard? Give some examples to back up your answer.

Pondering the Principles

1. If you have a problem getting irritated, upset, and angry with people, it's probably because you have a preoccupation with yourself and a mind-set that you will always defend your own personal rights. The illustration given in this lesson made reference to the irritation that people experience when they drive their car. You may not have a problem in that area, but there is probably at least one area that you find yourself getting more irritated in than others. Evaluate what it is that gets you upset. Can it be boiled down to a defense of your personal rights? What perspective should you have if you are to have victory over the problem of getting mad and losing your temper? If you really want to change, ask God to bring circumstances into your life that will give you the opportunity to act in

love toward those that offend you--to see the duty to love as more important than the defense of your rights.

2. Have you ever said, "I forgive you," to somebody, but brought up their offense at a later time--either directly to them or in your mind? Can you truly forgive someone without also forgetting their offense? Is there someone that you really don't like being around anymore because they offended you in the past? If so, you're still keeping an account of their sin against you, right? Recognize your lack of forgiveness as sin and confess it to the Lord. Thank God for the fact that He doesn't keep an account of your sins (see Ps. 103:12; Isa. 44:22; Mic. 7:18-19), then meditate on Matthew 18:21-35.

3. When you see a fellow Christian sin, how are you to respond? Read Matthew 18:15-17 and write down the steps for dealing with a sinning brother. How are these steps related to 1 Peter 4:8? Are you often tempted to talk about someone else's sin? Well, after love deals with a person's sin it covers it with silence. Love certainly doesn't gossip about it. How much of your conversation would be silenced if you never gossiped about the faults and sins of others? At the end of each day, try and recall how often you gossiped about someone else's faults. Confess it, and then commit yourself to love the brethren by not rejoicing in their sin or repeating it to others.

4. Instead of talking about the faults of people, love finds the good in them and talks about that instead. When you hear someone say negative things about another person, make an effort to say something positive about them. Oftentimes, you'll find that negative people will become silent when their negative comments fall on positive ears. How do your children hear you talk about others? Do they hear you gossip and say negative things, or do they hear you say good things? Teach your children to see the good in people by first doing it yourself.

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