

Introduction

I received Christ into my life in 1974, just before my Sophomore year. Shortly afterwards, I met Karen, and we began dating. At that time, I had never read the Bible, and did not have someone mentoring me. I was a carnal Christian, and my thoughts, words, and actions were all unrighteous. If I had to characterize my life at that time, I would say that I was selfish, driven, and foolish. When we started dating, I enjoyed being with Karen. She was full of life, just as she is today. She was beautiful, cute, and fun to be with. I remember telling her that I loved her. In retrospect, I did not love her. I did not even know the definition of love at that time. I enjoyed being with her, and was physically attracted to her, but that is not love. Over time, we found a good Bible-teaching church, began reading our Bibles, and our lives began to be transformed.

What I have found is that many people in the church do not know or understand what love is. For us to have the goal of love, we must understand the goal. Last week, I mentioned Howard Hill, the famous archer who could fit the bullseye time after time. However, if he had not been able to see his target, he would not have won 196 consecutive field archery competitions. Warner Bros. would not have hired him. To hit the target, you must see what you are trying to hit. The problem that we have in the church is that most of us cannot see what we are shooting at.

Today, I want to try to give an understanding of love. Our text today is 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, where Paul gives fifteen definitions and statements about love. Notice the various characteristics of love that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 13. There are fifteen statements about love. Five of these are defining statements, saying what love is or is not. Ten of these are action; five of them are actions that love does not do, and five of them are actions that love does engage in.

Understanding Agape Love (1 Cor 13:4-7)		
Defining Statements	Actions Love Avoids	Actions of Love
Is Patient	Does not brag	Rejoices in the truth
Is Kind	Does not act unbecomingly	Bears all things
Is not Jealous	Does not seek its own	Believes all things
Is not arrogant	Does not take into account a wrong suffered	Hopes all things
Is not provoked	Does not rejoice in unrighteousness	Endures all things

First, I am going to give some of the various Greek words used for love, and specify the love that we are targeting. Second, I will give five statements defining love. Third, I will give five actions that love avoids. Fourth, I will give five actions of love.

Understanding the Goal - Love

1. Defining Love
2. Defining Statements
3. Actions Love Avoids
4. Actions of Love

(1 Cor 13:4–7) “Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

1. Defining Love

The Greek word for love that is used in 1 Corinthians 13 is agape (Strong's G26). There are other Greek words for love. In fact, there are eight Greek words for love, but only three are found in the New Testament.

The first Greek word is eros, which is not in the Bible. Eros was the Greek God, who was the son of Aphrodite in Greek mythology. Eros refers to a sensual, romantic, passionate, or sexual love. Many people today think they love someone, but what they have is a physical or sexual attraction to someone. That is not Biblical love.

The second Greek word is phileo (Strong's G5384). Phileo comes from philos, which means a friend. Philos means to have a brotherly love, or a love as a friend. The city of Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love. It is affectionate, but not in the sense of eros. When Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love (agapao, Strong's G25) Me?", Peter answered by saying, "You know all things; You know that I love (phileo, Strong's G5368) You." (John 21:17)

A third Greek word is storge, which is a type of phileo, and is a love specific to families. This is often referred to as a familial love, as a parent would have towards his children. It is used in Romans 12:10, and is compounded with philos (philostorgos, Strong's G5387), and is translated as being devoted or kindly affectioned to one another.

The fourth Greek word for love is agape (Strong's G26), which is used in 1 Corinthians 13. It is used 116 times in the New Testament. This is the word that is used to describe God's perfect love towards us. It was sacrificial love, and it was intentional love. In Romans 5:8, God demonstrated His love (agape) towards us while we were yet sinners by Christ dying for us.

(Ro 5:8) "But God demonstrates His own love (agape) toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In John 15:13, God tells us that there is no greater love (agape) than this, that one lay down his life for his friends, which is what Jesus did for us.

(Jn 15:13) "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

In 1 John 3:16, God tells us how to know love. He said, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Agape love is sacrificial, and it is intentional. It is not a romantic feeling; it is laying your life down for others.

(1 Jn 3:16) "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

When Paul exhorted husbands to love their wives in Ephesians 5, he said to love them as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself up for her. God's love is sacrificial and intentional.

(Eph 5:25) "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,"

2. Defining Statements

Karen and I were doing some marriage counseling with a couple, and they were continually bringing things out from their closet of offenses, and both of them had closets full of unforgiven offenses. I asked them if they loved one another, and they both said yes. Then I took them through 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, line by line. After we had finished those four verses, I asked them again if they loved one another. They both admitted that they had never loved the other person the way that Paul defined love in those verses. This couple did not understand Biblical love. This couple was not alone; many people do not understand Biblical love. We want to take a look now on what God tells us about love, so that we can have a good understanding of Biblical love.

A. Love is patient

The first list is a list of defining statements. The first statement is that love is patient. The Greek word is *makrothumeo* (Strong's G3114), which means slow to anger. This is the same Greek word that is used in Galatians 5:22, where Paul gives the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, and patience. When we are walking in the Spirit, we will have the fruit of patience.

(1 Co 13:4) "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,"

(Ga 5:22–23) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

God is a patient God. In 1 Peter 3:20, he wrote about how God patiently waited in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons were brought safely through the water. It took Noah one hundred years to build the ark, so God patiently waited one hundred years before He brought judgment..

(1 Pe 3:20) "who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water."

Peter also talks about God's patience in his second letter. He said that the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward us, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. One the Lord returns, it will be too late. Therefore, he concluded, "regard the patience of our Lord as salvation..."

(2 Pe 3:9) "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

(2 Pe 3:15) "and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,"

Love is patient. Love is patient with one another. You husbands, waiting patiently for your wife to get ready is a way of demonstrating love. Telling her to hurry up does not show love. Wives, waiting patiently for your husband to fix something that you told him about a week earlier, is a way to show love. Nagging him does not show love. The couple we counseled were not patient with one another; they quickly got upset with one another.

B. Love is Kind

The second characteristic of love is kind. The word for kind in the Greek is *chresteuomai* (Strong's G5541), which means to show oneself useful, to act benevolently or kind.

(1 Cor 13:4) "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,"

In Romans 2:4, Paul wrote, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance."

(Ro 2:4) "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"

A number of years ago, Steve Sjogren, a pastor, church planter, and author, wrote a book, *Conspiracy of Kindness*. He and a group of people began to do acts of kindness in their community. They might show up at a gas station and clean the toilets for them. They might clean windshields for people, or rake leaves for them. They found intentional ways to show kindness to people. He wanted people to experience the love of God through acts of kindness.

We try to show God's kindness to people, because it is that kindness that leads to repentance. They will know our love by our kindness.

C. Love is not jealous

The third attribute of love is that it is not jealous. The Greek word for jealous is *zeloo* (Strong's G2206). When Paul encouraged the Corinthians to be zealous for spiritual gifts, it is the same root word for both words. Jealous is a strong passion, a boiling passion about something.

(1 Cor 13:4) "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,"

(1 Cor 12:31) "But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

We often think of jealousy as a bad attribute, but it also has good connotations. God is a jealous God. He said that His name is Jealous. God jealously desires our affection. We are the bride of Christ and we belong to Him; and He is jealous for us.

(Ex 34:14) "for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."

On the other hand, we are not to be jealous for what belongs to others. We should not be discontent with what we have and want what others have. When God tells us that love is not jealous, He is speaking about the negative side of jealousy, the envying of what belongs to others. Love is not jealous. Envy and jealousy will damage relationships.

James wrote that where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. When we look at the various verses where jealousy is mentioned, it is with other deeds of the flesh.

(Jas 3:16) “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.”

In Galatians 5:19, Paul wrote that “the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like this.” However, when we walk in the Spirit, we will not carry out the deeds of the flesh. For us to walk in love, we must walk in the Spirit.

(Ga 5:19–21) “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, {20} idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, {21} envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

(Ga 5:16) “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

D. Love is not arrogant

The fourth attribute of love is that it is not arrogant. The Greek word is physio (Strong’s G3361), which means to be puffed up or inflated. Love is not puffed up, but is looking out for what is best for others.

(1 Cor 13:4) “Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,”

Arrogant people do many things that reveal arrogance. Probably one of the most obvious signs of arrogance is a critical spirit. Arrogant people are always finding fault with others. Nothing anyone else does measures up in their eyes. They see what people are doing wrong. They are above others, and so they must look down at others. They act as judges. We must learn to encourage others, not judge them. Arrogant people expect others to serve them. We must learn to serve others, not expect them to serve us. We must learn to look out for the interest of others, not just our own interests.

Jesus was not arrogant; He was humble and gentle. In Matthew 11:28-30, He said, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heaven-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

(Mt 11:28–30) “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. {29} Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. {30} For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

E. Love is not provoked

The fifth attribute of love is that it is not provoked. The Greek word is paroxyno (Strong’s G3947), which means to be easily provoked or stirred. Provoke means to anger, vex or exasperate. Love does not get angered or vexed or exasperated. The couple we counseled were easily provoked by one another.

(1 Cor 13:5) “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,”

I have found that many times there are underlying, unresolved offenses that put people on edge, and for that reason they are easily provoked. I do not know many people who like confrontation, but we need to deal with matters, and to resolve them. We need to forgive one another and to keep clean hearts. Otherwise, we can become bitter, and we will be provoked easily.

3. Actions Love Avoids

A. Love does not brag

The first action that love avoids is bragging; love does not brag. The Greek word is *perpereuomai*, which means to boast or vaunt itself. Paul says that love does not brag and is not arrogant. The two are very often tied together.

(1 Cor 13:4) “Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,”

Brag means to speak boastfully. Boastful means to speak with pride or vanity. It means to be proud in the possession of. Love does not speak boastfully. It does not try and let everyone know how great you are and what wonderful things you have or have done. People do not enjoy being around boastful people. Love is not trying to build yourself up. Love tries to build up and edify another. Proverbs says that a stranger should praise you and that your own lips should not do it.

(Pr 27:2) "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips."

In Jeremiah 9, God tells us not to boast in our wisdom, or in our might, or in our riches. If anyone is going to boast, he should boast that he understands and knows God, who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for God delights in those things.

(Je 9:23–24) “Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; {24} but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.”

B. Love does not act unbecoming (rude, or unseemly)

The second action that love avoids is being unbecoming. The ESV says that love is not rude, and the KJV says that love does not behave unseemly. Love does not act unbecoming. Some versions translate this as love is not rude, or does not act unseemly. The Greek word is *aschemoneo* (Strong’s G807), which means to behave in an unseemly or unbecoming manner.

Godly love is attractive, and love does not do things which will detract from the impression that one should have for the person. Poor table manners are not attractive. Love would not do things that are going to take away from the appearance and look of Christ in our lives.

(1 Cor 13:5) “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,”

C. Love does not seek its own

The third action that love avoids is seeking its own. Love is not selfish and does not seek its own. The Greek word is *zeteo* (Strong's G2212), which means to seek or to plot. The word can be used in a positive or negative way. We are to seek God and His righteousness. However, we are not to seek the things of the world. We are not to seek our own. This does not mean that we do not look out for our own good. We should take care of ourselves, eat healthy, exercise, and live our lives in ways that are beneficial to us. Seeking our own is referring to a life focused on ourselves, a selfish life, that has no regard for others.

(1 Cor 13:5) “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,”

In my younger life, before coming to Christ, there would be two characteristics that I would use to describe my life. I was selfish and foolish. Everything that I did was centered around my desires and goals. I was not concerned at all about the lives of those around me, which is the heart of selfishness. God had to deal with me about my selfishness. My life is now characterized by serving others, and not seeking my own. My life is a testimony of God's sanctification in my life.

I believe that selfishness is one of the biggest problems in relationships and marriages. We live in a very narcissistic culture, where everybody is looking out for themselves. The big question is, “What's in it for me?”

There was much strife in the church in Philippi, and in particular, between two women in the church, Euodia and Syntyche. Paul exhorted the church not to do anything from selfishness or empty conceit. He told them to have humility of mind and to regard one another as more important than himself. They were not to merely look out for their own interests, but also the interests of others. This is exactly what their church needed, and what anyone dealing with selfishness needs to do. We must learn to consider others more important than ourselves. We must learn to look out for the interests of others, not merely our own interests.

(Php 2:3-4) "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; {4} do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

Then Paul gave the example of Christ, who emptied Himself and took the form of a bond-servant. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. That is the attitude that God wants us to have. Love does not seek its own.

(Php 2:5-7) "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, {6} who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, {7} but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

(Mk 10:45) ""For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.""

D. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered

The fourth action that love avoids is to take into account a wrong suffered. If you have forgiven someone, you should not take into account a wrong suffered. If you are taking into account a wrong, ask God to help you. You will know if you have love by whether you take into accounts a wrong suffered.

(1 Cor 13:5) “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,”

God tells us in Proverbs 17:9 that “he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.” God did not say that he who brings up a matter, but he who repeats a matter. We need to have a conversation about the offenses, and we need to ask forgiveness or give forgiveness. Once we have dealt with the matter, we should not be bringing it up again or repeating the matter. Love does not take into account a wrong that is suffered.

(Pr 17:9) “He who conceals a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.”

The couple that Karen and I counseled each had a closet full of past offenses of the other person. They kept bringing them out and using them as weapons against each other. They had not dealt with matters properly; they had just stored them in the closet of their heart, and at opportune times they took into account the wrongs suffered. Love does not do that. Love deals with the matter, forgives, forgets, and does not put them in a closet for later use, but throws them in the trash can, never to be seen again.

Love covers a multitude of sins. Peter tells us to keep fervent in our love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. A fervent love does not consider a wrong suffered, but keeps covering sins. Again, this is a way for us to know love.

(1 Pe 4:8) "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

Peter asked the Lord the question about forgiveness in Matthew 18. He wanted to know how many times he had to forgive his brother. Jesus said to forgive his brother up to seventy times seven, meaning without number. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Love forgives. Peter asked the Lord, how many times he needed to forgive his brother. Jesus tells him 70 times 7 or infinitely. The word 7 signifies perfectly or completely.

(Mt 18:21-22) "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus said^ to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

E. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness

The fifth action that love avoids is to rejoice in unrighteousness. The Greek word is adikia (Strong's G94), which means injustice, moral wrongfulness, iniquity, or unrighteousness.

(1 Cor 13:6) "does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth."

One of the issues today is the removal of God's moral standards. When men determine what is righteous and what is not righteous, we get a perverted moral standard. Today, there are many who are rejoicing in unrighteousness, whether it is sexual immorality or injustice for the unborn. Love rejoices in righteousness.

(Pr 8:13) "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate."

One of the things that I pray for leaders is a fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil and love good. We need to love the things that God loves and hate the things that He hates. God rejoices in righteousness, and hates unrighteousness. Throughout God's word we find out the things that He loves and the things He hates. For example, in Proverbs 6, God tells us that there six things He hates, and seven which are an abomination to Him. He hates haughtiness and a lying tongue. He hates the shedding of innocent blood, which would include abortion.

(Pr 6:16–19) "There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: {17} haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, {18} a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, {19} a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers."

In Isaiah 61:8, the Lord tells us that He loves justice and hates robbery in the burnt offering. We need to use the word of God to calibrate our moral standards so that we hate the things that He hates and love the things that He loves. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

(Is 61:8) "For I, the LORD, love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering; and I will faithfully give them their recompense and make an everlasting covenant with them."

4. Actions of Love

A. Love rejoices with truth

The first action that love takes is to rejoice with truth. The couple that we counseled constantly accused the other person of lying. Neither one rejoiced in truth. Usually, there are several sides to a story. Each person has their own narrative of what has happened, and it is their perspective. Then, somewhere between those narratives is the truth, what God sees and knows about what happened. A person walking in love wants to know the truth and rejoices with the truth. Love rejoices in truth, even if it requires us to humble ourselves and admit our wrongdoings. We know love by our commitment to truth.

(1 Cor 13:6) "does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;"

What is truth? In John 17:17, Jesus was praying and said, "Sanctify them in truth; Thy word is truth." We should rejoice in God's word. We should also rejoice in finding out the truth about things that come up. We should ask questions, and seek to be good listeners, so we can learn the truth.

(Jn 17:17) "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

B. Love bears all things

The second action that love takes is to bear all things. Love does not bear a few things, but all things. We can know if we have love for someone by whether we are willing to bear all things with the person.

(1 Cor 13:7) “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Jesus is our example of someone who bore all things. In 1 Peter 2:21, Peter said that Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow in His steps. Jesus committed no sin, and there was no deceit in His mouth. He did not revile in return when suffering, and uttered no threats.

(1 Pe 2:21–23) “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, {22} WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; {23} and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;”

Then, in verse twenty-four, Peter quotes the prophet, Isaiah, saying that Jesus bore our sins in His body on the cross. He took our punishment so that we could be healed or forgiven of our transgressions and iniquities. Jesus set the example for us, to bear with one another.

(1 Pe 2:24) “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

(Is 53:4–5) “Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.”

In Galatians 6, Paul wrote about restoring those who were struggling with sin. He tells us to restore them in a spirit of gentleness. Then, he adds that we are to bear one another’s burdens. When people are getting free from a sinful habit or lifestyle, they go through a process.

(Ga 6:1–2) “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. {2} Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

Sometimes, that process is quick, but at other times it is a season of getting free. Paul tells us to bear the burdens of those we are helping to restore. I believe that bearing is much more than an attitude; it is praying for the person and walking through the process with them. It is asking the tough questions and showing tough love when needed. It is a commitment to that person, and to the process they are going through, Paul ended by saying that when you bear someone’s burdens, you are fulfilling the law of Christ, which is to love one another. Love bears all things, which is what Jesus did for us. He bore all of our sins on the cross.

Recently, I was at the oncologist for my monthly check-up. There was a man in the waiting room that I struck up a conversation with. He had recently been married, and two months after getting married, he was diagnosed with cancer. When his wife heard the diagnosis, she divorced him. She did not want to go through this ordeal with him. She did not want to bear that load with him.

I am blessed to have a wife that bore my load when I went through chemotherapy and a stem cell transplant. She was in the Infusion Clinic every day, keeping me company. The chairs were not comfortable, especially being in them most of the day. That is real love, a love that bears all things.

C. Love believes all things

The third action that love takes is to believe all things. The Greek word is *peisteuo* (Strong's G4100), which means to believe, or to put your trust in. The root word is *pistis* (Strong's G4102), which is to have faith. The root word of both of these is *peitho* (Strong's G3982), which means to be convinced of or have confidence in.

(1 Cor 13:7) "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

People appreciate a vote of confidence from others. A husband wants to know that his wife believes in him and has confidence in him. A wife wants to know that her husband has confidence in her. An employee wants to know that the manager has confidence in him. We want others to believe in us, in our abilities, in what we say, and in what we plan on doing. Our actions and history of actions can hinder or help others believe in us. I have more confidence in someone when I see them following God. I have more confidence in someone who always speaks the truth. A person with agape love is willing to believe all things about God and others.

D. Love hopes all things

The fourth action that love takes is to hope all things. The Greek word for hope is *elpizo* (Strong's G1679), and it means to expect, confide, trust, or hope. Hope is one of the big three that Paul mentions in verse thirteen. He said, "but now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love." Hope is important, and it is also a part of love, for love hopes all things.

(1 Cor 13:7) "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

(1 Co 13:13) "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."

God is the God of hope., He can give us hope, and fill us with all joy and peace in believing. We need to be full of hope, and to encourage others in the hope that can have in Christ.

(Ro 15:13) "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

E. Love endures all things

The fifth action that love takes is to endure all things. The Greek word is *hupomeno* (Strong's G5278), which means to stay under, hold out against; sustain or undergo without impairment or yielding. When you endure something, you make it through the process until the end is reached.

(1 Cor 13:7) "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Jesus said in Matthew 10 that we will be hated by all because of His name, but the one who has endured to the end will be saved. Endurance or perseverance is something that every believer must have.

(Mt 10:22) "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he gave an exhortation about walking in love. It is very similar to 1 Corinthians 13, and he mentions that we are to persevere in tribulation. That is the same Greek word, *hupomeno*. We are to endure or persevere in tribulation.

(Ro 12:12) "rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,"

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he was incarcerated in Rome, and was about to be put to death. In the midst of that suffering, he wrote, "If we endure, we will also reign with Him." (2 Ti 2:12) Paul saw that there was a prize on the other side of enduring all things.

How did Paul get that endurance? How do we get endurance? James tells us to count it all joy when we encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance. We get endurance through enduring the trials in our life.

(Jas 1:2-3) "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

Two of my children ran marathons this past year. My oldest daughter ran the New York Marathon and my son-in-law, James, ran in the Louisiana Marathon in Baton Rouge. Both of them trained hard to prepare for their races, and successfully ran their races. Researches have shown that proper training and diet helps prevent the body from suffering a lack of muscle glycogen during the race, which is one of the main causes of runners hitting the 30K wall. Their training produced the muscle endurance that they needed for the 26.2-mile run. In the same way, as we endure various trials, we gain endurance in our lives.

Finally, if we are going to endure all things, we should fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. In Hebrews 12, we find several principles to help us run with endurance. We are exhorted to lay aside every encumbrance. The Greek word is *onkos* (Strong's G3591), which means a mass, burden, or load. Our burdens or encumbrances can be busyness, sports, and even things like serving others. Anything that detracts us from doing what God has called us to do is an encumbrance. The apostles in Acts 6:1-4 did not serve the Hellenistic widows food; instead they had the congregation select seven men to serve, and they devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Serving the widows was a good thing, and we should do that, but for the apostles, it would have kept them from their priorities, so they found seven others to do that ministry so they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

(He 12:1-3) "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. {3} For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart."

The second thing that can help us run with endurance is to lay aside sin, which can easily entangle us. Sin weighs us down. In Psalm 32:4, David said that God's hand was heavy upon him and his vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. He had to confess his sin to God and be forgiven so that the weight was lifted.

Third, we have been given the example of Jesus to follow. We are to consider Jesus, who endured the cross and endured hostility by sinners against Himself, so that we do not grow weary and lose heart. For us to walk in love, we must be willing to endure all things.

Conclusion and Applications

Agape love, God's perfect love, is not an emotion or feeling; it is intentional and sacrificial. Jesus laid His life down for us, leaving us the greatest example of love. We are called to love one another and to lay our lives down for one another. That is not an option; it is the command that Jesus has given to us, to love one another, just as He loved us.

(1 Jn 3:16) "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Love is patient. We are to be patient with one another. Love is kind. Our lives are to be characterized by kindness. Love does not envy what others have; it is not jealous. Love does not brag or boast; it is not arrogant. Love does not act unbecoming, but it is well-mannered and adorning to the gospel. Love is not selfish; it does not seek its own. Instead, love considers other more important, and looks out for the needs of others. Love is not provoked. Agape love forgives others and keeps short accounts, so that it is slow to anger, and not provoked. Love forgives and forgets, and does not take into account a wrong suffered. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. This is the love that God has called us to have in our lives and exercise towards one another.

(1 Co 13:4-7) "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Our first application is to examine your own life and hold it up to these fifteen attributes. If there are areas that miss the mark, confess those to the Lord. Ask the Lord to help you grow in that area or those areas. Do your part by memorizing and meditating on the verses that apply to your life.

Second, be intentional with your love. Look for opportunities to seek the interest of others. Look for opportunities to lay your life down for others, to meet needs in their lives. Look for opportunities to show the kindness of God to others. Look for opportunities to forgive and cover the sins of others.

Third, be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, and walk in the Spirit. Paul said if you walk in the Spirit you will not carry out the deeds of the flesh. Instead, you will bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

(Ga 5:16) “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

(Ga 5:22–23) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Closing Prayer

Father God, when you called me out of professional golf to plant churches, You told me to plant a church that loves You with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and that will love one another just as You have loved us. Help us to be that church that loves You and loves others. May this be the identifying mark of our lives. May others see us and know that we are Your disciples by our love. Help us not to be merely hearers of this word today. Help us to look intently and to be doers of the word. Lord, You are the Perfecter of our faith. You are the Potter and we are the clay. We ask You to mold us and make us into vessels of love. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- Was your understanding of love similar to my thoughts when you were younger?
- Which of these characteristics of love is the most challenging for you to apply?
- Which of these characteristics of love is the easiest for you to apply?
- Give an example in your life where the Holy Spirit showed you how to love someone with God’s perfect love.
- What are some ways to humble ourselves so that we are not arrogant or boastful?
- Why did Jesus say that all the Law and the prophets are summed up in these two laws?
- What are some ways that we can be patient or show patience with one another?
- I mentioned that Karen bore my burden while I was going through my transplant. Is there a time where you bore the burdens of others, or someone else bore your burden?

Understanding the Goal - Love

Introduction (1 Co 13:4–7)

1. Defining Love (John 21:17, Ro 5:8, Jn 15:13, 1 Jn 3:16, Eph 5:25)

- Eros: physical, sensual, romantic love
- Phileo: love of a friend
- Storge: family love, love of a parent for child
- Agape: God's perfect, sacrificial, love

2. Defining Statements

- A. Love is patient (1 Cor 13:4, Ga 5:22-23, 1 Pe 3:20, 2 Pe 3:9, 3:15)
- B. Love is Kind (1 Cor 13:4, Ro 2:4)
- C. Love is not jealous (1 Cor 13:4, 12:31, Ex 34:14, Jas 3:16, Ga 5:19-21, 5:16)
- D. Love is not arrogant (1 Cor 13:4, Mt 11:28–30)
- E. Love is not provoked (1 Cor 13:5)

3. Actions Love Avoids

- A. Love does not brag (1 Cor 13:4, Pr 27:2, Je 9:23–24)
- B. Love does not act unbecoming (rude, or unseemly) (1 Cor 13:5)
- C. Love does not seek its own (1 Cor 13:5, Php 2:3-7, Mk 10:45)
- D. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered (1 Cor 13:5, Pr 17:9, 1 Pe 4:8, Mt 18:21-22)
- E. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness (1 Cor 13:6, Pr 8:13, 6:16-19, Is 61:8)

4. Actions of Love

- A. Love rejoices with truth (1 Cor 13:6)
- B. Love bears all things (1 Cor 13:7, 1 Pe 2:21-24, Is 53:4-5, Gal 6:2)
- C. Love believes all things (1 Cor 13:7)
- D. Love hopes all things (1 Cor 13:7)
- E. Love endures all things (1 Cor 13:7, Mt 10:22, Ro 12:12, Jas 1:2–3, He 12:1-3)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Jn 3:16, 1 Cor 13:4-7, Ga 5:16, 5:22-23)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.