

1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 17

The Gospel and Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

A. No Love, Gifts = Nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV)

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

1. a) Discussion Question. Do you find that leaders prioritise gifts over love in your church?

b) Reflection Question. Do you find yourself prioritising gifts over love in people?

c) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture, fill in the blanks on the difference between gospel change and moralistic behaviour change.

	Moralistic Behaviour change	Gospel change
Motivation	See the poor suffer and feel guilty "It's a command, if I don't give, God will punish me."	Grace melts your heart
Direction of	From outside in, outside deeds	From inside out, God purifies

change	make my inside pure, dependant on external behaviour	my inside, so I can now respond in love from the heart, dependant on internal change
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B. What is Love?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

2. a) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture, fill in the blanks on what the Apostle Paul is teaching us about love.

	Love is...
1.	dynamic and active, not something static.
2.	Not an inner feeling or emotion
3.	Not conveyed by words alone. It has to be shown
4.	Defined only by what it does and does not do

b) Discussion Question. Why was Paul suddenly defining what love is?

Because the Corinthian church wasn't showing love. The Corinthian church was doing the exact opposite of Paul's list. The Corinthian church was: Impatient and unkind; Envious or boastful; Arrogant rude. Insist on its own way; Irritable Resentful; Rejoice at wrongdoing, but does not rejoice with the truth. Does not bear all things, nor believes all things, nor hopes all things, nor endures all things.

c) Reflection Question. What if one day your church received a letter from a prominent Christian saying the people in your church are unloving, impatient, unkind, arrogant, rude, insisting in their own way, irritable, and resentful? What would you do with that letter?

d) Reflection Question. It seems like the Corinthian church heeded Paul's advice since Paul wrote them a second letter (2 Corinthians) and in 2 Corinthians 1:12-14 he mentions being proud of them and that he'll boast of them on the day of the Lord Jesus. Can you think of brothers and sisters in Christ that you would dare to boast about to God?

2 Corinthians 1:12-14 (NIV)

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. 13 For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, 14 as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

C. Love Carries on to Eternity

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NIV)

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

3. a) Objective Question. Choose the most appropriate answer. "when completeness comes" in verse 10 refers to:

A. Complete Canon of Scripture

(No, because The Corinthians would not have understood what Paul was

talking about..the concept of the canon. The church after the completion of the canon 300 years later would have more knowledge than Paul. The church today is not more mature than the one in Paul's time.)

B. Consummated Kingdom

(Yes, The current spiritual gifts will disappear because they are only designed for the current age)

b) Reflection Question. According to Dr. Peter, **LOVING IS DYING TO SELF**, which looks like:

"My strong craving for a trouble-free life must die."

"My need for an uninterrupted schedule must die."

"My demand that frustrations and interference get out of my way must die."

Are you willing to pray these prayers consistently until God changes you from the inside out? Why or Why not?

Takeaway

Everything done should be accompanied by love, our investment in love is carried on to eternity. Doesn't matter if you did a million things, without love, none of that will be carried over.

Case Study

Case 1 – Love over Gifts

Sunny Tai Zher attends Fourth Baptist Church. She works hard to run a Chinese Ministry in the church. Sunny has many talents, in preaching and managing the ministry, but is bossy and tyrant, she wants those under her to be as productive as possible and cuts them out of the ministry if they are not giving her the results she wants. She is short-tempered and is very harsh and often rude to those who work with her.

One day, one of the leaders confronted Sunny directly and told her that the way she ran the ministry was not loving and appealed that she repent and change and ask God to show her a more loving way to do things.

Sunny got really angry and exploded on the leader, saying “DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I SACRIFICED FOR THIS MINISTRY? I worked like a dog and sacrificed my time and money to build this ministry for two decades! The ministry started with 10 people and now has 300 people! Don’t you dare question the way I do things!”

1. a) Discussion question. Was the church at fault for letting Sunny run in that way for 20 years? Was all the fault with Sunny alone for being a tyrannic leader? How much percent of blame would you contribute to each?

b) Discussion question. How can we tell if a person loves the church (the church is the people, not the building)? Run through the list in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to see if Sunny showed love.

	1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.	Checkbox ✓ ✗ ?
1.	Was Sunny patient?	
2.	Was Sunny kind?	
3.	Did Sunny envy?	
4.	Did Sunny boast?	
5.	Was Sunny proud?	
6.	Did Sunny dishonour others?	
7.	Was Sunny self-seeking?	
8.	Was Sunny easily angered?	

9.	Did Sunny keep a record of wrongs?	
10.	Did Sunny delight in evil?	
11.	Did Sunny rejoice with the truth?	
12.	Did Sunny protect, trust, hope, and persevere? (Did Sunny never tire of support, never lose faith, never exhaust hope, never give up?)	

c) Discussion question. If you are the leader who brought it up to Sunny, what is your next course of action?

2 Corinthians 8:7-8 (NIV)

But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

d) Discussion question. Does God care more about the church building or His people (the church)?

Case 2 – Toxic person

Toh See Yek is boastful, prideful, controlling, rude, and self-centred. 9/10 things that come out of his mouth are negative. He very rarely has nice things to say. Even the good “things” he praises people are often white lies so that he can manipulate people to do his bidding. He often lies and believes in his own lies to be true.

See Yek has attended Second Baptist Church for 5 years and has offended a lot of people in those 5 years. See Yek often gossips and slanders people he doesn’t get along with.

Timothy Keller quote:

“God sees us as we are, loves us as we are, and accepts us as we are. But by His grace, He does not leave us as we are.”

2. a) Discussion question. According to the video lecturer, Dr. Peter proposes that all of us are toxic so we shouldn't avoid toxic people. However, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 asks us not to even eat with people who are greedy and a slanderer, yet claim to be Christians. See Yek is clearly toxic. So should we avoid See Yek or not? Can we eat with See Yek?

Knowing we are all sinners does not mean we allow people to remain sinners. Rebuking in love for those who claim to be Christians and yet still sin in obvious ways so that they know that those who remain sinful will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). If See Yek shows no signs of repentance after many warnings according to Matthew 18:15-20.

Step 1: Tell them directly, just between the two of you.

Step 2: If they will not listen, take one or two others along as witnesses

Step 3: If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church

Step 4: If they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan (treat them like unbelievers; ie. ex-communication)

Supplementary Reading

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NIV)

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”

Matthew 18:15-20 (NIV)

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.

If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

b) Discussion question. How do we know if we rebuked someone in love?

You feel genuine sorrow that they refused to repent and chose the way to sin stubbornly, just like how Paul feels in 2 Corinthians 2:4, with many tears of anguished love, hoping the Corinthian church will repent.

2 Corinthians 2:4 (NIV)

"For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you"

c) Reflection question. Have you ever felt this kind of love for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Would you pray for it?