

IT'S A VERB!

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Corinthians 13

How do you define love? It's one of those concepts that we are all familiar with but which no one seems able to define. Is it a feeling, a chemical reaction, a choice, an act? We use it in so many ways. I love you. I love my dog. I love running. I love pizza. And, that's just for starters. We talk about making love, I've fallen out of love, first love, love at first sight. So, what is love?

In today's chapter reading, Paul takes us to the heart of love. What's interesting is that he does so, not to provide an abstract treatise about love, but to address a problem in the Corinthian church. They had an attitude of, "It's all about me!" This attitude manifested itself in the way they did worship, ministry and relationships. It's why there were divisions, inferiority and superiority complexes, fights, hurt feelings, etc. Paul's solution was to bring them back to what he called, "the most excellent way" of love.

He opens the chapter by driving home first the importance of love. Without it, Paul says, we're just a big noise. We are nothing and we gain nothing without love. Love is a prerequisite if our lives are to count for anything in the kingdom. Paul then begins to lay out a definition of love by describing what it does and doesn't do.

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| ★ <i>Love is patient</i> | ★ <i>Love does not envy</i> |
| ★ <i>Love is kind</i> | ★ <i>Love does not boast</i> |
| ★ <i>Love rejoices with the truth</i> | ★ <i>Love is not proud</i> |
| ★ <i>Love always protects</i> | ★ <i>Love is not rude</i> |
| ★ <i>Love always trusts</i> | ★ <i>Love is not self-seeking</i> |
| ★ <i>Love always hopes</i> | ★ <i>Love is not easily angered</i> |
| ★ <i>Love always perseveres</i> | ★ <i>Love keeps no record of wrongs</i> |
| ★ <i>Love remains</i> | ★ <i>Love does not delight in evil</i> |
| | ★ <i>Love never fails</i> |

So, what is love? It's a verb. It acts. True love acts, and, based on the lists above, always acts in the highest interest of the one loved. It loves, not based on "it's all about me" but "it's all about thee!" But, it's not an unhealthy, codependent love that sacrifices its own individuality, simply enabling the one loved to stay unhealthy. No, far from it! True love is a powerful, redeeming, honest, forgiving, empowering and enduring love that doesn't quit loving no matter what. It's a love that believes in the best and for the best of the one loved instead of expecting the worst. It never fails. It is exactly this kind of love that God, whom the Scripture declares "is love" (see I John 4:8), embodies, isn't it? It is this kind of love we are called to show as well: "*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love...*"

Action Step & Prayer Focus: When you look at the lists above, which characteristic(s) of love do you sense the Holy Spirit pointing out as areas he needs to work? Take it to the Lord in prayer today and ask him to develop the fruit of the Spirit of love in your heart.

Take-a-way: *At its core, love is a verb!*