Message: Love Life

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Theme: We are called to live a life that is marked by love.

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Location: Christ Community EFC

So, how’s your love life? You may have recognized the words that were flashing up on the screen during that video.

They come from 1 Corinthians chapter 13…the love chapter.

1 Corinthians 13 is often read at weddings. We had a plaque in our home that was given to us as a wedding gift with those words on it.

**In fact, I would like to ask you to go ahead and turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 13**.

Bill Clarke was proud of his family tradition. His ancestors had come to America on the Mayflower. His family line had included senators, pastors, and even Wall Street wizards.

With his own children grown, Bill decided to compile a family history as a legacy for his children and grandchildren.

So he hired a well-known author. Only one problem though: how to handle great-uncle George.

You see great-uncle George had been executed in the electric chair.

But the author said not to worry; he could handle that section of history tactfully.

When the book arrived, Bill turned to the section on Uncle George.

There, he read “George Clarke occupied a chair of applied electronics at an important government institution, was attached to his position by the strongest of ties, and his death came as a real shock.”

Our text for this morning is not what it first appears.

As I have said, we have all heard portions of 1 Corinthians 13 read at weddings as the happy couple gaze into each other’s eyes imagining the perfect life with their perfect spouse in perfect love.

But our text is not just a lovie—dovie, mushy—gooshy, warm and fuzzy text on falling in love and getting married.

It’s about your Love Life. So let me ask again; how is your love life?

I’m not talking about if you have had a date lately or if there is romance in your marriage. That’s all great, but I’m actually asking a very different question.

Let me ask it another way. Are you a loving person? Do you treat the people in your life with love? Are you living a life of love!?

How’s your love life?

Are you living out a life that has been marked by a deep and growing love relationship with God the Father?

Is the love you are receiving and experience so real that it is transforming you as you grow in Christlikeness?

And are you so becoming like Christ that you are choosing to love those around you with Christ-like love?

I am not asking if you “love” people, that is have some warm fuzzy feeling toward them, but do you love as God loves them?

Have you made a conscious determined choice to act lovingly toward them regardless of who they are or what they may have done?

After all, God has chosen to love you! That’s grace. That’s real love.

Some of the greatest words on love in Scripture are found in 1 John 4:7-10. Listen as I read them to you.

**Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

9 **This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him**.

10 **This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins**.

In this passage, the simplest and yet most profound statement of all is this, “God is love.”

But listen to this as well. In few verses down in 1 John 4 we read in verse 19-21:

“**We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.**

**21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother**.

We are told that “God is love,” and that you are to “love the Lord, your God with all your heart.”

And the Bible tells us that you are to love yourself, love your neighbor, and even to love your enemies.

Love is not an option for you if you claim to be a Christian. It is commanded of you as followers of Jesus Christ. In fact it can even be seen as a test to see if you really are a true follower of Christ.

Paul will tell us in Ephesians 5:1-2:

“**Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God**.

So I ask again. How is your love life?

Are you willingly giving up yourself and offering yourself as an offering, a sacrifice to God for the sake of that bully at school, that friend who you found out has been gossiping about you, that person you trusted and in the end hurt you or worse yet someone you love?

You see you are not commanded to have warm fuzzies about that person. You are not told you have to condone or even like what they do.

But you have to love them with the same kind of love that God has loved you with.

So as we walk through this passage in 1 Corinthians this morning I want you to do two things. First I want you praise God as you remember that God is love and this is how He loves you.

Then I want you to honestly ask God to give you the grace to love others the same way you have been loved.

Got it? Praise to God for how He has loved you and ask Him for the grace and help you need to love others the same way.

Let’s look at 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. And in these four verses you will see 14 different actions that the apostle Paul uses to describe how God loves us and how we are to express that same love to others.

Let’s read [Slide]: “**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, 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**.

The very first word Paul chooses to describe love is patience. And yes guys this can mean waiting graciously and patiently for your wife to finish putting her makeup on.

Specifically though the word here means “to bear patiently with other people’s faults and offenses, to be longsuffering—not short tempered.”

This is the first characteristic of God’s love because it is totally unconditional.

It is choosing to love another not because of who they are, but in spite of who they are, in spite of what they do to you or have done to you.

It is a love which understands the frailties of the fallen human nature and refuses to take offense.

It is a love which sees the potential in people and does not demand instant maturity or growth.

It is a love which continues to desire the best for others even when it is slandered or abused. It is a love that God has loved you with.

Think about it. Isn’t God incredibly patient with you?

In 2 Peter 3:9 we read “**The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance**.”

Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:15-16 saying: “**I am the worst (of sinners). 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life**.

God is love, and therefore God is patient with us and we are to be patient with others.

Love is patient and **Love is kind**. It has been said, “The greatest thing a man can do for his Heavenly Father is to be kind to some of his other children.”

It is not difficult to be kind. It doesn’t take much effort, but it does take intention.

And that is what Paul is talking about here – caring enough to be kind.

Sometimes just a word is enough. Proverbs 12:15 says, “**An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up**.”

This world is very often not a kind place. People say and do so many hurtful things. We need a lot more kindness in our world.

Make it a point to be kind to others. Let it be spontaneous, no hesitation. This will mean that you will have to leave some room in your schedule.

If you can think it, you can do it. Kindness is a powerful medicine for a hurting world. Many people will remember an act of kindness forever.

**Love is patient, love is kind**.

These two words describe our passive and our active responses towards others.

God is described as being both patient and kind. God holds back his wrath and pours forth his mercies.

In Romans 2:4 Paul speaks of God’s “kindness, tolerance and patience,” and how God’s kindness leads us towards repentance.

Your acts of kindness to others can lead them to our Lord!

So, thank God for his patience – and then be patient with others.

Praise God for his kindness – and then be kind toward others.

Start with your family, and then move on to your neighbors, co-workers, fellow students, and even strangers.

Paul started with describing what love is, now he shifts to say what love is not (verses 4b-5)

In this next section Paul uses seven verbs to describe love negatively – what love does not do.

“**Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs**.” (1 Corinthians 13:4b-5)

Let’s look at the first three: **Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud**.

First, “**Love does not envy**.” The word here is a strong word which literally means to burn with zeal, but when applied negatively it means to burn or boil with envy or jealousy.

We can envy many things – a person’s position in life, their possessions, or their appearance.

We can even envy another person’s spiritual gifts or service for God!

Love does not envy, because love is glad for what the other person has.

There is no rivalry or competition in love. You cannot love someone and envy them at the same time.

Envy causes us to treat others in wrongful ways. Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery because they envied him.

The gospel writers tell us that it was out of envy that the chief priests handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Envy is a poison which eventually consumes the person who chooses to harbor it in his or her life.

Proverbs 14:30 says, “**A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones**.”

Love does not envy. **Then we see that, “Love does not boast.”**

If envy is desiring what another person has, then boasting comes from the desire for others to see what you have.

Sometimes a person boasts truthfully about themselves. But more often they tend to stretch the truth.

The Greek word can mean to exaggerate, or display yourself, to brag about yourself, literally to be a windbag!

It means to act and talk in such a manner that you draw attention to yourself.

Some people feel the need to always be on center stage. They want others to notice them, to admire them.

They look for what they can get from others rather than what they can give to others.

You cannot boast and love at the same time, because boasting is concerned with you, while love is concerned with others.

Closely related to boasting is the issue of pride. “Love is not proud.”

The word for pride here actually means to inflate. You could translate it, “Love does not puff itself up.”

Boasting is acting outwards in relation to other people. Pride acts inward in relation to yourself.

Pride is the act of puffing yourself up in your own eyes until you feel so superior to others that you cannot possibly love them.

This kind of pride breeds a critical and judging spirit that has no patience with others and no desire to act kindly.

Love does not envy, love does not boast, love is not proud.

And the next pair of verbs tells us that **Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking.**

When Paul writes that “love is not rude,” he uses a verb which means to act disgracefully or dishonorably.

It means to violate the accepted standards of behavior in such a way that you make others feel uncomfortable.

Paul is speaking here about common courtesy. This is love in relationship to society.

We are social beings who live in community. As such we have certain social customs and expectations.

Love cares enough about people that it seeks to respect those conventions.

Immodest dress, offensive language, and disrespect for others – all of these are examples of a general rudeness which is incompatible with God’s kind of love.

Therefore love does not dress, speak or act in a way that defies general standards and offends other people.

I realize that’s not popular talk in our highly individualistic culture.

Most people take the attitude, “I’ll do whatever I want, and if you don’t like it, tough!”

Love says, “I will do whatever ministers to others, and if I don’t like it, tough.”

Love is not rude or “self-seeking.” This next word speaks about seeking your own advantage, putting yourself before others.

Paul writes in Philippians 2:3-4 “**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others**.”

Notice that we should not neglect ourselves, but neither should we seek our own advantage to the detriment of others.

You’ve heard the saying, “Some love people and use things; others love things and use people.”

Love does not use people to gain its own advantage. It looks outward rather than inward.

Love takes the attitude of Jesus who came “**not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many**.” (Mark 10:45)

Love is not rude or self-seeking.

**Now we come to the final pair in this section. “Love is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs.”**

“Not easily angered” has to do with the short-term, while “keeping no record of wrongs” has more to do with the long-term.

To be easily angered means to be easily provoked or stirred up, to be irritated or touchy, to yield to provocation.

Now understand this, we all have certain buttons which when pushed will trigger an unloving reaction.

Push the right buttons on me on the wrong day, and I will probably end up owing you an apology.

But some people are covered with buttons. They seem to take special pride in polishing and grooming their buttons, and then they wear them all over the front of their life where people can’t help but bump into them.

They even set their buttons on a hair trigger so that the slightest touch will provoke a reaction. Paul says that is not love.

This goes along with patience. Proverbs 19:11 says, “**A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense**.”

A bad temper reveals an unloving spirit. We should bear with one another in love. It is to your glory to overlook an offence.

That’s the short-term, blowing up when someone presses your buttons.

Others struggle more with the long-term side of this: “love keeps no record of wrongs.”

Being easily angered is a quick reaction which results in hurtful words and harmful actions.

Keeping a record of wrongs is the long-term decision to hold on to bitterness and resentment, to choose not to forgive.

It is the difference between the quick flare and the slow burn.

The word Paul uses here literally means “to count the evil, to credit it to someone’s account.”

Have you ever blacklisted someone in your heart? Are you waiting to settle a score? Do you have a habit of bringing up the past?

Then you are not practicing love. Love does not store up resentment and bears no malice. Love forgives all offenses and keeps no records.

This is the way God loves you when God forgives your sin in Christ.

We read in Psalm 130:3-4 “**If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared**.”

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that “**God . . . reconciled us to himself through Christ . . . not counting men’s sins against them . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**.”

God says in Jeremiah 31:34, “**I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more**.” Amen and amen!

So far Paul has described love in positive terms – what love is; and in negative terms – what love is not.

**Now he goes on to describe love with a contrasting statement in verse 6:** “**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth**.”

When Paul says that love does not delight in evil, he means that love takes no pleasure in unrighteousness, in injustice, in any wickedness at all.

Love never rejoices when people are mistreated, when evil wins out, when God is dishonored, or when God’s law is disobeyed.

Rather than rejoicing, love cries out with the psalmist in Psalm 119:136 – “**Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed**.”

Love does not delight when evil befalls another person. Love is never glad at another person’s misfortune, never gossips about another’s problems.

**Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.**

That’s the contrast. Love rejoices when truth wins out, not evil.

As Christians we are to love the truth at all costs. But we should speak the truth in love.

Scripture leaves no room for a watered-down Christian love that accepts and believes anything without regard for Biblical truth.

True love does not divorce itself from tough moral choices.

Let me give you a couple examples. Say a young couple comes into my office and wants to get married. One is a Christian, and the other is not.

I try to share Christ with the non-believer, but he has no interest in Christianity.

The Bible forbids mixed marriages between Christians and non-Christians, and so I tell them I cannot perform the ceremony.

They tell me I am unloving. They ask; how can I judge them like that?

But it would be wrong for me to marry them. How can I lovingly unite them in marriage against God’s revealed will in his Word?

Or say a young man comes to me and expresses a desire to join church.

But he says there is an issue in his life, however, which might be a problem for us, and he feels he should be open about it rather than keep it hidden.

What if he goes on to share with me that he is a practicing homosexual and sees nothing wrong with it. Is that a problem for church membership?

I would have to tell him that I respect him for being honest and up front about this issue in his life.

I would invite him to look at the Scriptures together with me to see what God says about homosexuality.

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament we find repeated condemnation of homosexual practice and lifestyle.

I would show him that God offers forgiveness and restoration to the all sinner who repents, regardless of their particular sin. But he is not interested.

At that point I would tell him that he is welcome to continue attending church, and I would encourage him to do so.

I would offer him my friendship, but explain that he is not ready to join church until he has dealt biblically with this issue in his life.

Some would say that I am being unloving; judgmental even.

But how can I lovingly approve a lifestyle which God in his Word condemns?

We must love the truth at all costs. And we must love people. But we cannot soft-peddle sin. Balancing truth and love is never easy.

It often involves confrontation, and most of us don’t like that. But sometimes truly loving someone requires loving confrontation.

Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

Paul has described love positive terms—what love is, negative terms—what love is not. And He described love with a contrasting statement.

Now finally he tells us four things that love always does. Look at verse 7: “**Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres**.”

First, love always protects. The word Paul uses here is related to the Greek word for “roof.”

It means “to protect by covering over,” just as a roof provides a protective covering from the elements.

Protection is a natural byproduct of love. A pastor protects the church he loves. The good shepherd protects the sheep.

A parent naturally protects his or her children. Some children complain that their parents are over-protective. But Paul calls it love.

**Next we see that love always trusts**. The word here means to trust or believe in, to commit yourself to someone or something.

Now love is not stupid or naïve. I don’t think I saw those words anywhere on Paul’s list.

It does not believe an obvious lie or blindly put its trust in untrustworthy people. But love chooses to believe the best about people until proven otherwise.

And love certainly trusts God who is always completely trustworthy.

**Next love always hopes. Love is unabashedly optimistic**.

Love does not dwell on the problems of the past, but looks forward to the future with confidence and grace.

**And finally, love always perseveres**. Love never stops loving. It continues in the face of rejection and opposition. It bears up under insult and injury.

Love perseveres because it is unconditional. It chooses to love people in spite of themselves.

Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Praise God for how He loves you. And may God help you love others with that same love.

Here is a suggestion. Take Jesus’ name and plug it in wherever you see the word love. “Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind. He does not envy, he does not boast, he is not proud. He is not rude, he is not self-seeking, he is not easily angered, he keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. He always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

That’s how God loves you!

Now say it again but this time with your name in the place of love.

“Mike is patient, Mike is kind. Mike does not envy, Mike does not boast, and so on.

Once again I ask, how’s your love life?

Jesus is the only one who truly fulfills this beautiful picture of love.

Rather than get discouraged over your own shortcomings, cast yourself upon Christ who is perfect love.

Meditate on the beauty of his character.

And let God do his work in your life, transforming you ever more into the likeness of Christ by the power of his Spirit.

That is the secret to growing in love. That is the love life I want to have.