

Entering In: (Ice breaker question – answer one)

Who was your first “crush”? How old were you? How long did it last?

In what way did your parents model “love” for you in their relationship with one another?

The Context:

1 Corinthians 12-14 have to do with spirituality and spiritual things. In this part of his letter, Paul especially gives attention to the “charismata,” the spiritual gifts. The Corinthian believers had an estimation of spirituality that said to be spiritual had to do with having certain kinds of gifts – manifestations of the Spirit of God that were manifestations of how spiritual one was.

In chapter 13, Paul mentions the gift of tongues which can be a special endowment of the Spirit to learn human languages and/or a “tongue of angels” (13:1), an unknown tongue. For the Corinthians, this became a criteria by which spirituality was judged, and became a divisive point within the church.

Going Deeper

Why is someone who “speak[s] in the tongues of men and of angels” but who is without love like a “resounding gong or a clanging cymbal?” What is Paul saying here about the cheapness of words not backed up by loving conduct?

What is the tragedy of possessing gifts but not having any love?

What kind of person would give all he possesses to the poor and even surrender his body to the flames without love? Why does Apostle Paul say that such a person gains nothing?

When have you experienced in your life that you have made a “sacrifice” without love and felt like you hadn’t gained anything?

What is the end result of a life lived without love (cf. Luke 15:25-32)?

Consider 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 in light of the life that Jesus lived. Give expression to the ways he fits the description of love. What examples from his life come to mind?

What is the description of love according to the world?

How do your ideas of what it means to love and to be loved compare with the description of love in this passage?

How is it possible for you to love others in this way (cf. Galatians 5:22-25)?

In what ways have you been loved by God and his people in terms of the specific way that this passage describes love?

In 1 Corinthians 13:11, Paul writes, “When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.” What are the “childish ways” that you need to leave behind?

Given Apostle Paul’s description about the “now” and “then,” why is love greater than even “faith” and “hope?” How does this provide the right perspective on the purpose of spiritual gifts and the question of whether or not I have certain spiritual gifts?