

Entering In: (Ice breaker question)

How long past the “best before date” of something in your refrigerator or pantry are you likely to still eat it? If it depends, then which are you more likely/less likely to eat?

The Context:

We are back in 1 Corinthians 13 after taking a break during the Advent and Christmas season. You’ll recall that the church in Corinth is a church with lots of problems, but then again, every church has problems. Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, however, deal with problems that have resulted in divisions within the church.

In addressing the issues that are dividing the church, Paul also turns their attention to that which ought to bind the church: love. In turning their attention to love, he also reminds them that though things of this world such as spiritual gifts or our jobs or our homes or anything will one day end, love lasts forever.

Going Deeper

1. Pilate asked Jesus “What is truth?” We are asked, “What is love?”

Look at the following ways Paul describes the characteristics of love. Which characteristics come easier for you? Which ones are more challenging?

- *Love is patient*
- *Love is kind*
- *Love does not envy*
- *Love does not boast*
- *Love is not proud*
- *Love is not rude*
- *Love is not self-seeking*
- *Love is not easily angered*
- *Love keeps no record of wrongs*
- *Love does not delight in evil*
- *Love rejoices with the truth*
- *Love always protects/takes responsibility*
- *Love always hopes*
- *Love always perseveres/does tough things/disciplines*

2. Consider what is temporal

God gives us many beautiful things that we can appreciate (creation, art, music, food, people, spiritual gifts, etc.) and declares them “good,” but they are temporary. These things exist as a way of pointing to Him and we are to appreciate them and use them to the fullest, but understand that they have a shelf life. The Corinthians sacrificed the eternal for the temporary, as did also other biblical characters (David in 2 Samuel 11; Esau in Genesis 25:29-34).

What is the attraction of the temporary that it becomes so easy to divert our attention away from the eternal? What does the attraction say about our understanding of God? What does it say about our perspective on life? What does it say about my perception of my needs?

On the basis of verse 11 and your own experience, what role does maturity have in one’s ability to love? Describe how mature love differs from childish love.

3. Consider what is eternal

In verse 13, Paul three times writes, “now...then” to show that when the perfect comes, then the transient will be done away with.

What does 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 promise about the future?

What does verse 12 teach you about Christian hope? (Hebrews 11:1) What are some things you “see in a mirror dimly” now that you someday hope to see more clearly?

Why do you think love is greater than either faith or hope?

4. Choose to live now in the forever

Keep in mind that all of 1 Corinthians needs to be read in light of chapter 15 and the reality that “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15:20) In the risen Christ, God’s “forever” has arrived in the present, calling us to be people of “forever.” As Paul said to the men in Athens, “In him we live and move and have our being, “(Acts 17:28) and if He is love, then we abide in the eternity of his love. In this sense, the love Paul writes about in chapter 13 is not our duty, it is our destiny.

What are ways that you can seek the “forever” in the week ahead?

What do you want your legacy to be? How does that view of your legacy align with what you see God doing in and around you?