

WHITE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WMPC – Men’s Bible Study

I Corinthians 13 – Winter-Spring 2017

Lesson 8

Read I Corinthians 13

3 Questions:

Q1: Have you taken a personality test before? What does it say about you? Do you have the gift of speaking, knowledge or giving? In all three of these examples in I Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul says they are nothing without love. Can you think of a time in your life when you did love and when you did not love while performing one of these gifts?

Q2: In verses 4-7, love’s credentials are laid out both positively (verse 4) and then reinforced negatively (verse 4, 5 and 6). Ask yourself three questions: How do I see the quality of Jesus himself? How do we see it in ourselves and not in ourselves? How do we then work it out in and practice in our lives?

Q3: Reflect and answer this question for yourself. How and why is love greater than faith and hope? And in your mind, what is second, faith or hope or does it even matter?

3 Insights:

I1: I Corinthians 13 is broken up into 3 sections in the 13 verses. The first three verses focus three specific gifts that the people of Corinth valued very highly – speaking and even more speaking in tongues; great knowledge and the ability to prophesy; and the ability to surrender myself or my possessions. These extraordinary gifts, grand abilities and skills, extravagant actions are emptied of any worth without love. Furthermore, with the mention of each item, the refrains describing lovelessness become more blatantly self-indulgent, more individualistic and more self-serving. The point is that no matter how magnificent the accomplishment, power or action, when love is missing the exercise in question becomes vain, selfish, fruitless and empty. Imbedded in 13:1-3 are two items: 1.) Love’s nature is to seek not one’s own needs but the needs of others and 2.) In so doing, love ultimately secures not only the other person but also one’s own self.

I2: The 2nd section of I Corinthians 13 (verses 4-7) is commonly recited at wedding after wedding. It strings together a practical list of adjectives that if wrestled with start to finish really stretch our own personal interactions. The words – patient, kind, no envy, not selfish, not angered, no record of wrong, no evil, truth, protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres represent 12 simple yet challenging statements on what love is and is not. Love is never held alone in one’s self; love always involves another. Love is a two-way street both for God and us but also for how we interact with the people around us. Over the years, Art Ross has taught many younger generation people that “the opposite of love is control.” In these 12 words, there is no room for control.

I3: In the last section of I Corinthians 13 (verses 8-13), notice how Paul starts. He refers back to the first three verses after he says love never fails. He goes on to predict the future – no prophecies, no tongues and no knowledge. Paul is describing the call of love and ultimately life itself as an unfinished scale, going ahead of us in God’s future. The child of love, which will one day be completed, is therefore not

just our duty, but our destiny. So often life feels like we have to fit into a Christian framework which speaks of this duty in an often impossible standard. But Paul sees all of life within the framework of God's future – His future that will burst into the present in the person of Jesus and especially in his resurrection. In the future, Paul sees a world of joy, delight and love. A future where the child truly becomes the adult.

3 Links to further study:

L1: Max Lucado, in *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior*, tells the story of Maria and her daughter Christina. Longing to leave her poor Brazilian neighborhood, Christina wanted to see the world. Discontent living at home having only a pallet on the floor, a washbasin, and a wood-burning stove, she dreamed of a better life in the city. One morning she ran away, breaking her mother's heart. Her mother knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew that her daughter was too stubborn to give up. Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, any place with the reputation for street walkers or prostitutes. At each place she left her picture--taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, or fastened to a corner phone booth. On the back of each photo she wrote a note. A few weeks later, Christina was coming down the stairs in a seedy hotel. Her young face was tired. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back Maria had written this: "Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. Please come home. I love you." And Christina went home. God is the same way. He wants us to come home. It doesn't matter what we've done. It doesn't matter what we've become. We can always come home to Him.

L2: Philip Yancey in his book *What is so Amazing about Grace* starts with a story in which his friend tells him about encountering a homeless prostitute in Chicago who began to cry as she told him that she had raised money for drugs by prostituting her two-year old child. When Yancey's friend asked the woman if she had sought help at a local church, she answered, "Church? Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse and less in love with myself."

L3: Close your eyes and listen to the CK Gospel Choir sing about love:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_Dn0pnsckg