

Journey Into Building Better Relationships

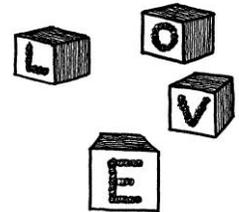
LESSON 1 . . . Laying the Foundation for Great Relationships (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

NOTES

God created us for relationships. When He created Adam, He placed him in the Garden of Eden, a perfect paradise. However, in the midst of paradise, what does God say in Genesis 2:18b?

The thirteenth chapter of *1 Corinthians* is the greatest passage ever written about relationships. The believers at Corinth were having all kinds of relationship problems. There were divisions, confusion, and contention about which gift was the most important. After discussing spiritual gifts, what does Paul write in the last phrase of 1 Corinthians 12:31?

Then, in chapter thirteen, Paul declares *charity* (love) is the most important thing in the Christian life. It is the foundation of all great relationships. Laying the foundation of love has **two** requirements . . .



Analyze the kinds of love.

As we talk about love, one problem we encounter is the English language has only one word for love. For example, I can say, “I **love** boiled okra, and I **love** my wife.” Does the word “love” have the same meaning in each of those statements? Of course not! I think one reason God inspired the writers of the New Testament to write in Greek is there are four words for “love” in that language.

First is the word ERŌS (air'-os), from which we get our word “erotic.” It means “sexual love.” ERŌS refers to a relationship based on physical attraction and sex. It is a “love” that uses people until it gets all it wants from them sexually, and then it moves on. This word is never used in the New Testament. Second is the word PHILEŌ (fil-ay'-oh), which describes the love between brothers and sisters. We get our English word “Philadelphia,” which means “brotherly love,” from this word. The third Greek word for “love” is STORGĒ (store'-gay), which denotes love for family. It usually refers to the love between parents and children.

None of these three words for “love” is used in 1 Corinthians 13. The word used in this chapter is AGAPĒ (uh-gah'-pay), which is an enduring,

sacrificial love that will do anything for the one loved. This is the word Jesus uses twice in John 15:12. Write it below:

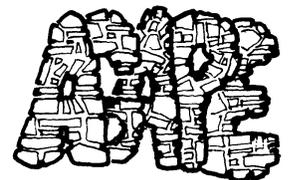
Which of these kinds of love do you need to have a great marriage? All four! You must have ERŌS because one of the basic needs of a man is sexual fulfillment. While the word ERŌS is not found in the Bible, sensual love and physical attraction, as God intended between a husband and wife, are described in detail in *Song of Solomon*. The Bible teaches physical appearance is important to men. Therefore, Solomon writes about his bride, *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes* (Song 7:1a). Wives, dirty feet will turn off your husband. Then, what does Solomon write in 7:1c-d?

Solomon also writes: *thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies* (7:2b). Men like their wives to look the best they can. Every wife should strive to look something like the woman her husband married because that's the woman he fell in love with and married.

Wives also like their husbands to look good. The Bible teaches appearance is important to women. For example, what does Solomon's bride write about him in *Song of Solomon* 5:14b-15a?

I know Virginia likes my body to look good, so I try to work out with dumbbells two or three times a week and try to watch my diet.

Some of the rest of *Song of Solomon* you should read on your own. Not only do you need ERŌS love in your marriage but also PHILEŌ (brotherly) love. This is because husbands and wives should be best friends. There must also be STORGĒ (family love) because the family must take precedence over everything except God. AGAPĒ is also essential because both husbands and wives must be willing to make any sacrifice for the benefit of the other (Eph. 5:33).



To lay a foundation for great relationships, first **analyze the kinds of love** and then . . .

Realize the consequences of not loving.

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul lists **four** consequences of not having AGAPĒ love (*charity*).

1. All I say is just noise. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal* (13:1). The word *tongues* (GLÖSSA, glow-sah´) means languages (Acts 2:4-6). The phrase *tongues of men and of angels* refers to the greatest possible eloquence of speech and oratory in both earth and heaven.

Sounding brass refers to the loud noise created by striking a large metallic disk. The *tinkling cymbal* refers to the circular, slightly concave, brass plate used as a percussion instrument that is struck with a drumstick. Cymbals are also used in pairs and struck together. The repeated clashing of *brass* or a *cymbal* produces a meaningless sound that is very irritating. In all our relationships, when we speak without love, our words are meaningless and even irritating.



The most important ingredient in any relationship is communication. The number one complaint in marriages is: “We can’t seem to communicate.” The basic reason people cannot communicate is failing to obey what command in Ephesians 4:15a?

Without obeying that command, **all I say is just noise.**

2. All I know is negated. Paul writes, *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing* (13:2). Many parents say, “My kids won’t listen to me.” I wonder why! As someone has said, “Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.” How does the last sentence in 1 Corinthians 8:1c-d express this truth?

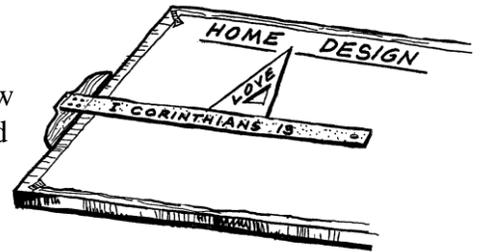
If we don’t love, our *knowledge* causes us to be puffed up with pride and hurts our relationships rather than helps them. If you want your kids, or anyone else, to listen to what you know, don’t talk down to them; talk to them in *love*.

3. All my faith means nothing. *And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing* (13:2b-c). If we do not love, our *faith* means *nothing* to God or anyone else. Being a

Christian is much more than what we believe, it also includes how we behave. The real issue is not only what we believe about Jesus, but also what difference He has made in our lives and our relationships. How does Galatians 5:6b express this biblical truth?

4. All my sacrifices are nullified. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing (13:3).* One man said, “I have worked hard all my life to give my wife a new house, a nice car, and clothes, but now she wants to divorce me.” Why? Without love, it is all nullified.

Why do kids whose parents buy them smart phones, laptops, new cars, and designer clothes often grow up resenting their parents and often breaking their parents’ hearts? Because without *love*, it is all nullified! What does God tell parents in Colossians 3:21?



The word translated *fathers* (PATĒR, pat-air´) can also be translated “parents,” as it is in Hebrews 11:23. Why do many children grow bitter or angry toward their parents? Because children spell love “T-I-M-E! All that expensive stuff many parents buy their kids is often just a payoff for not spending enough time with their kids. The kids know that! Many parents can’t say “no” to anything their child wants because they feel guilty for not spending enough time at home. Remember, no one’s last words have ever been, “I wish I had spent more time at work.” Of what does Ephesians 5:16 warn us?

In no area is this truth more important than in our relationships.

The consequences of not loving are **all I say is just noise, all I know is negated, all my faith means nothing, and all my sacrifices are nullified.**

To lay a foundation for great relationships, **analyze the kinds of love and realize the consequences of not loving.**