

Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide (Rooted In The Word : I Corinthians) (October 3, 2021)



And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 1 Cor. 13:2

Throughout the book of 1 Corinthians its author, Paul is entreating the fledgling church in Corinth to center themselves on the love and unity found in being disciplined students of the life and person of Jesus. A church cannot represent the church of Jesus if that church is divided in self-centered bickering (1 Cor. 12:12), which is what was happening in Corinth. The people in the church were focusing on being right about which person's teachings they followed, about how they dealt with meat sacrificed to idols, about sex and so on, instead of focusing on the righteousness found in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

As Paul nears the end of his letter he sums up the matter at the beginning of chapter thirteen. Even if a person knows incredible things, and even if they have faith that will shift mountains, if they aren't loving they aren't anything. This is because ultimately knowledge, wisdom and faith are for the glory of God and the goodness of people, and we can neither glorify God nor bring goodness to anyone if our hearts are unloving. So, without love our knowledge and faith simply drift away like smoke on the wind.

Paul then goes on in chapter thirteen to articulate exactly how love looks and acts, just so there's no confusion. This part of chapter thirteen is often used in wedding ceremonies, and rightfully so. In marriage and in family we have a crucible that will, with the kind of love Paul describes, guided by the Holy Spirit forge deep unity while maintaining genuine diversity of thought, personality and will. Marriage, family and the Church are meant to model, develop and support our individual and collective relationship with God. But if we remove genuine love from our marriage, our families and our churches, if we model those parts of our lives as opportunities to be right, to shun, to manipulate for selfish purposes we risk teaching people to carry these same values and behaviors into their relationship (or attempted relationship) with God. This will result in, at best a stunted relationship and at worst a non-existent relationship with God.

This is why Paul is so adamant about loving in unity. Not only will we not live full interpersonal lives, we also cannot have a genuine, sustainable love of God if we do not practice such a thing with one another. And so Paul ends chapter thirteen with this simple statement: we must have faith, hope and love, but the greatest of them is love. (13:13)

So, Consider:

1. What is the relationship between knowledge and wisdom?
2. Reflect on how marriage, family and church act as models for our relationship with God.

Take Action:

Spend focused prayer time this week on any area of your life where there may be interpersonal disunity, and ask for wisdom in how to restore unity in that area. May the Lord bless you and keep you!

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