

What Love Means 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

The highest _____ of life is to love God and other people, but what does it mean to love? The God of the _____ is the God of love, who loves us in _____ of all our weaknesses. How thankful we should be for the Bible because the Bible _____ all that God has done to _____ us now in this life and in the life to come. God's Word records His _____ for us and His _____. The more we _____ about God, the more we'll love Him. By studying God's word, we'll _____ in our faith and our devotion to Him.

Read what the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Love is the very _____ of our relationship with God. Without love, we _____ nothing and we _____ nothing. Imagine waking up in a _____ without love, a world where people don't care—and they don't care that they don't care. Small offenses would start fights and wars because no one loved enough to _____. People would _____ selfish and ambitious, stepping on others to better themselves. A world without love is a world where the life of the unwanted would be _____, where children and the aged are forgotten, and where people sit silent while _____ takes place. A world without love is without _____ and filled with all the ugly substitutions that people find to take love's place.

Our scripture reading comes from Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

What does it mean to love? The love that we're talking about isn't the same thing as physical _____, though many call that love. No, "love," as it is used in the Bible, is the _____ of the self for the best interests of others. Love takes place when people put other's _____ above their own. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his _____ for his friends" (John 15:13).

Love is _____ than mere feelings, though love involves feeling. Love is an intentional _____ of the will; love determines to put self aside and _____ the object of its love. Love pays whatever _____, gives whatever _____, and runs whatever _____ to do what is _____ for another. It gladly _____ without complaint. Love will act even when _____ things are required. Love will _____ the harsh and the demanding _____.

Sometimes love is _____ others. At other times, love means allowing the _____ will of someone else to act in our lives. Love knows how to _____, but love also knows how to

_____ the love others graciously give. Peter didn't want the Lord to wash his feet (John 13:8), but his objection to allowing the kindness of Jesus meant that he had no _____ with the Lord. Love requires us to _____ others to enter into our lives to be kind to us.

Living without love means that our _____ will be empty and indifferent. We won't care about anything but _____. We will be like the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan; we'll just pass by on the other side of the road and leave others to _____. A life without love means we'll turn _____ in selfishness, wanting only to fulfill our own lusts and desires. We'll be like the _____, rich farmer whose land provided abundantly but all he could think about was hoarding it up for himself. Living without love means we'll forget how to be _____ for what we have or how others sacrificed to bless us.

Living without love means that we won't have a relationship with _____. **Read what the Bible says in 1 John 4:7-8.** Living without love means living with _____. Without love, we grow angry at every _____ and we plot to get even. Without love, _____ flourishes. **Read 1 John 2:10-11.** Hate _____ everything with darkness, and fear, and violence. A world without love is a _____ place.

On the other hand, living with love means living with _____ and compassion. We see a _____ and we fill it; we see a _____ and we comfort it; we see an opportunity to _____ and we seize it. God is the great _____ of love. So, what we want to do is see how God loves.

First, God's love is _____. **Read John 3:16-17.** The entire gospel comes to _____ in this verse. God's love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and it _____ others in. Here God sets the _____ of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love somebody dearly, you're willing to pay the price dearly for that person's responsive love. God paid dearly with the _____ of his Son, the highest price He could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our _____, and then offered us the _____ life that he had bought for us. When we share the _____ with others, our love must be like Jesus. We must be _____ to give up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

Second, God's love is _____. **Read Psalm 103:8-12.** We can understand a God who would forgive _____ who ask for mercy. But we have a God who tenderly searches for _____ and then joyfully forgives them. He must _____ an extraordinary love to do that! It is the kind of love that prompted _____ to come to earth to search for lost people and save them. This is the kind of extraordinary love that God has for you. If you feel _____ from God, don't despair because God is searching for you.

Third, God's love is _____ and beyond _____. **Read Romans 8:38-39.** These verses contain comforting _____. Believers have always had to face _____ in many forms: persecution, illness, imprisonment, even death. These problems could cause them to _____ abandoned by Christ, but Paul explains that these things cannot _____ us from Christ and His love. God profoundly loves His people.

Paul bowed his knees before the Father and he prayed "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19). If we could grasp—even a little—the immeasurable love of God for us, we would love Him and love others so _____.

How then should we love others? People are not "_____ _____" any more than people are born chefs. They have to learn how to _____ and they also have to learn how to _____. You may have the deepest of feelings, but love is a _____; it's an act of the heart and soul. Loving somebody means that you've paid enough _____ to their needs and their desires, that their needs and their desires become more _____ than your own. The Scriptures teach us _____ to love and _____ to love.

Many people want to be loved, but they don't understand the _____ calling of loving others. Love isn't merely affection that we receive from other people; it's our determination to sacrifice ourselves for the _____ interests of others. We love because we _____ to love. We love because we see the _____ of serving God and serving others.

Read what the Lord Jesus said in John 13:34-35. We show that we are the Lord's _____ when we love like He loves. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his _____" (John 15:13). True Christianity calls us to _____ ourselves for others. If we become distracted with _____ people treat us, we'll _____ how we treat others. Love means setting ourselves and our wills _____ so that we can bless other people. **Read what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:31-32.**

The devil _____ people to be arrogant, to be offended easily, to take revenge, to slander, and to grow bitter inside. The Lord Jesus leads us to be _____, even when no one else is kind; to be tenderhearted, even when everyone else is apathetic; and to forgive, even when the world hates us. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-48.**

God calls us to be His _____ and He expects us to grow beyond a purely selfish mindset. The Lord God sacrificed Jesus on His own. We didn't _____ _____ for Him to send His Son. No! He gave Jesus because He _____ loved us. **Read 1 John 4:9-11.** The Lord God

forgave us, not because we _____ it but because He is so loving. He calls us to forgive—even when people don't deserve it, because we are His _____. He calls us to love our _____ rather than hate them, to pray for those who persecute us, and to love those who don't love us. Why? Because we are God's children and that is the way God is.

Read Colossians 3:12-14. Have you _____ love? Can people _____ the love of God in your heart and in your behavior? Do you care enough to take up a brother's _____ as your own? Do you care enough to sacrifice yourself for a _____ cause?

Love means _____ our selfish, self-centered ways so we can sacrifice ourselves to serve God and to serve others. Life without love is empty and useless; it is sad and lonely. People who turn away from the love of God may not realize how much they've _____ themselves or what a precious thing they have _____ when they lose love. When people lose love, God's love, they also lose His _____; they lose His _____ in prayer; they lose a _____ in His eternal house. Will you love God? Will you give yourself fully to Him?

After the wonderful chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, comes the command of 1 Corinthians 14:1, which simply says, "Pursue love." To "pursue" means to _____ something until you seize it. Paul isn't speaking here about finding someone to love you; he's urging us to pursue the _____ of loving someone else. Pursuing means regularly giving of ourselves in _____ and _____ to do what is best for others. First John 3:18 says, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in _____ and _____."

Love means caring enough for others to _____ them about Jesus and about His love. We _____ Christ each week because we love you. When people get to know Christ, they _____ to love in the fullest sense of the word. They truly put other people _____ themselves. They won't _____ God or others by living sinful lives when they love God. God's love and His kindness moves us, motivates us to _____ of our sins and to live moral lives. Love won't let us _____ sinning against God or sinning against other people. God loves you, and He greatly wants you to be His _____. So, if you open up your heart, and you begin to love God the way that He loves you, you'll _____ your life. You'll draw close to God and become a _____. Because He loved you, Jesus died upon the cross to make atonement for your sins. Don't reject His marvelous gift of salvation.

Believe in Jesus, turn away from everything sinful, _____ Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be _____ into Christ. When you're baptized, you'll enter into a relationship with God that can last eternally. In baptism, God washes away your _____ (Acts 22:16) and He makes you His child (Galatians 3:26-27). As God's child, He will _____ your prayers; He'll _____ you an inheritance in heaven. If God loved you enough to send His Son to die on the cross for your sins, will you love Him enough to commit your heart and life to Him?