



Parkway Fellowship

Love Handles: Get a Grip on Your Relationships • What Makes Love Persevere •
1 Corinthians 13:4-8a; 1 Peter 5:5; Ephesians 4:15 • 02/17/2019

Main Point

Persevering love is a choice that demonstrates itself in humility and grace-filled honesty.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Name three ways you have heard the word love used in the past week.

What do those uses of the word reveal about the way people typically view love?

How might our culture define love differently than God?

We are a world in love with being in love. We use the word about food, sports, entertainment, and people. But where our culture sees mere affection, God sees something different. Love is the defining mark of the Christian. In the context of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul helps us see the nature of true love and shows us what it means for love to persevere.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.

What attributes of love did Paul list in these verses? Which one stands out to you the most? Why?

Which of these qualities of love is the easiest for you to apply in relationships with others? Which is the most difficult?

Paul is not talking about an emotional love. The kind of love he described here is above emotion; it's self-sacrificing for the sake of another. These 15 characteristics describe loving others even when doing so is difficult. Of course, that is when love is most needed. If we love only those who measure up to our standards or who never pose any challenge, then is that really love? This is the kind of love that you can only truly see in Christ. It's only through experiencing the self-sacrificial love of Jesus that we can truly love others.

In this week's message, Gary, Andrea, Will, and Shawna talked about how this passage makes them think about what it means for love to persevere. Do you tend to think about perseverance as something that you're forced into doing or something you choose to do? Why does it matter? How does this view of perseverance impact how you love people?

| Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 5:5.

What does this verse say to you about "swallowing your pride," like Gary, Andrea,, Will, and Shawna discussed?

What is the relationship between willing submission and humility? Is one of these more difficult for you than the other? Explain.

Why is swallowing your pride, or humbly dying to self, so difficult for most of us?

Peter counseled believers to respect their leaders and to be humble. They were to allow God to humble them under His sovereign rule. If they did so, God would honor them. They could put their cares on Him with the confidence that He cared for them. All believers are to display humility, realizing that God provides for their needs.

| Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:15.

According to verse 14, what happens when we speak the truth in love?

In contrast, what do we avoid when we speak the truth in love?

How would it change your relationships to think about them as a means for growing in Christ?

Paul noted the importance of spiritual growth and the role God's Word plays in that growth process. For Paul, maturity as a Christian isn't something found in isolation; it's something brought about by God's Spirit (Eph 3:16-19) as God's people (the body) live out their calling together. We press on toward maturity by continually growing in the Word and speaking God's truth to one another. That is our responsibility to one another.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In the panel discussion this week, Gary said he was asked, "What are you going to do to get your marriage where it needs to be?" Think about a relationship where you struggle to persevere in love. What are you going to do to get that relationship where it needs to be?

Of the three main points from this week's message— love is a choice, die to self by swallowing my pride, and speak the truth in love—stands out to you the most personally? Why?

What next step is God calling you to take?

Pray

Thank God for showing us the nature of true love in Jesus. Ask Him to help your group remember the central place of love in your lives, and that it is a daily choice demonstrated in humility and grace-filled honesty.

Commentary

| 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

13:4. The Greek word for “patient” literally means “to be long (that is, slow) to anger.” Generally speaking, the term refers to the patience we need to have with people as opposed to endurance in difficult circumstances. The word for kind refers to an active quality in which we look for opportunities to act with helpful intentions toward others. This is the quality of love in which we seek to do good to others. We derive the English word “zealous” from the Greek term for envy. This word is sometimes used in a positive sense, for we can be appropriately passionate about many good causes. In this case, however, the term refers to a negative desire for gain or jealousy that another person received gain. Such envy usually leads on to rivalry and strife.

To be “boastful” refers to a tendency to call attention to one’s accomplishments or abilities for selfish reasons. Paul saw this tendency as a particular problem among the Corinthian church members. He included the synonymous phrase conceited. This word literally means “to be puffed up” and serves as an apt illustration of the inflated egos of some of the Corinthians. Paul insisted that Christlike love displays neither of these tendencies.

13:5. The phrase “not act improperly” can be literally translated as “not behave against the scheme.” The phrase refers to God’s giving His people a certain pattern of behavior to follow. Those who are guided by agape-love strive to avoid acting in ways that are inconsistent with that God-given pattern. The phrase is “not selfish” literally means “does not seek its own.” Again, Paul’s emphasis was on avoiding any behavior that

constantly puts one's own desires and preferences above the needs of others. Selfish behavior was at the root of many problems in the Corinthian church. Selfless love was the solution. The Greek word behind the phrase "is not provoked" came over into English as the basis of the word paroxysm, a violent explosion of anger. Paul taught that love molds a Christian into the kind of person who is a calming influence. The phrase "does not keep a record of wrongs" includes a concept from the world of accounting. Refusing to keep a record of wrongs means not being "historical" with those who have wronged us.

13:6-7. The Corinthians would have recognized these faults as taking place among them. Contrary to common perception, love is not marked by tolerance for error. Love endures in this age with a sure expectation of better things to come in the next.

13:8. Paul contrasted love's permanence and eternal impact with the temporal nature of spiritual gifts. This verse serves as a kind of thematic parenthesis with the beginning section in which Paul also used the examples of prophecies ... tongues ... knowledge. By emphasizing that love never fails, Paul highlighted that loving God and loving one another are two things Christians do that extend even into eternity. Active expressions of love are the substance of the "treasures in heaven" that Jesus taught His followers to store up (see Matt. 6:20).

| 1 Peter 5:5

Here the term elders may refer to age, not office. Peter encouraged all believers to practice humility and trust God with their cares. Humility commends us to God and fellow humans, which is the opposite effect of arrogance and conceit.

| Ephesians 4:15

The cure for immaturity and instability is speaking the truth. Yet this truth is to be expressed in love—with compassion and understanding. Truth without love can be cold and harsh; love without truth can be mushy and weak.