

## 1 Corinthians 13:1-7: **You Can't Have One Without the Other**

### **Introduce**

Good morning Fathom Church. My name is Eric Shelly and I'm one of the elders here at Fathom. It's good to be up here again and good to bring today's message to you.

If you've got your Bibles, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. That's where we're going to be today. Each week, we want every person to read the scripture passage on their own Bible, whether that's an actual book, a phone, or a tablet. Find your way to 1 Corinthians 13 in your bible.

### **INTRO: Love & Marriage/ WEDDINGS**

In 1955, Frank Sinatra recorded the song 'Love and Marriage'. Its first verse says:

*Love and marriage, love and marriage*

*They go together like a horse and carriage*

*This I tell you, brother*

*You can't have one without the other*

Now, if you're my age, you may know this song less because of Frank Sinatra and more because of another guy named Al Bundy. 'Love and Marriage' was the theme song of the show *Married With Children* that ran during the much of the 90s.

But I don't mention this song because of the TV show, or Al Bundy, or Frank Sinatra, but because of the last lyric that I read to you. *You can't have one without the other.*

- It's the idea that you can't have one thing without also having another thing
- You can't have A without B
- You can't have light without also having darkness
- You can't be a Broncos fan without also hating the Raiders... right?
- I'm a Philadelphia Eagles fan and we have the same requirement about hating the Dallas Cowboys
- *You can't have one without the other*
- We're going to come back to that phrase this morning

But there's a second reason that I mentioned the song, 'Love and Marriage'. It's because our passage this morning, 1 Corinthians 13, is about love and is often associated with marriage and with weddings.

- Even if you've never opened the book of 1 Corinthians before, there's a good chance you're familiar with this passage.
- There's a good chance you've been to a wedding where this passage was read

- There may even be a good chance that you had it read at your own wedding
- I'm in both of these groups. I've been to weddings where this has been read and Anne and I had it read at our wedding.

But guess what?! Reading 1 Corinthians 13 at a wedding is taking this passage WAY out of context

- It's not that this passage doesn't teach us great things about love
  - In fact, the passage describes love very accurately
- Where using it at a wedding takes the passage out of context is that Paul is not talking about weddings at all
  - He's not talking about marriage
  - Or romance
  - Or anything involving a marriage relationship

Just like the rest of 1 Corinthians, in this passage, Paul is talking *to the church about the church*. He's teaching the church in Corinth how to love one another

## 1 Corinthians Review

Starting in January and for all of 2020, we've been preaching through 1 Corinthians which is one of Paul's letters to the church in Corinth

- Paul wrote to them because the church had some issues...
- And that's what Paul has been addressing in his letter. He's been addressing the issues he's heard about in this church. That's what we've been learning about for the past 8 months!
- For really the first 10 chapters of this book, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for a variety of things: jealousy, boasting, rejoicing in wrongdoing, arrogance, resentment, impatience, self-seeking
- Then, in chapter 11 Paul shifts gears somewhat and turns his focus onto the church's gatherings or church services. How they meet and worship and gather together
- In chapter 11, he talked how the church should take communion together
- In chapter 12 he talks about spiritual gifts and how they should be used in the church
- In today's passage Paul continues his discussion on spiritual gifts... but then he kind of circles back and revisits some of things he rebuked the church on earlier

## Connection to Spiritual Gifts in Chap 12

So, our passage today is a continuation of that discussion on spiritual gifts

- But now Paul is bringing one greater point into the discussion

- In chapter 12, Paul's point was that the Spirit gives each of us these gifts, or talents, or abilities
- Which we are to use in the church for the good of the church, for the edification of the church, or in other words, to *build up* the church – Chris taught on this last week
- The Spirit has given us each different gifts
- ... just like the different parts of our body have different roles
- Then there is this sentence at the end of chapter 12 that sort of stands out on its own... but it transitions us into chapter 13
  - Paul says at the end of chapter 12 “And I will show you a still more excellent way”

So, it is this “more excellent way” of using spiritual gifts that Paul is telling us about in chapter 13. And that “more excellent way” is to use them *in love*.

- Here in chapter 13, Paul is still talking about spiritual gifts
- And this is where using 1 Corinthians 13 as a wedding reading is taking it out of context, because the passage is about how to use spiritual gifts in the church in love
- Paul lists off several spiritual gifts and states that while each are desirable gifts, they are all sorely lacking if they are not used in love

### 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- So, let's turn to our passage together. Verse 1:

**‘If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.**

### Explain: Tongues

- Tongues is the first gift Paul mentions in verse 1
- Now in a few weeks, Chris is going to preach on chapter 14, which discusses tongues specifically, so I'm not going to go into great detail about tongues today
- For our purpose today, speaking in tongues is the ability – given by the Holy Spirit – to pray or speak in a language of that you have not learned and do not understand
  - It is the ability to speak in a non-worldly language
- So, Paul is saying that if you speak in tongues, if you speak in a heavenly or angelic language, but do not do it in or out of love, then you are just making noise
  - You're just babbling
  - You can say the most wonderful things, but if love isn't present... you're simply making empty noise... and that's all that people will hear
  - He's saying, *You can't have one without the other*. You can't have tongues without love

- Ok, verse 2...

<sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

### Explain: Prophecy, Wisdom, Knowledge, and Faith

- The next gifts Paul addresses are the gifts of prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, and faith
- Verse 2 is really a re-wording of what Paul said in chapter 12 verses 8-9. You can quickly flip there

<sup>8</sup> For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

- So again, Paul states that you can have some of these gifts, but they are empty without love:
  - The gift of prophecy is the ability to declare the future will of God... that's a gift we would all love to possess, right?
    - How many times have you prayed, "God show me your will", or "God reveal your will for [blank]"
  - The phrase **understand all mysteries** refers to having great wisdom and knowledge. It is the ability to understand God's truths and promises
  - And the gift of faith is leaning your full trust and confidence in God's saving power
    - Again, How many times have you prayed that you would have stonger faith or for God to deepen your faith?
- These are all very desirable gifts: prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, and faith
  - When given through the Spirit, these are important and powerful gifts to use in the church
  - Paul says that you can be a prophet, or you can be wise, or knowledgeable, or extremely faithful
    - But if you aren't loving, you are nothing and the gifts are nothing
  - You can't have wisdom or great faith without love
  - *You can't have one without the other*
- Onto verse 3...

<sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

### Explain: Generosity and Sacrifice

- In verse 3, Paul speaks to the gifts of generosity and sacrifice
- He states that you can have the gift of generosity – that is, you can give away your money or possessions – all that you have

- Or you can go as far as to give away or sacrifice your life – this is martyrdom – but you can even do that without love
- Paul is saying here that even the ultimate sacrifice – if done without love – is ultimately nothing and means nothing
- One commentator said that, “Even self-sacrifice can be self-centered”<sup>1</sup>
- If the sacrifice is not done in love... in love of others – it is empty. It is nothing
- You can’t truly be generous without love
- *You can’t have one without the other*

### Illustration

- So, here’s a way to illustrate, which I’ve borrowed from another pastor<sup>2</sup>
- I’m going to read you a brief excerpt from one of the greatest speeches in US history: Martin Luther King Jr’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech:

*I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.*

*This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.*

- You see... I was reading from one of the most compelling, powerful, transformational speeches ever given
  - I certainly didn’t speak it with the authority or eloquence that King used back in 1963
  - ... but you really didn’t hear the words I was saying anyway, did you?
- Instead you heard the noisy gong. The clanging cymbal. You heard more cowbell
- That’s Paul’s point here – that without love, all the wonderful things that we say or do
  - Whether it is wonderful words or speech
  - Whether it is prophecies, wisdom, knowledge, or great faith,
  - Extreme generosity or even sacrificing your life...

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<sup>1</sup> Lowery, D. K. (1985). [1 Corinthians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 535). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly Matt Keyser, but not 100% sure who I’ve borrowed this from

- If these things aren't done in love, all of those things, all of those gifts... are just noise
- And that noise distracts from everything else, rendering the gift meaningless
  - Just like me ringing a cowbell rendered the powerful words I was reading meaningless
  - So, living and acting without love renders even our good actions meaningless

## Application

- This is Paul's message to the Corinthian church. It's that:
  - The Holy Spirit has given each of us in the church gifts that are to be used to build up the church
  - But if those gifts aren't used in a loving manner, they're just a waste of time and energy
- So, for us, the questions become:
  - 1) Am I using my spiritual gifts to build up the church?
  - 2) Am I using my spiritual gifts in love?
- So first, If you don't know what your spiritual gifts are, come talk to us. Come talk to one of the elders or staff members and we'd love to talk through it with you...
  - there are some conversations we can have about your talents or passions
  - and some resources we can point you towards that can help you identify your spiritual giftings
  - and then we can discuss how to use them here at Fathom to build up and strengthen the church
- Now if you do know your spiritual gifts or if you have found ways to serve here at Fathom, the questions for you are:
  - Am I using my gifts in love? Am I serving in love? Am I serving with the right heart?
  - Because it's really easy to do anything with the wrong motives
    - For example, I could stand up here and teach for a lot of reasons, with lots of motivations
      - To try to make myself look good, or smart, or funny, or clever
      - Or try to make Fathom look like a cool or cutting-edge church
      - Or I could try to attack or call out certain people who I disagree with
      - Or I could just vent about something I'm feeling or thinking
      - All of these, unfortunately can be motivations for those who wear a face-mic and preach

- When the true motivation should be to preach the gospel out of our love for others
- That's how I try to approach this each time I teach
- It's because I love this church – those in this room and watching online – that I want to see each of you go deeper with God
- So how can I explain and teach this text in a way that helps you do that?
  - That's how I can love you and build up the church when I preach
- I don't think Paul's instructions here apply only things like preaching or prophesying or having great faith either
- Like Chris taught a few weeks back, what Paul is teaching in this section of 1 Corinthians is about gifts, talents, activities, and ministries.
- Paul's mandate for love to be present applies to any and all ways that you can serve within the church
  - Maybe you've volunteered to be on the cleaning team, helping to disinfect the chapel in between services
    - It would be easy to do so with poor motives, maybe even doing so resentfully
      - Saying, "does this really matter, am I even helping anyone? How am I helping others when I'm cleaning chairs?"
    - But if you start in love, starting with the idea "How can I love others by using my time and energy to clean the chapel?"
      - Then you begin to see through a different lens
      - You see that in cleaning the chapel well, you may help prevent a brother or sister at Fathom from getting sick
      - You may help prevent the spread of Covid-19
      - And suddenly, wiping down some chairs in this room becomes an act of love. It becomes a tremendous way to serve the church and love the church
      - This is how we act, think, and live in love
- So, whether its teaching and preaching, whether it's giving to Fathom, whether it's helping to lead worship, or whether it's using disinfectant wipes on our chairs... it is meaningless if not done in love
- *You can't have one without the other*

Here's my main idea for this section: **SLIDE**

*If spiritual gifts are the tools the Spirit uses to build the church, our love is the material the church is built with*

- It's the idea that tools are worthless if there isn't material to work with
- A saw – without wood to cut – is just a piece of machinery sitting there
- A hammer – without a nail to hit – is just a shaped hunk of metal
- You can't use tools without materials to work with
- You can't use spiritual gifts without love
- You can't have one without the other **BLANK SLIDE**

## 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Ok, let's move on to the rest of our passage. Verses 4-7.

Paul has just told us that the most wonderful spiritual gifts and the most incredible human sacrifices, power, wisdom, and faith – if these things are practiced and done without love – they are meaningless. They are nothing without love.

Now Paul is going to do what a good teacher should do. He just told us that we need love in all aspects of our ministry and now he's going to describe love to us.

We'll break this passage down further, but first let's read verses 4-7 as a whole

**<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

### Explain: What Corinth was doing (why Paul addressed it)

So, as I discussed earlier, Paul is writing to Corinth to gently rebuke and correct them. And that's what he's continuing to do here.

In these 4 verses, he's contrasting some of their actions – actions which he's previously addressed – with what true love looks like.

Chris has talked about this before, but

- One of the hard parts about preaching through a book of the Bible the way that we do at Fathom
- Where we slice it up into small, sections
- And study each section one week at a time
- Is that it's easy to lose sight of the big or overall picture of the entire book or letter
- Remember, Paul is writing a full letter to the church, intended to be read in one sitting... much like you'd read an entire letter or email that you received

So, it's important to remember that as we look at this section of our passage today, because Paul will be referencing lots of things he's already addressed earlier in his letter, again.

He brings them up again as a way to contrast how they're *currently* treating each other vs. how they *should be* treating each other.

They are not loving one another and so Paul wants to explain to them the 'more excellent way' of how to love one another.

He's going to explain love in two ways:

- He'll contrast what love *is not* with what love *is*
- ... and what love *does not do* with what love *does*

### **Is not vs Is**

So let's start with what love *is not* vs. what love *is*:

Paul says at the end of verse 4 and beginning of verse 5 that the Corinthians were **arrogant** and **rude** towards one another.

Further on in verse 5 it says the Corinthians were **irritable** – which means easily angered or easily provoked – and **resentful** of one another. Resentful means that you keep records of the wrong done to you rather than forgiving the wrong done to you.

Remember, some of the ways that the church in Corinth was treating each other:

- They were causing divisions by their arrogance – boasting about which speaker they followed
- They rudely wouldn't wait for others to start communion, and instead would over eat before everyone had a chance to participate
- They would get ticked off at one another, hold grudges, and sue each other

So, Paul contrasts the actions of the church – saying look you guys are arrogant, rude, irritable, and resentful... that's not love! Here's what love is: its **patient** and **kind**

So, there's the *is not vs is* contrast:

- Love is not arrogant, rude, irritable, or resentful
- Instead, love is patient and kind.
- Let's discuss these two traits of love: patience and kindness
  - First, love is **patient** – In this context it is not just the ability to wait your turn or to wait for something
    - Instead, it is the ability to be wronged and not retaliate
    - It literally means to be "long tempered" - You're patient with someone despite their sin against you or even continued sin against you
  - Second, love is **kind** – which means extending good to others even when they may not be good to you
- When you put these two together, you begin to see what Paul is saying:

- Loving each other with patience and kindness means being hurt or wronged by someone and not seeking revenge or restitution, but instead extending kindness and forgiveness to them
- We all know that kids say the darnedest things... sometimes what they say is unintentionally really funny... sometimes its unintentionally really mean
  - I would come in from working in the yard or working out and one of my girls would say to me, “Daddy, you kind of smell bad”
  - Or at times, I would get “Daddy, no offense, but Mommy makes better pancakes than you do”
  - And sometimes kids can get disrespectful and talk back, or blatantly disobey. And in the moment, as a parent, it can be infuriating... Amen?
  - But parents don’t fight back. We don’t punish our kids to get back at them for hurting our feelings and or for disrespectful
  - We don’t insult them back or talk rudely back to them and get short with them
  - We don’t kick them out of the family
  - No, we are ‘long-tempered’ with them. We realize they are still learning and that they need to be loved and lovingly corrected
  - Anne and I are often seeking the right balance of firmness and love when we discipline our girls. Because we love them. We are in a permanent relationship with them
  - And so, we seek to love our daughters in patience and kindness, not rudeness, irritability, and resentment. Its hard, but its what we’re called to

### Does not vs Does

Now Paul moves on to show what love *doesn't do* compared to what it *does do*

In verses 4-6, Paul states what love does not do: it does not **envy** or **boast**, does not **insist on its own way**, and does not **rejoice in wrongdoing**.

These things are all related in that they are caused by self-seeking

- Envy or jealousy is related to boasting: we are jealous of what others have and so that causes us to boast in what we have... “oh yeah, well I caught a fish that was this big”
- When we insist on our own way, we make our choices about our own freedoms and not about the good of others. We say “I’m free to do what I want”... “I want to have it my way” (facemask)
- And we get so concerned with seeking what’s best for ourselves that we can rationalize, overlook, or even celebrate when we do wrong

Paul says here, “look, love doesn’t do the things you guys are doing. It doesn’t envy or boast or insist on its own way or celebrate sin. Instead, here’s what love does”

- Paul then lists 5 things that love *does* as a contrast to what it *doesn't do*

At the end of verse 6, he says love **rejoices with the truth**. Meaning that love doesn’t celebrate sin, but it celebrates the truth of the gospel

- Love takes pride and joy in the good news of the gospel because the gospel is God’s love on display. It is God’s love being demonstrated
- The truth of the gospel is that God loves man so much...
- He loves us so much that he sent His son Jesus to die as punishment for our sin
- And it’s our belief in his resurrection and triumph over death saves us from our sin
- THAT is the truth Paul is talking about here. That is the truth that love rejoices in
- When he says *love rejoices with the truth* or *love celebrates the truth*, it is Christ’s love for us that is being celebrated and rejoiced in
- It’s almost like Paul is saying “*Love celebrates love!*”

This was convicting for me as I wrote this sermon

- I started thinking about the things that I celebrated or rejoiced in, in my own life
  - We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries
  - We celebrate our daughters when they accomplish something new
  - We celebrate when we achieve goals
  - I celebrate when my sports teams win. Especially when the Eagles beat Dallas
  - I celebrate when I go fishing and catch trout... by snapping a photo to look at and enjoy later
  - I celebrate lots of things in life
- But the hard questions for me became
  - Do I celebrate the gospel?
  - Do I celebrate the truth that Christ died for me and that I don’t need to work, struggle, or worry about my ability to achieve my own salvation?
  - Do I talk to friends and neighbors as excitedly about Jesus as I do about the Eagles winning a football game or a good day of fishing I just had?
  - If I’m honest, I can’t always answer yes to all of these questions... how about you?

In verse 7, Paul lists 4 more things that love does. Love:

- Bears all things
- Believes all things
- Hopes all things
- Endures all things

In other words, if we have Christ's love in us,

- We are patient and kind and can bear or endure the sin, arrogance, or rudeness of others
- We can continue to trust, believe, and have faith in Christ's work on the cross and His work in our lives
- We can always be hopeful in all things and all circumstances because of that victory on the cross
- And that hope allows us to persevere and endure anything that may come our way

#### **Application: What we may do (how it applies to us)**

The longer I've been a part of churches – whether as a member or as an elder – the more and more I see that church is *hard*

- It's hard to live in community with others
- Because we're all sinful, imperfect people living and doing life together
- We all – at times – act just like the church in Corinth
  - We're rude, arrogant, self-seeking, jealous, impatient
- But we're called to live with one another through it all
- And love each other through it all
- It's kind of like a marriage
- And so maybe I need to clarify my earlier statement about this passage not being applicable to weddings or to marriage
- This passage in 1 Corinthians 13 *is* applicable to marriage
  - Its most applicable to the marriage described by Paul in another letter he wrote. He wrote to the Ephesian church and in Ephesians 5 he says this (vs 25-32):

**SLIDE**

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

**SLIDE** <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

In as much as Paul is writing about the roles of husbands and wives in Ephesians 5, he's also writing about the role of Christ and his bride, the church

- Christ gave himself up for his bride
- He provides for her and cares for her
- He is patient and kind to her, despite her sins
- Because he died for her sins, cleansing her and making her holy, clean, and blameless
- He is one with his church

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul is not only painting a picture for the church in how to love each other

- but he's painting a picture of Jesus
- of how Jesus loves his bride, the church
- of how Jesus loves us,
- and of how Jesus demonstrates the love of God - to us
- This is the good news of what we believe. This is the gospel.
- And the gospel is the foundation of the life of a Christian.
- The gospel is the good news that God loved us and so He sent His son Jesus to die for us and our sins. And in believing in Jesus, his death, and resurrection will have eternal and abundant life

## CONCLUSION

So we wrap up today, I want to circle back to the statement or main idea that I made earlier. I stated that: **SLIDE**

*If spiritual gifts are the tools the Spirit uses to build the church, our love is the material the church is built with*

I think that statement did a good job of summarizing what Paul was saying in verses 1-3. But I want to add to it in light of verses 4-7 **SLIDE**

*If spiritual gifts are the tools the Spirit uses to build the church, our love is the material the church is built with, **and Christ's love is the foundation the church is built on***

You can't have spiritual gifts without love

And you can't have true love without Jesus.

Let's pray **LYRICS SLIDE w/ PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION –THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING – TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER – [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I'm going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we'll take communion, and then we'll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 –WORDS OF INSTITUTION

<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”TAKE

<sup>25</sup>In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”TAKE

<sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thanks church. Let's sing together.

### Resources:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 610). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Lowery, D. K. (1985). [1 Corinthians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 535). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.