

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

CHAPTER 13		
<p>1. The great importance of love</p> <p>a. Verdict 1: Tongues without love are meaningless</p> <p>b. Verdict 2: Gifts without love are nothing</p> <p>1) Prophecy is nothing</p> <p>2) Understanding all mysteries & knowledge are nothing</p> <p>3) Faith is nothing</p> <p>c. Verdict 3: Giving without love profits nothing</p> <p>1) Giving one's goods</p> <p>2) Giving one's life—martyrdom</p> <p>2. The great acts of love</p>	<p>D. The Most Excellent Quality of Life: Love, Not Gifts, 13:1-13^{DS1}</p> <p>Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become <i>as</i> sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.</p> <p>2 And though I have <i>the gift of</i> prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.</p> <p>3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed <i>the poor</i>, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.</p> <p>4 Charity suffereth long, <i>and</i> is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,</p> <p>5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;</p>	<p>6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;</p> <p>7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.</p> <p>8 Charity never faileth: but whether <i>there be</i> prophecies, they shall fail; whether <i>there be</i> tongues, they shall cease; whether <i>there be</i> knowledge, it shall vanish away.</p> <p>9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.</p> <p>10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.</p> <p>11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.</p> <p>12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.</p> <p>13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these <i>is</i> charity.</p> <p>3. The great permanence of love</p> <p>a. It never fails, never ceases, never vanishes</p> <p>b. It is perfect & complete</p> <p>c. It is maturity—mature behavior</p> <p>d. It is the hope of being face-to-face with God—possessing perfect consciousness & knowledge</p> <p>4. The great supremacy of love</p>

DIVISION VII

THE QUESTIONS CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS, 12:1–14:40

D. The Most Excellent Quality of Life: Love, Not Gifts, 13:1-13

(13:1-13) **Introduction:** there is no question, what the world needs more than anything else is love. If people loved each other, really loved each other, there would be no more war, crime, abuse, injustice, poverty, hunger, starvation, homelessness, deprivation, or immorality. Love is the one ingredient that could revolutionize society. Love is the greatest quality of human life. Love is the supreme quality, the most excellent way for a man to live.

1. The great importance of love (vv.1-3).
2. The great acts of love (vv.4-7).
3. The great permanence of love (vv.8-12).
4. The great supremacy of love (v.13).

DEEPER STUDY # 1

(13:1-13) **Love:** throughout this passage, the word used for love or charity is the great word *agape*. (See DEEPER STUDY # 4, *Love*—Jn.21:15-17 for more discussion.) The meaning of *agape love* is more clearly seen by contrasting it with the various kinds of love. There are essentially four kinds of love. Whereas the English language has only the word *love* to describe all the affectionate experiences of men, the Greek language had a different word to describe each kind of love.

1. There is *passionate love* or *eros love*. This is the physical love between sexes; the patriotic love of a person for his nation; the ambition of a person for power, wealth, or fame. Briefly stated, *eros love* is the base love of a man that arises from his own inner passion. Sometimes *eros love* is focused upon good and other times it is focused upon bad. It should be noted that *eros love* is never used in the New Testament.

2. There is *affectionate love* or *storge love*. This is the kind of love that exists between parent and child and between loyal citizens and a trustworthy ruler. *Storge love* is also not used in the New Testament.

3. There is an *endearing love*, the love that cherishes. This is *phileo love*, the love of a husband and wife for each other, of a brother for a brother, of a friend for the dearest of friends. It is the love that cherishes, that holds someone or something ever so dear to one's heart.

4. There is *selfless and sacrificial love* or *agape love*. *Agape love* is the love of the mind, of the reason, of the will. It is the love that goes so far...

- that it loves a person even if he does not deserve to be loved
- that it actually loves the person who is utterly unworthy of being loved

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Note four significant points about agape love.

- a. Selfless or agape love is the love of God, the very love possessed by God Himself. It is the love demonstrated in the cross of Christ.

⇒ It is the love of God for the *ungodly*.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Ro.5:6).

⇒ It is the love of God for *unworthy sinners*.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Ro.5:8).

⇒ It is the love of God for *undeserving enemies*.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Ro.5:10).

- b. Selfless or agape love is a gift of God. It can be experienced only if a person knows God *personally*—only if a person has received the love of God into his heart and life. Agape love has to be shed abroad (poured out, flooded, spread about) by the Spirit of God within the heart of a person.

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Ro.5:5).

- c. Selfless or agape love is the greatest thing in all of life according to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mk.12:29-31).

- d. Selfless or agape love is the greatest possession and gift in human life according to the Scripture (1 Co.13:1-13).

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Co.13:13).

1 (13:1-3) **Love:** the great importance of love. Unequivocally, the decree is pronounced; the judgment is given; the verdict is declared:

⇒ the superior quality of life is love; it is not gifts

⇒ the most excellent way to live and serve is to possess and share love; it is not gifts

The contrast between love and gifts is vivid. Three *verdicts* are declared and the verdicts stress with resounding force the great superiority of love.

- a. Verdict one: tongues without love are meaningless.

⇒ The “tongues of men” probably means all the languages of men (see Ac.2:4-13).

⇒ The “tongues of angels” probably means the heavenly language or the spiritual gift of an ecstatic utterance given by the Holy Spirit of God.

⇒ “Sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal” do not mean the sound of musical instruments but the tinkling together of either small cymbals or the clashing and banging together of large cymbals by untrained persons.

A person can possess the gift and ability to speak and share Christ in all the languages of the world, but if he does not have love, *he becomes* only a clanging and tinkling noise. His speech is meaningless.

A person can possess the spiritual gift of tongues, that is, speak in the heavenly languages of angels; but if he does not have love, he *becomes* only a clanging and tinkling noise. His heavenly, angelic language is meaningless.

Note the phrase “*he becomes*.” This is a crucial point: the gifted person’s speech is not only meaningless, the person himself *becomes meaningless*. He becomes useless in his life and ministry for Christ. Love is far more superior than the gift of tongues.

- b. Verdict two: gifts without love are nothing. Three particular gifts are contrasted with love.

1) There is the gift of prophecy (see note, *Prophecy*—1 Co.12:8-10). A person may have the gift of speaking under the inspiration of God’s Spirit, both predicting the future and proclaiming the truth of God’s Word. He may possess all the charisma, stature, eloquence, and descriptive language in the world; but if he does not have love, he is nothing. Not only is his gift of prophecy nothing, but he is nothing.

Thought 1. There is always the danger of feeling and acting superior because of one’s prophetic gifts and eloquence. It is possible to long for souls and to preach the glories of heaven and the tragedy of hell with an attitude and a tone that one is better than others.

2) There is the gift of understanding “all mysteries and all knowledge”—the sum total of all that God has ever revealed and of all that man has ever learned, discovered, and developed. Just imagine! A person possessing all the

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knowledge in the world! Yet if he does not have love, he would be nothing! Not only would his understanding and knowledge be nothing, he would be nothing.

Thought 1. The danger is looking down upon others, of feeling that one is more knowledgeable or better equipped than others. A coolness or detachment or aloofness often characterizes such a person.

- 3) There is the gift of faith, that is, the very special gift of faith that is given by the Holy Spirit to remove mountains and to do great and miraculous things for God (see note, *Faith*—1 Co.12:8-10). Note the word “*all*”. Imagine a person possessing “all faith”; yet, if he did not possess love, he *would be nothing*.

Thought 1. The danger is spiritual superiority, an overblown sense of importance. A person with the gift of faith can easily hurt others by speaking openly of their *great faith*. They can easily make others feel inferior and of less importance to God.

- c. Verdict three: giving without love profits nothing. Two phenomenal illustrations are given.

- 1) There is the illustration of selling and giving everything that a person has. Imagine giving everything—“bestowing all my goods to feed the poor”—yet, if I have not love, it profits me nothing.

Thought 1. There are several dangers in giving. There are the dangers of:

- ⇒ giving out of duty
- ⇒ giving with contempt because one is forced to give
- ⇒ giving with an air of superiority because one has and the needy do not have
- ⇒ giving with a rebuke because one feels the needy are just irresponsible and ought to make their own way in life
- ⇒ giving unsacrificially

- 2) There is the illustration of martyrdom, the most terrible martyrdom of all—of being burned alive at the stake. Yet, if a person does not have love, his martyrdom profits him nothing. He dies in vain.

Thought 1. There is always the danger of counting martyrdom as a thing of glory and of pride, as something to show one’s commitment to a cause. If a believer is ever called upon to die as a martyr, he is to die only out of love for Christ and for his fellow man.

2 (13:4-7) **Love:** the great acts of love. What is given in these four verses is not a long, dry, methodical definition of love. On the contrary, the very acts of love are given—the very behavior of a person, the very way a person is to live among and with others. In living and moving among others in the world, a person is to love, and this is what loving others means.

- a. Love suffers *long* (makrothumei): is patient with people. The word always refers to being patient with people, not with circumstances (William Barclay. *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p.133).

Love suffers a long, long time..

- no matter the evil and injury done by a person
- no matter the neglect or ignoring by a loved one

Love suffers a long, long time without resentment, anger, or seeking revenge. Love controls itself in order to win the person and to help him to live, work, and serve as he should.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith” (Ga.5:22).

“Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col.1:11).

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Ti.4:2).

- b. Love is *kind* (chresteuetai): courteous, good, helpful, useful, giving, showing and showering favors. Love does not resent evil; it does not revel in the hurt and neglect. Love reaches out in kindness: in helpfulness, in giving, and in showering favors upon the person who neglects or hurts oneself.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Ro.12:10).

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ep.4:32).

- c. Love does not *envy* (zeloi): is not jealous; does not have feelings against others because of what they have, such as gifts, position, friends, recognition, possessions, popularity, abilities. Love does not begrudge or attack or downplay the abilities and success of others. Love shares and joys and rejoices in the experience and good of others.

“Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Ga.5:26).

“Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity” (Ps.37:1).

“Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways” (Pr.3:31).

“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones” (Pr.14:30).

“Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long” (Pr.23:17).

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d. Love does not *vaunt itself* (peopereuetai): is not boastful; does not brag nor seek recognition, honor, or applause from others. On the contrary, love seeks to give: to recognize, to honor, to applaud the other person.

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Ro.12:3).

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Ro.12:10).

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Ph.2:3).

e. Love is not *puffed up* (phusioutai): prideful, arrogant, conceited; does not think nor act as though oneself is better or above others. Love is modest and humble and recognizes and honors others.

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt.18:4).

“But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee” (Lu.14:10).

“But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Lu.22:26).

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Pe.5:5).

f. Love does not *behave itself unseemly* (aschemonei): unbecomingly, rudely, indecently, unmannerly, disgracefully. Love does nothing to shame oneself. Love is orderly and controlled; and it behaves and treats all persons with respect, honoring and respecting who they are.

“That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Ph.1:10).

“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you” (2 Th.3:7).

g. Love seeks not her own: is not selfish; does not insist upon its own rights (Williams). Love is not focused upon who one is nor upon what one has done. Love seeks to serve, not have others serving oneself. Love is acknowledging others, not insisting that others acknowledge oneself; it is giving to others, not insisting that others give to oneself.

“Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth [welfare]” (1 Co.10:24).

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Ph.2:4).

h. Love is not *easily provoked* (paroxunetai): not easily angered; not ready to take offence; not quick tempered; not “touchy” (Phillips, as quoted by Leon Morris). It is not easily aroused to anger; does not become “exasperated” (Barclay). Love controls the emotions, and never becomes angry without a cause (Ro.12:18).

“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth” (Col.3:8).

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Js.1:19).

“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil” (Ps.37:8).

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Pr.16:32).

“The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Pr.19:11).

“Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools” (Ec.7:9).

i. Love does not *think evil* (logizetai to kakon): does not consider the wrong suffered; is not resentful; does not hold the evil done to oneself. Love suffers the evil done to it and forgets it.

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Mt.5:39).

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Ro.12:17).

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (1 Th.5:15).

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (1 Pe.3:9).

j. Love does not rejoice in *iniquity* (adikia): unrighteousness, evil, wrong-doing. Love does not take pleasure in the unrighteousness and sin of others; it does not feed upon sin and wrong, nor does it pass along the stories of sin and wrong. Man’s nature is too often fed the tragedy of evil, whether personal sin or natural disaster (see the daily news reports and most subjects of conversation between so many people).

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“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (Mt.7:3).

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Ro.15:1).

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Ga.6:1).

“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Pe.4:8).

k. Love rejoices in the truth: rejoices when the truth is known and when it prevails; rejoices when others are recognized and promoted for whom they are and for what they have contributed. Love rejoices when the truth is rooted and grounded in a person and among the people of the world. Note that love never covers nor hides the truth; love is courageous in that it faces the truth.

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Ep.4:25).

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ep.6:14).

“These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates” (Zec.8:16).

“The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity” (Mal.2:6).

l. Love bears all things: the word *bears* (stegei) means both to cover all things and to bear up under all things. Love does both: it stands up under the weight and onslaught of all things and it covers up the faults of others. It has no pleasure in exposing the wrong and weaknesses of others. Love bears up under any neglect, abuse, ridicule—anything that is thrown against it.

“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ep.4:2-3).

“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” (Ep.6:9).

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col.3:13).

m. Love believes all things: is “completely trusting” (Barclay); “always eager to believe the best” (Moffatt, as quoted by Leon Morris); is “ever ready to believe the best” (Amplified New Testament). Love sees and understands the circumstances and accepts and forgives and believes the very best about a person.

“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Lu.17:4).

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ep.4:32).

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col.3:13).

n. Love hopes all things: it “never ceases to hope” (Barclay); it expects the good to eventually triumph and to gain the victory; it refuses to accept failure; it always hopes for the best and for the ultimate triumph of the good—no matter how fallen or how tragic the fall or how difficult gaining the victory may seem.

“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Ro.8:24).

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Ro.15:4).

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (2 Th.2:16-17).

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 Jn.3:3).

o. Love endureth all things: the word *endures* (huopmenei) is a military word meaning to stand against the attack of an enemy. Love actively fights and endures all attacks. Love is strong, full of fortitude and fight, and it struggles against any and every assault to buckle in to being unloving. Love conquers and triumphs—always—because it endures all things. No matter what attacks love, named or unnamed, it endures the attack and continues to love.

“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Mt.10:22).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Co.15:58).

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Ga.6:9).

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“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [trial]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (Js.1:12).

“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (Js.5:11).

“Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Re.3:11).

3 (13:8-12) **Love:** the great permanence of love. Love is far superior to the spiritual gifts. The great permanence of love clearly shows its superiority.

a. Love never fails, never ceases, and never vanishes. Love endures and lasts forever. But not so with spiritual gifts: the spiritual gifts shall cease to be and shall vanish. When? When we stand in eternity before God. Spiritual gifts are only temporary; they are not permanent; therefore, they are far inferior to love. Spiritual gifts are only temporary tools for us to use in reaching and ministering to a lost and needy world.

Thought 1. Note how believers become guilty of the very things they accuse the world of doing: focusing upon the temporary instead of the eternal. Too many believers glory in their earthly gifts and abilities instead of serving and ministering in love.

b. Love is perfect and complete. We know nothing perfectly, and we can proclaim and predict the truth only with partial certainty. No person knows all the truth. However, a day of perfection is coming, and when it comes, only that which is perfect will stand and endure.

The point is this: love is perfect; therefore, love shall endure and be the primary trait between believers in eternity. Therefore, love is far superior to the gifts.

c. Love is mature—maturity of behavior. While on earth, all that man is and possesses—his abilities, knowledge, and being—all are as a child. Man is just immature and imperfect, no matter what area of his life is being considered. However, the day of maturity is coming, the day when he shall set aside all the childhood understanding and thoughts and become a mature man, a perfected man. When will that day come? It will come when love is perfected between God and man and between man and man. Love is the great gift and quality existing upon earth today that shall endure throughout eternity; therefore, love is far superior to the gifts and abilities of men.

d. Love is being face-to-face with God—a perfect consciousness and knowledge of God. Our present relationship with the Lord is comparable to the reflection we see through a dark mirror. We can faintly see the figure, but it is not fully distinct nor clear. Therefore, we only see God and the truth in part and we only know God and the truth in part. However, the day is coming when we shall know God even as He knows us—perfectly.

⇒ When is that day coming? The day love is perfected between God and man.

⇒ What will bring the day about? Love—God’s perfect love for man.

It is love that will be perfected and that will bring the day of perfection to reality for man. It is love that will bring us into a face to face relationship with God and into a perfect knowledge of truth. Therefore, love is far superior to the spiritual gifts.

4 (13:13) **Love:** the great supremacy of love. Both faith and hope are great qualities and gifts, but love is far superior.

How? Remember that Paul is contrasting love with the spiritual gifts and dealing with the tendency of people to center attention upon their gifts and accomplishments. Love is far superior to faith and hope for at least six reasons.

a. Faith focuses upon the revelation of God, whereas love focuses upon *God Himself*. We know about God only by the revelation of God through Jesus Christ, the Word, nature, and the inner witness of thoughts and conscience (see Ro.1:18-20; 2:14-15). A man believes in God by focusing upon one or more of the revelations about God. But love is different, entirely different. Love focuses and centers upon God Himself and stirs a relationship of adoration and worship. Faith, of course, can stir the same adoration and worship; but faith can also exist without adoration and worship. A person can believe in someone and not love him.

b. Hope focuses upon being eternally with God in a perfect world, but again, love is superior because it focuses upon God Himself. A person can have hope in someone without loving him, but a person who loves someone always hopes in him.

c. Love—true love (agape love)—does not originate in the nature of man, but in the nature of God. God is love; love is the basic trait of His nature. The very existence of man is due to the fact that God is love, not to the fact that God believed or held hope for man. Therefore love, which is the basic trait of God’s nature, is far superior to faith and hope.

d. True love is a gift of God. A man can know true love only as he comes to know the love of God. Faith arises from the heart of man, but love is deposited or given to man by God. It is shed abroad in the heart by God. Apart from God, man loves only those who love him; he either opposes or withdraws from those who hate him. A man can only love (agape love) his enemies through the love of God. Therefore love, being the very special gift of God, is far superior to faith and hope.

e. Experience and nature itself prove that faith and hope reach and grow people, but love reaches and grows people far more than any other gift or quality.

f. A person can believe in God, yet feel he is above others. He can act prideful, arrogant, and superspiritual. He may hope for an eternity to be with God and with other believers, yet he can be cold and distant. But love—true love—has no weaknesses or dangers. Love never fails, never comes short. But remember: love is not indulgence and license. Love involves control and discipline as well as care and giving, selflessness and sacrifice.