

INSIDE OUT

Becoming the people God calls us to be, inside and out

The series looks at what it means to *become*; changed and transformed by the Spirit as we follow Christ.

Introduction

In today's study, we look at Paul's great description of what Love is, does and does not do. His exposition has such depth and width that it is still one of the favourite passages at Weddings. For Paul, Love must be the music that accompanies all our actions, the grammar and syntax that underlines all we do, the spring from which all the other activities must flow.

Read 1 Corinthians 12: 31 – 13:3 & 13: 8 – 10

Paul does not condemn the gifts or belittle them – they are very important and have their function in the present – BUT they are not a sign of how spiritual or mature we are. Paul uses strong words in this passage like “I am nothing” and “I gain nothing.” What is his point? Why does he seem so harsh here?

Read: 1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 7

Love characterises our existence both now and forever. It is therefore crucial for Christians to learn to speak the language of Love in all we do.

Paul describes the Love that is the *sine qua non* of Christian behaviour with a series of 15 verbs:

1. Two positive expressions of love: Patience and Kindness
2. 8 verbs expressing what Love is not and does not do + 1 that balances the last in the series by its positive counterpart
3. 4 verbs each with the object of “all things,”

Look through the passage: is there a particular attribute of Love that speaks to you and why?
In general, which one do you find easier and which one do you find challenging? Why?

Reflect

Last week, Fabian gave the following definition of discipleship:

‘Discipleship is the process of becoming who Jesus would be if he were you’.

If we change it slightly with an emphasis on Love, we have: ‘Discipleship is the process of knowing how Jesus would love if he were you’.

How can those definitions of discipleship transform our relationship with each other, our witness and our involvement with the world?

Suggested quiet personal activity:

Read the passage slowly (1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 7), a line at a time, and reflect on three things:

- What are the ways in which we see the quality of love in Jesus himself?
- What are the ways in which we see it (or more likely, alas, don't see it) in ourselves?
- For those qualities we are missing, how would it work out in practice?
Ask God to envisage situations where you could behave differently. Try to imagine expressing that quality of love. How would it feel like and what steps you would have to take to make it happen?

