



## 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (New International Version)

<sup>1</sup>If I speak in the tongues<sup>[a]</sup> of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames,<sup>[b]</sup> but have not love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup>but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. <sup>12</sup>Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

<sup>13</sup>And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind... love is patient...just like Andrew is patient when I show him how to load the dishwasher properly ...again!

Paul makes a big deal about love here, living life without love is meaningless. The focus here isn't on us being loved, it's on us loving others. Just have a look at the text again, verses 4 – 7, and use your own first name instead of the words Love or 'it'.... Billie is patient, Billie is kind. Billie does not envy, Billie does not boast, Billie is not proud. Billie is not rude ... and so on.

It's not easy is it? I don't think any one of us could honestly say that we always managed to be patient, kind, not to bear grudges or get angry etc

But it is important. Why do I think that? Because Jesus thought it was too. Now, young people, look at the grown-ups sitting next to you...do they look clever? Find a clever one, and ask them to help you find Matthew 22: 36 – 40. The first person to find it, call out the page number.

OK, love your neighbour as yourself. How do we do that? Who are our neighbours? Is it just the people who live on our staircase? Is it just our family and friends? Or is it just the people we see here on a Sunday, our church family?

Answer: no, it's everyone, but that's really hard too. We've just seen the devastation in Haiti, and we've sent off lots of money to try and help people over there. But how can we really care and love people we've never met and know hardly anything about? The answer is, we can't...but we know someone who can.

Another chance to get those clever adults helping you. Who can find **1 John 4:7–8?**



'Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.'

I don't know about you, but I can't love everyone in my own strength. I run out of love very quickly. We can only really love if we have God's love welling up within us and overflowing into the lives of others. That means being in touch with God, praying regularly, keeping close to Him and keeping Him in our lives.

Now, if we look at the newspapers, or the TV, we read stories about politicians fiddling their expenses, doing deals, saying one thing and doing another. People just don't trust politicians anymore and lots of other professions have lost our respect too... A word that came into fashion in the 80s, I think, is 'spin'. Spin is where an idea is presented in a certain way so people can be influenced to think in a certain way. The more politicians and other people in authority, even our bosses, use 'spin' the more we learn not to believe anything they say. When they make fine speeches, say the right thing, 'talk the talk' but don't 'walk the walk' they just leave us disillusioned and cynical.

So, as Christians we are saying that love is important. We're saying that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. We're saying that love is patient, kind, and, among other things, not self-seeking or envious. Another way of saying that might be 'selfish and greedy'. How much misery in the world, how many wars, how much exploitation, could be avoided if we really weren't selfish and greedy? If we weren't selfish and greedy, perhaps some of the richer Christian countries could have shared some of our wealth with the people in Haiti before the earthquake struck. Perhaps then they would have had homes that could withstand the quake, infrastructures that could bring relief quickly. Just over 20 years ago, in Northern Carolina, USA, there was an earthquake of the same strength in a densely populated but wealthy area – just 63 people were killed.

So, if we are serious about being Christians, loving others is not an optional extra, something we can tack onto the edge of our lives making sure it doesn't get in the way of what we want to do. Nor is it only about when we've got the time and can get around to it.

Let's just have a look at how that can work out in practise.

Need: large glass bowl, large stones, jug full of pebbles, tray, glass of red 'wine', glass of coke.

Child to fill bowl with stones, is it full? Then add pebbles, is it full now? Big stones: things we have to do, take up most of our lives – work, school, college, extra study, cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, travelling. Pebbles: things we choose to do – meeting up with friends watching TV, coming to church, going to home groups, going to the beach, shopping, reading. Now the bowl is full!

No! We can add in time to have a drink with someone, spend some time with someone. I'm not talking about going to a tapas bar with your friends. I'm talking about you making that phone call you've been putting off because you know you'll be caught on the phone for ages. I'm talking about you helping the grumpy old woman who's rude to everyone. I'm talking about the loner at school who doesn't have any friends. The street people. Can



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you make time to reach out to these people? As Christians, we have to be seen to be putting Christian love into action. It's not enough to talk about it, we have to do it! My challenge to you, my prayer this week, is for us to let God's love overflow in our lives, let us show the world that we really do follow Christ's teaching, we love our neighbours just as much as we love ourselves. Amen.