

## WHAT IS LOVE?

**MONDAY 5.2.16** Read 1 Cor. 13:3. What is the Christian heritage in giving like this? (Read Matthew 19:16-30). Handing over one's body was a reference to a historic event in Corinth. Hellotis and one of his young sisters threw themselves into the burning temple of Athena rather than surrendering to the Dorians. (about 1000 B.C.E.) Corinthians commemorated this noble act in the feast of the Hellotia, a deed of supreme sacrifice in face of atrocious torment. So Spirit-inspired impulses can be noble but without love, those are useless to those performing them. *What "good things" do you do regularly that leave you feeling empty? How can we stay focused on love as the catalyst for all our actions?*

**TUESDAY 5.3.16** Read 1 Cor. 13:12. We've all heard this phrase before, "now we see in a mirror dimly." The Jesus-group (church) in Corinth would understand this better as their mirrors were different than our modern ones, more like a polished tin can. The word Paul uses "dimly" in Greek is *en anigmati*, which literally means "in a riddle." That seems weird, doesn't it? Read Numbers 12:8. God says he will speak to Moses face to face and "not through riddles." Paul says "face to face" to let us know pursuing God and living with one another in love ends in direct contact, personal connection with the divine. *What areas of faith are "murky" for you? What things take the most faith for you to engage in discipleship?*

**WEDNESDAY 5.4.16** 1 Corinthians 13 is about spiritual gifts, *charisma* ("gifts" where we get "charismatic"), and the favorite in Corinth is speaking in tongues. Paul asks the church to imagine him, very gifted in tongues as he is, to do so without love. The church knew him to be very loving. The "tongues of angels" bit lets us know this isn't just simply being smart and knowing another language or two. This is something spiritual. Look at 1 Cor. 14:18-19 and 1 Cor. 7:7. Paul says without love, he would be useless and even irritating, but *with* love (group allegiance) he would be helpful and enriching. Paul will develop the image more in 14:7-11. *Why would love or connection to Christian community be important for speaking in tongues? What is the connection between selfishness and being "without love?"*

**THURSDAY 5.5.16** The second bundle of gifts Paul addresses includes prophetic abilities, understanding, and wisdom. (He mentions these first in 1:18-2:16 of 1 Cor.) Paul knows this Jesus-group really believes these things to be important. Prophecy (awareness of what changes need to take place in the church to better align with God's purposes), understanding, and wisdom are pointless if they do not come from a place of focus on the church. If you are useful but you don't have a deep sense of connection to the Christian community, it's not beneficial for *you*. Paul is brilliant in reminding us that in thinking of our church first, it comes back as a blessing to us individually. *What are some things in Christian community that we can experience by putting others first?*

**FRIDAY 5.6.16** Let's continue with yesterday's theme of the individual in the church and the greater good of the community. Paul has two main arguments about love in 13:1-3. 1. Love does not focus on one's own needs but on the needs of others and 2. In doing this, love secures not only the other person, but one's own self. This is the core of living Christian faith in community: Put others first and you will be taking care of yourself as you love them. Read Phil 2:1-4, Romans 13:8, 15:1-2. *When is it the most difficult to put the needs of the church ahead of your own? How can we determine what is the "best" way when our opinions are different from others?*

**SATURDAY 5.7.16** Read 1 Cor 13:13, 1 Thess 1:3, 5:8; Gal 5:5-6. Faith, Hope and Love are all lasting and endure. These three are the core identifying marks of the social identity of the Jesus-group members (church). But in all of this, the greatest one, the one that means the most is *agape*. The greatest is group allegiance, commitment, care. *Why is the strength of the group important in translating "love?" Why would the church in Corinth need to hear this?*

**Love:** How do these devotions teach about the love of God and the love for one another?

**Learn:** What have you learned about where Jesus walked that helps you with where you walk?

**Share:** What key insights have you learned this week on how to share your faith with others?

**Serve:** Look at the prayer list. Who can you pray for? Who needs a little extra help in an area where you can make a difference?

**Healing Strength:** Beverly Kysar, Annette Pitcher, Mary Schmidt, Stand Ensch, Lincoln Wallis, Rex Townsend, Chris Osborn (Ken and Sandy Grubb's daughter), Janet Coons (Donna's daughter)

**Sympathies:** Family of Darryl Rash, Family of Virginia Diana (Birdwell family)

**Homebound Members:** Mary Hicks, Mary Schmidt, Joann Young, Jeanne Carman

**Military Personnel:** Adam Walters, Joseph Roberts, Lucas Lamkin, Adam Clark