



A VALENTINE'S DAY BIBLE STUDY

TO: LEGISLATORS

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DATE: FEB 13, 2012

Some of you love-birds weeks ago let me know that this year, Valentine's Day would fall on the same day as first-votes-back—the same day we all meet for Members and Staff studies on the Hill.

You then asked me what we might do special? Well, several things. We will cater a Valentine's Day dinner this coming week, as well as exegete I Corinthians 13 during our study time.

This portion of the Bible is often referred to as the love chapter. Wherein people often say that love is indefinable, the Apostle Paul lists fifteen specific components of love in the Word of God. Via his listing of both positive and negative indicators of its existence, Paul ascertains its presence or lack thereof. Notice that the word for love agape could be exchanged for "Jesus," as He perfectly embodied via His sinless life, all of the characteristics of the study that will follow.

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WEEKLY MEMBERS BIBLE STUDY
 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF
 FIRST-VOTES-BACK (MONDAY OR TUESDAY NIGHT)
 Capitol Room H324 • Dinner served, Spouses welcome

WEEKLY STAFF BIBLE STUDY
 11:00 AM THE DAY OF FIRST-VOTES-BACK
 (MONDAY OR TUESDAY)
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A VALENTINE'S DAY BIBLE STUDY

I. INTRODUCTION

Contextually, chapter 13 is sandwiched in-between two chapters of instruction by Paul to the Church at Corinth who, in their carnality, emphasized the practice of certain spiritual gifts over-and-above the necessary prominence one need place on **love**. Paul reasons that **love** is preeminent to all. Of special note are the love-defining verbs that follow under the second outline point: "The Elements of Love." All 15 are in the present continuous tense "denoting actions and attitudes which have become habitual, ingrained gradually by constant repetition."¹ Those defining characteristics of **love** are worthy of constant review and practice, especially with our spouses, family members, office staff and professional colleagues. Given the fact that repetition is the key to ingraining, I like to revise and teach this study often. Akin to driving a car, these should become habitual responses in one's life even though they are more difficult to cultivate than the former illustration. However, before examining the fundamental aspects germane to objective **love**, Paul first emphasizes—and appropriately so—the superiority of **love**.

II. THE ESSENTIALITY OF LOVE 13:1-3

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

In these three opening verses, Paul makes three stark comparisons in order to underscore the incomparability of **love**. These introductory remarks exclaim the dominance of **love** as a virtue over all other character traits. It is important, motivational and insightful to note that the three comparisons *are related to qualities necessary* from a human perspective for one to continually exist in

the capitol community! One need possess speaking skills, leadership and self-sacrifice. As critical as those are, possessing **love**—from a godliness perspective—is of greater importance! The first comparison in verse one is to a person's oratory abilities...

A. LOVE OVER ORATION 13:1

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

One's **love** for others is more important than their speaking abilities. The metaphorical meaning of one **becoming a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal** relates to empty philosophizing. Someone who knows and exclaims all the right answers but has no **love** is akin to the Church of Ephesus as described in Revelation 2:1-7. That church had all the right doctrine but had lost their **love** for God. Proverbs 3:3 summarizes the necessary virtues a legislator need possess both in being a herald of truth and a man or woman of **love**: "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart." Solomon's use of the word **neck** and **heart** bespeak of both **love** (kindness) and **truth** as being a part of one's outward and inward adornment. The meaning of the Hebrew word for **heart** *leb* includes the aspects of one's intellect, emotion and will. The mature believer possesses **love** and **truth** simultaneously in full measure. The loving legislator, because their priorities are straight, is neither inwardly nor outwardly **a noisy gong or clanging cymbal**--even when he or she heralds the truth on the floor, such speech should be garnished in gildings of **love**.

B. LOVE OVER LEADING 13:2

And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

It is not a stretch to interpret the second verse of chapter 13 to be a statement of the primacy of **love** over leadership. A legislator who knows the Word



A VALENTINE'S DAY BIBLE STUDY

of God, who is **knowledgeable** of all the policy issues and possesses **faith**—visionary leadership for his or her personal and party's future—who possesses not a **love** for people, Scripture states emphatically herein amounts to **nothing**. The phrase **so as to remove mountains** is a Pauline hyperbolic² expression (as will also be seen in verse 7) intended to convey and emphasize the meaning “to make what seems impossible possible.”³ One may be a great leader, or an up-and-coming great leader in American government—one who may be able to achieve what others deem impossible, a man or woman of great **faith**—but forget not that it is more important to **love** people, especially those who have nothing to do with accomplishing one's leadership objectives.

C. LOVE OVER SELF-SACRIFICE 13:3

And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

For sure, one who gives sacrificially of time, talent and treasure is to be exalted above the lazy and uncommitted that do not. But in comparison to **love**, sacrificial qualities are of lesser significance. In fact a life of personal sacrifice for one's cause will **profit nothing** when all is said and done in eternity. One is woefully deficient who lacks **love**.

**“LOVE IS THE INDISPENSIBLE
ADDITION WHICH ALONE GIVES
WORTH TO ALL OTHER CHRISTIAN
GIFTS.”⁴**

Life in the capitol, in the community, or in the home without **love** is **nothing** *oudeis* meaning “nothing at all.” How are you doing as a preeminently loving person—a lover of people and especially your mate? What follows are the biblically-objective indications of **love**; they should help to answer the above question more realistically, versus analyzing subjective feelings that may or may not accurately reflect one's real **love** quotient.

III. THE ELEMENTS OF LOVE

A. FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Paul proceeds to describe the characteristic elements of love's non-existence (after stating for openers what love is: **love is patient** and **kind**). The following seven on his inspired-by-God list state what **love is not**. Sometimes the best way to describe what something is to state what it is not. After briefly examining and defining these fifteen virtues, Colossians 3:12-14 will be reviewed for additional insights relative to the emotional aspects of **love**. And I think it is important to approach and teach on **love** in that order. Why? Because emotions, both good and bad, always stem from one's thinking, either proper or improper.

1. Love is patient *makrothumeo*

Literally “suffers long.” This first characteristic is the ability to be taken advantage of by a person many times and not be upset. The root word means “to persevere.” James uses this same Greek word in describing the attitudinal response of the prophets of old whose words went unheeded by their peers (cf. Ja. 5:8ff.). Program your mind with Philippians 1:6. It will help you to sober to the fact that God is not through sanctifying the other person—nor am I perfect either! So be patient!

2. Love is kind *chresteuomai*

The counterpart to longsuffering, it means “to show one's self mild.” This characteristic is a willingness to give to another, including one's enemies, to be gentle and slow in avenging. The Greek root means “one desires and works for



A VALENTINE'S DAY BIBLE STUDY

another's welfare." It is the idea of good will, generous responses and actions, in contradistinction to holding onto past bad memories and thence being bothered by another in the future (aka "he or she gets on my nerves").

3. Love is not jealous *zeloo*

Literally the root means "earnestly desire." Contextually, **jealousy** is similar to covetousness as used here; it is a desire to have what another possesses. To the contrary, Scripture commands us to, "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Rom. 12:15). Choose to be glad for those who have—be they more talented, successful, popular or beautiful—versus envious. Are you the biggest cheerleader of another?

4. Love does not brag *perpereuomai*

Literally "to talk conceitedly." The mature in Christ have forgotten about self-importance. Center on others, not self. "Let another praise you and not your own mouth, a stranger and not your own lips" (Proverbs 27:2). Further, be characterized by asking another sincere questions (cultivate personal curiosity), talking little about self.

THINK WHEN APPROACHING CONVERSATION, "WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THIS PERSON?" VERSUS "WHAT CAN I TELL THIS PERSON?"

5. Love is not arrogant *phusioo*

Literally, "to puff or blow up." William Carey who translated the Bible into 34 languages was once put down in a banquet. An arrogant man said to him, "Mr. Carey, I understand that you were once a shoemaker?" Carey replied, "I was not a shoemaker, only a shoe repairman!" Strive to be big-hearted, not bigheaded. Make it a habit to play-down self in the presence of others. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (Proverbs 16:18), reciprocally, "God...gives grace to the humble" (Ja. 4:6).

6. Love does not act unbecomingly *aschemoneo*

This is the characteristic of someone who cares so little for others around them that they act without proper decorum for the occasion. It is to act rudely or impolitely, maybe even crudely. Work always on sensitivity for others. Always display respect for another regardless of their position or ability to assist in your objectives

7. Love does not seek its own *zeteo heautou*

Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mt. 20:28). Be occupied with others needs, not yours. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3). Herein is boilerplate Christianity! Are your mate's objectives more important to you than your own? What will you do by way of time, talent and treasure for your mate that will spell out to them in no unmistakable actions that you cherish them above yourself?

8. Love is not provoked *paroxuno*

Literally "to irritate, arouse to anger." **Love** guards against being upset, irritated or angered. Remember, **love is kind**. A person who is intent on having their own way is easily provoked when he or she is denied what they want.⁵

9. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered *logizomai*

The Greek has the idea of not "ledgering" of the wrongs someone has done and keeping a log. To the contrary, Chrysostom remarked that a wrong done against **love** is like a spark that falls into the sea and is extinguished forever. Blatantly lacking in euphemistic prose, I call this concept "flushing the toilet." Do not engender in one's self a memory akin to an elephant. Praise God He takes not into consideration our past sin. Clinging onto the virtue



A VALENTINE'S DAY BIBLE STUDY

of Christ's forgiveness enables one to forsake the bondage of bitterness.

10. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness *adikia*

Isaiah warns, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil" (5:20). It is not loving to sacrifice truth. One should not applaud the presence of sin in another. The biblical concept of **love** is not emotional sentimentality devoid of truth.

11. Love rejoices with the truth *aletheia*

Love cares that what another believes is truthful. It is not loving to allow another to be hurt by lies, since what one believes (and then acts upon) is determinative to personal, familial and national destinies. It follows that **love** does not rejoice with erroneous thinking.⁶

The following remaining four elements of **love** are stated with hyperbole, a genre or literary device incorporated by the Apostle that is intended to exaggerate to make a point. (See endnote #2). The repetition of **all things** therefore relates to **all things** within the confines of God's righteousness, will and tolerance.

12. Love bears all things *stego*

Literally "to cover". "Love covers a multitude of sins" (cf. Prov. 10:12; 1 Peter 4:8). One can measure their **love** for another as to how quickly he or she is willing and apt to forgive and forget: To move-on relative to another's faults. Psalm 103:12 states of God's nature, and hopefully the believer's actions, "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." Be forgiving and forgetful.

13. Love believes all things *pisteuo*

Love trusts, it is confident; it isn't suspicious or cynical. **Love** trusts even after past hurts for having

trusted. It is better to trust and be hurt again than to end up living life alone.

14. Love hopes all things *elpizo*

Literally "to anticipate with pleasure." Jesus took not Peter's failure as final. The believer continues to hope that sinners will someday turn from their sin and that believers will someday mature in Christ-likeness, for to lose hope is equivalent herein to losing **love**. Again, and similar to the virtue to patience, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" Stated Paul in Philippians 1:6. Remember, "as long as God's grace is operative, human failure is never final."

15. Love endures all things *hupomeno*

This Greek word was used of an army that held its position no matter what the cost. **Love** holds fast to the one it **loves**. It will stand against all opposition. Love remains loyal even when the object of love is less than perfect.

THESE FIFTEEN VIRTUES MAY SEEM SOMEWHAT MECHANICAL. THEY WILL HOWEVER PRODUCE THE EMOTIONS OF LOVE THAT ARE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO EVERY HUMAN BEING.

Keep in mind, theologically speaking, all of these attributes of love already and completely exist in the life of the child of God per Colossians 2:10a. The believer is made positionally perfect before God at the point of salvation. How obedient one is to his new God-given positional perfection in their everyday practice is a matter of obedience. All that to say this: No believer can reason, "I am just not a very loving person." All believers are perfect in their love: How obedient are you to your new nature in Christ?

Colossians 3:12-14 speaks to the passions of love:

B. FROM COLOSSIANS 3:12-14



A VALENTINE'S DAY BIBLE STUDY

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against one anyone, just at the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

In light of all the perfect and sacrificial **love** Jesus Christ has displayed to and for the world (John 3:16) God expects nothing less in response from His followers. **Heart of compassion** *splagchnon oikirmos* speaks of the seat of emotions. These elements of God's supernatural love are poured out via the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Again and importantly, all of the elements of love presently exist in the believer's heart (cf. Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 2 Pe. 1:3-4). It isn't a matter of gaining them; it is a matter of appropriating them!

The elements and passions of **love**, listed in Corinthians and Colossians, are characteristic ingredients of the truly redeemed, and they should naturally flow forth in and from the life of the Spirit-filled follower of Christ.

IV. THE ETERNITY OF LOVE 13:8

A. LOVE NEVER FAILS

Love is permanent. It is an attribute of God, which means it never withers or decays. The believer should view this as a communicable attribute from God. Love is to be present and active in the life of every believer. Likened to Jesus we need possess eternal, unending, ever-present **love!** Never failing **love!** May these virtues be increasingly unfolding in your life. May you conscientiously and regularly cultivate the habitual traits of Christ's unending **love!**

The 1 Corinthians 13 passages go on to once again contrast the importance of **love** with the spiritual gifts in the body of Christ (which is another study with a great deal of complexity).

V. CONCLUSION

Life in office is tough on marriages. The commute is tiresome and compounding in its deleterious impact. Accordingly, one must make special, conscientious efforts to compensate for the reality of being elected to office, a high calling of God. But one must be wise: Holding office and the rigors associated with it is no excuse for lacking in love for one's spouse. The call to public office provides not a license—in God's eyes—for a substandard marriage. Determine today that the upcoming week in the district will be your God-ordained time to heavily invest in your marriage. Do not waste the opportunity to draw near to your mate. Take heed of the consequences of a poor marriage. Such can and often does lead to adultery. And remember this about that:

TO LOSE YOUR MORAL AUTHORITY IS TO LOSE YOUR GOVERNING AUTHORITY

Hopefully the fear of vocational diminution is not your motive for investing in your mate. Hopefully you are motivated out of your love to please Christ and the precious gift He has graced you with. Make the most of your time away from DC. You and your spouse may even decide to read through these notes together and work on some of the objective elements of **love** that you determine will most aid your marriage. Get to work my friend! Your marriage is sacred; build it up during the week ahead! Danielle and I will be praying for you and are here to help.

LET US KNOW IF YOU NEED CONFIDENTIAL, PRIVATE COUNSELING; YOUR MARRIAGE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO GOD AND TO US.

My private mobile phone number is always listed on the header of the weekly Bible study notes. It is 661-803-7970. We are here to minister to you 24-7-365. Blessings.



A VALENTINE'S DAY BIBLE STUDY

¹ Prior, David *The Message of 1 Corinthians* (Nottingham, England: Inter Varsity Press, 1985) p. 229-30

² In the literary genre of Scripture, as in the best of writing today, various figurative devices are inculcated to communicate both effectively and artfully. These devices would include (among many) the use of simile, allegory, ellipsis, metaphor, paradox, irony, euphemisms, etc. The figurative device used by Paul in 1 Cor. 13:2 & 7 is hyperbole. The people of the Middle East in ancient time used intensified exaggerated expressions to convey a thought with more force. An additional example would be what the Apostle John states in his gospel about the life of Christ, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (21:25). (cf. E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* [London: Messrs, Eyre, and Spottis-woods, 1889], pp. 171ff.) Such insights defy a wooden literalistic approach (of which Evangelicals are often falsely accused of) to biblical interpretation/hermeneutics.

³ H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 1922-1928. As quoted in Barrett, C.K. *The First Epistle To The Corinthians*, *Black's New Testament Commentary Series* (London: Hendrickson Publishers, 1968) p. 301

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 303. This quote in its tightest context relates to the point of chapter 13 in comparison to chapters 12 and 14. The application of the quote is nonetheless an appropriate capstone as used in the placement of these notes.

⁵ The exception to being not provocative is if another is maligning or contradicting God's Word. Being provoked over such is akin to righteous indignation.

⁶ Herein biblical Christianity conflicts with Postmodernism in that the Christian faith is based upon perspicuous moral absolutes as explicated in and through propositional truth, i.e. infallible and inerrant biblical revelation.