



## Discussion Guide

Date: 7/5/2026

Sermon Title: What does love look like?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

### OPENING PRAYER

*Gracious and loving God, thank you for gathering us together as your people. Open our hearts and minds as we study your Word. Help us to hear these familiar verses with fresh ears and willing hearts. Teach us not simply to admire love but to practice it. Through your Holy Spirit, shape us into people who are patient, kind, humble, forgiving, and faithful. May our love reflect the love we have received through Jesus Christ, so that others may know you through us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS: (Choose one to start with)

1. Share about someone who showed you extraordinary kindness or love when you least expected it. What made that moment memorable? How did it affect you?

### SETTING THE SCENE:

Few passages in Scripture are more familiar than 1 Corinthians 13. It is often read at weddings, but Paul was not writing about marriage. He was writing to a divided church struggling with conflict, pride, favoritism, and competition. His message is clear: without love, the church cannot be the Church. Paul reminds believers that spiritual gifts, knowledge, generosity, leadership, and even great acts of sacrifice are empty if they are not rooted in agape—God's self-giving, covenant love. This week's discussion explores what authentic Christian love looks like in a community of faith and how the Holy Spirit forms that kind of love within us.

The Greek word Paul uses throughout this chapter is: ἀγάπη (Agapē)

Unlike other Greek words for love:

- Eros – romantic or passionate love
- Philia – friendship or brotherly affection
- Storgē – family affection

Agapē means: a self-giving love, a covenant love, a love that seeks another good, a love that chooses to act regardless of feelings. This is the same kind of love God demonstrates toward humanity. God proves his love

for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." - Romans 5:8. Agapē is less about emotion and more about faithful action.

**DIGGING INTO 1 Corinthians 13: Use these questions to discuss and study the scriptures.**

Read verses 1–3. Paul describes impressive spiritual accomplishments like speaking in tongues, prophecy, great knowledge, extraordinary faith, radical generosity, and sacrifice; yet he says without love they amount to... noise Nothing, no gain.

1. Which statement surprises you most?
2. Why do you think Paul places love above every spiritual gift?
3. What activities can churches do that look successful but lack love?
4. Have you ever experienced a church where activity replaced genuine care?

Read verses 4–7. Notice that Paul never defines love as a feeling but an action. Instead, he gives fifteen descriptions. Love is...

1. Which description comes most naturally for you?
2. Which one challenges you the most?
3. Which of these qualities do you think our culture struggles with most?
4. How would our church change if these characteristics became our daily practice?
5. Why do patience and kindness come first?
6. When have you received undeserved patience?
7. How can patience become an act of evangelism?

Read Verses 4–6 again and describe the behaviors love rejects (Love does not?)

1. Why do you think Paul spends so much time describing what love is NOT?
2. Which of these temptations most threatens Christian community today?
3. What does it mean that love "keeps no record of wrongs"?
4. How is forgiveness different from pretending something never happened?

Read verses 8–13. Paul contrasts temporary gifts with eternal realities.

1. Why does love outlast every spiritual gift?
2. What does it mean to "know in part"?
3. How does humility help us love others?
4. Why do faith, hope, and love remain?
5. Why is love called the greatest?

**METHODIST CONNECTION:**

When United Methodists celebrate Holy Communion, we hear an invitation rooted in grace: "Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another." Notice that worship always points us toward reconciliation and love within the community. Likewise, Wesley's General Rules encourage Methodists to: Do no harm - Do good - Attend upon all the ordinances of God (Stay in love with God). Each flows from loving God and loving neighbor.

1. Which General Rule is easiest for you?



2. Which one stretches you the most?
3. How does communion strengthen our ability to love difficult people?

#### **SERMON QUESTIONS:**

1. The sermon mentioned that the Corinthian church valued speaking well, knowledge, faith, and giving. How do you see the modern church (or our church specifically) valuing these same things today?
2. Pastor Allison references when Jesus summarized all commandments as loving God and loving neighbor. How does this simplification challenge or comfort you in your spiritual journey?
3. The Greek word for patience in this passage specifically refers to patience between people in relationship. Why do you think relational patience is so central to Christian love?
4. We are reminded that this Godly love is the opposite of "me first" mentality. Paul warns us against insisting on our own way, even when we believe we know best. In what areas of your life do you find it hardest to let go of control and make space for others' voices?
5. The sermon describes love as a roof that weathers storms and bears burdens. What storms in your life right now need the sheltering love of Christ and community?

#### **REFLECTIONS:**

1. When people encounter you in everyday settings like the grocery store or workplace, what main thing do they take away from the interaction? Is it love, or something else?
2. When have you caught yourself insisting on your own way rather than being open to others? What was the result?
3. If love is the main thing Christians are called to embody, what practical changes would you need to make in your daily life to ensure love is what people remember about their encounters with you?
4. Paul says love "bears all things" like a roof shelters from storms. What does it look like practically to provide that kind of sheltering love to someone in your life right now?
5. The sermon emphasized that we don't love in our own strength—Christ goes with us. How does knowing this change your ability or willingness to love difficult people or in difficult circumstances?

#### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Loving God, thank you for showing us what true love looks like through Jesus Christ. Forgive us for the times we have chosen pride instead of humility, impatience instead of kindness, or keeping score instead of extending grace. Fill us anew with your Holy Spirit so that our lives reflect your agapē love. May our homes, our church, and our community become places where your love is seen, experienced, and shared. Help us to love not only with words but with our actions, remembering that the greatest witness to the world is a community transformed by Christ's love. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## WAYS TO RESPOND:

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

1. Practice patient love by identifying one person you struggle to be patient with (family member, coworker, neighbor). Before each interaction with them this week, pray: "God, help me show Your patient love to this person". Journal about what changes when you approach them with intentional patience
2. Practice not Insisting on your way in one situation this week where you'd normally insist on your way of doing things, pause and ask others: "What do you think?" or "How would you approach this?". Practice listening without correcting or redirecting and reflecting on what you learned from others' perspectives.
3. Do a love encounter audit at the end of each day this week, reflect on your encounters with others by asking yourself: "Did they walk away carrying love with them?" Write down one thing you could do differently tomorrow to make love the "main thing" people experience from you.
4. Show up for someone else by sheltering them with love. Identify someone in your life who is going through a "storm". Commit to one specific action that provides shelter (a meal, a listening ear, practical help, consistent prayer). Follow through this week, asking God to love them through you.