
GENUINE CHRISTIAN LOVE IN ACTION

STUDY NOTES FOR CARE GROUPS - (1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7)

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, November 8, 2009, by Pastor Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

November 8, 2009

Context:

The most fundamental statement in this opening section of 1 Corinthians chapter 13 states that *“without love, I am nothing”* (v.2). This should not be read as if it were the equivalent of “I am useless.” Paul meant that without love, we do not exist. In other words, we come into being through loving. Paul here diverges radically from every philosophical view of human nature. He took seriously the revelation of Christ.

I. WHY LOVE?

In giving Himself for humanity, Christ revealed that true humanity consisted in loving (Galatians 2:20). Loving is what makes a person genuinely human.

Love, however must have as its object, another person. Thus, “A” exists as human and as Christian only in loving “B.” One cannot be a completely isolated Christian. There must always be an active reference to at least one other person.

Here, we find the profound reason why Paul had to think of the church in terms of an organic unity such as the human body. The lover and the beloved share a common existence in precisely the same way as the arm and the leg co-exist

II. WHAT IS GENUINE CHRISTIAN LOVE – WHAT DOES IT LOOKS LIKE (VV. 4-7)

The diverse aspects of love are expressed both positively and negatively. Paul affirms two positive qualities, denies eight negative qualities and then returns to five positive qualities.

– WHAT IT IS [V. 4]: PATIENT AND KIND

Just how fundamental ‘patience’ and ‘kindness’ are emerges from the fact that they are characteristics of God (Romans 2:4), and fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) which are manifested in Paul’s own ministry (2 Corinthians 6:6). Love puts up with everything while reaching out with genuine gentleness. Paul virtually repeats himself in saying that love ‘supports’ and ‘endures’ everything (v. 7).

- **WHAT IT IS NOT [VV. 4-6]: JEALOUS, BRAG, ARROGANT, UNBECOMING, SEEK ITS OWN, NOT PROVOKED, DON'T KEEP SCORE, DON'T REJOICE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Certain people at Corinth were 'jealous' of the spiritual gifts enjoyed by others who, no doubt, 'boasted' of their superiority. Those who attached themselves to different leaders within the church believed that their faction was the best...their 'pride' (bragging and arrogance) was misplaced.

"Unbecoming" or unseemly behavior in the church assembly includes gluttony and drunkenness of the wealthier members of the community.

"*Seeks its own*" was manifested in the attitudes of both the weak and the strong with respect to eating food offered to idols. Each side was so focused on its own needs that the other was vilified as stupid or hypocritical respectively. Paul had to tell the believers explicitly "*Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others*"(1 Corinthians 10:24).

Paul did not 'keep a record of wrongs' of the Corinthians. Once each problem had been worked out, the slate was wiped clean. There were so many problems, however, that he was often irritated at their childishness.

- **WHAT IT IS [VV. 6-7]: REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH, BEARS ALL THINGS, BELIEVES ALL THINGS, HOPES ALL THINGS AND ENDURES ALL THINGS.**

REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH... Paul was aware of his own failings and struggled to overcome them. His love did not strive to find fault. Instead, he preferred to rejoice in what he saw was solid and true.

BEARS ALL THINGS... the believer seeks to withstand the blows of others.

*BELIEVES ALL THINGS...*does not mean being naïve or gullible but rather it is a trusting of others.

*HOPES ALL THINGS...*seeking the best for others

*ENDURES ALL THINGS...*determination and courage to press on, not quitting easily.

III. HOW IS GENUINE CHRISTIAN LOVE GOING TO HAPPEN?

- **STARTS WITH AN "ACT OF THE WILL"**
Love others unconditionally (John 15:12-17)
- **SUSTAINED BY AN "ACTIVE DEPENDENCE ON GOD"**
Let the Holy Spirit work in our lives (Romans 5:5).

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

Sometimes, in a church, people come and go, not willing to love others or be loved by others yet one of the greatest needs of human beings is the need to be loved and to love.”

1. Within the Care Group, are we as open and do we manifest genuine love? Why or why not?
2. How can we open up to others, especially strangers, individually, at Church and at Work?
3. Do we open up only to people we know?

End of Study.