



***YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!***  
**Winter 2017-2018 Midweek/ Sermon Starter**

**Unit 2: Spiritual Check Up**

**Sermon Series Title:** Grow Up: A Look At Spiritual Maturity

**Sermon 1:** What's Love Got To Do With It?

**Bible Passage:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13

**Introduction**

In 1984, Pop, R&B, and Rock & Roll, soul sensation Tina Turner released what would become her most popular and most successful single of her lifetime. Turner's single entitled, *"What's Love Got To Do With It?"* immediately ascended the charts by captivating audiences all across the world. Turner's single offers a proactive critic to relationships by suggesting that love is not necessarily obligatory in relationships.

Unfortunately, many people in our world concur with the sentiments of this song. People enter romantic relationships and platonic relationships alike without ever seeking or offering love. To make matters worse, many churches are filled with programs and personnel, but suffer from a lack of the proper perspective: love. What does love have to do with it, you ask? Everything!

**Background/Context**

Paul understood the necessity of love. In 1 Corinthians 13, he addressed a Corinthian church—a church heavily influenced by carnality, capitalism, and corruption. The church at Corinth was a church that lacked love. Paul wrote, if I “do not have love I am nothing... do not have love I gain nothing” (1 cor.13:2-3). Why is love a necessity for Christian maturity?

**A. Love Is the Standard**  
**(1 Cor. 13:1-3)**

1 Corinthians 13 is a continuation of the thoughts expressed in 1 Corinthians 12. Paul stressed the interconnectedness of the community of believers by depicting this community as a body. Paul made it clear, we are the body of Christ; there are many parts with many gifts, but there is only one body.

Unfortunately, this rhetoric did not seem to work. The Corinthian church was filled with selfish, self-centered, self-seeking, and self-willed people. This community totally ignored Paul's teaching because they were exercising spiritual gifts without functioning in love. Therefore, everything they did manifested discord, disunity, and disharmony.

Paul, in an attempt to dismantle the division and dysfunction in the community, offered this lesson: Gifts are useless if not activated with love. Paul wanted the church at Corinth to

understand that love must be the standard for all believers. Moreover, the spirit-given fruit of love should drive all our lives.

Paul argued that love trumps talents, gifts, and benevolence. John informs us, love is the thing that identifies us as Christian disciples (see John 13:34-35). For Paul, the depth of our spiritual maturity is not measured by attendance and activities; our maturity is measured by our attitude of love. 1 John 4:8 reminds us, “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” Love is the fuel that should activate our talents, gifts, and benevolence. Love must be the focus of every action that we display.

**Application Point:** What changes do you need to make to ensure that love is your standard of living? Remember, our maturity is measured through our attitude of love. Evaluate your life and make the necessary changes to ensure that you are living by God’s standard of love.

## **B. Love Is Selfless (1 Cor. 13:4-7)**

In the first part of chapter 13, Paul established love as the standard of living for all believers. Paul was clear, without love we are nothing. In fact, for Paul, “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10b). Typically, when we think about love we consider three categories of love: *eros*—passion shared between two intimate partners, *philia/philos*—brotherly friendship shared between friends, and *storge*—natural affection shared between parents and offspring. However, Paul seems to dig deeper.

Paul instructed us to love the way that God loves. Paul used the word, ‘agape’ in order to drive this point home. This word agape means to love unconditionally. This expression of love validates true spiritual maturity. For Paul, love is more than a feeling, emotion, or sensation; love is an action, a discipline that must be practiced daily.

Continuing, Paul offered some clear descriptions of love. Paul stated that love is: patient, kind, humble, nice, merciful, forgiving, truthful, and faithful, to name a few. Here, we learn that love is selfless—an act of self-sacrifice. Paul was charging each Christian to grow spiritually to the place where he can “look not only for his own interest, but also for the interest of others” (Phil 2:4). In a real sense, it takes a certain level of maturity to consider someone else before self. It takes love to consistently accomplish this goal. Beloved, this is the true model of love—this is our task on earth—to love selflessly.

**Application Point:** When do you find it difficult to love selflessly? What factors prevent you from living a life free from selfishness? Remember, God empowers us to love one another. Moreover, we fulfill our life purpose when we commit ourselves to loving selflessly and unconditionally.

## **C. Love Stands Forever (1 Cor. 13:8,13)**

Paul offered a reason for living with love—agape love as the standard in the last section of the Scripture passage. For Paul, love is the greatest quality that any believer can possess. But why is love the ultimate Christian quality? “Love never ends” (1 Cor. 13:8).

Paul validated this argument by exposing the impermanence of gifts. Paul wrote, “but as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end” (1 Cor. 13:8). Paul wanted the Corinthians to alter their perspectives. He wanted them to see that life is more than superficialities and abilities. Paul made it very clear that nothing we possess on earth is permanent; it all has an expiration date. In fact, Solomon warned, “there is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1). Talents are useful, but they are temporary; gifts are valuable, but they will go away, and benevolence is beneficial, but it blows away like tumbleweed in a whirlwind. However, Paul declared that “love never ends.” Paul wants us to recognize that love stands forever. Why do we love? We love because when we sow seeds of love, we plant them in soil that will last forever.

***Application Point:*** How committed are you to planting seeds of love that will outlive you? What can you do to guarantee that love is spread throughout this world? Remember, your seeds of love will last forever. This week commit yourself to planting seeds of God’s love throughout the world.