

# Loving Like **JESUS**

In a World That  
Hurts and Hates

A Flexible Inductive Study of  
**1 Corinthians 13**

**SAMPLE CHAPTER**

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# Week One

## Building Up in a World That Tears Down

*Let all things be done for building up.*

—1 Corinthians 14:26b

There is, perhaps, no greater question for today's Church than how we are to love in a world that hates. We know how to love people who love us—everyone does, but when we get at angles with others, or worse yet, when people actively hate both us and our Master, the loving business can get tough. Let's be honest here, Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves is a tall order under favorable circumstances and next to unfathomable under common ones.

And so for the next eight weeks, we are going to learn to observe, interpret, and apply in our lives what God's Word—specifically 1 Corinthians 13—says about love. As we go, it is my prayer that you will not let facts get stuck above your neck, but that you'll learn God's truth and that He will use His Word to transform you more and more into the image of His Son . . . the One who is the perfect picture of love!

### **FYI:**

#### **If You're in a Class**

Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

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## FYI:

### What do your bags look like?

We all have baggage . . . some of us hate our baggage, others of us love it, but smart or less than smart, rich or financially-challenged, raised in the Church or new to Christ, we all have thoughts we bring to the table.

Instead of denying or ignoring our presuppositions, let's take the time to think about them and talk through some of them. It will help us in our individual study and it will benefit our discussion time. In doing this, we may uncover some lies that we've always assumed to be truth.

## PRESUPPOSITIONS: WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING ALONG?

How do you define "love"? What makes a person or behavior "loving"?

In what ways does our culture define "love"? How does this compare with your view?

If you disagree with the cultural definition(s), what struggle does this pose in your day-to-day life?

## INDUCTIVE STUDY: LETTING GOD'S WORD SPEAK FOR ITSELF

While it's important to consider our current views as we study, we want to do that primarily so we can hold them up to the plumb line of God's perfect Word. We'll do this through a process called Inductive Bible Study which simply means that we'll be using the Bible itself as our primary resource.

This may sound simple and obvious, but an epidemic of biblical illiteracy is making this less and less common, even in the Church as people increasingly follow the views of people rather than taking the time to discover God's truth for themselves.

There are three basic components of Inductive Bible study: observation, interpretation, and application.

## OBSERVATION

As we observe the text of Scripture, we read carefully and seek to answer the question: *What does the text say?* Slow and thoughtful reading is the core competency in observation and certain tools can help us in that.

- Asking 5 W and H questions — Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?
- Identifying and marking **key words** — Key words are critical to understanding and typically repeated. When marking key words, you'll want to mark synonyms and pronouns, too.
- Making **Lists** — Key words are the basis for lists. After we identify a key word, listing everything we learn about it helps us to better grasp what the text says.

## INTERPRETATION

Careful observation is invaluable as we begin to interpret the text and answer the question: *What does the text mean?* As we interpret, we're looking for one meaning. It's not uncommon for people to mix up interpretation and application. You've probably witnessed this when you've heard a person ask, "What does this verse mean to you?"

The text of Scripture does not change meaning based on who is reading it. It means what it means. As an author, I have a purpose in writing. You may think I'm trying to say something other than what I've said, but that does not change my meaning. It means you've misinterpreted. As people misinterpret human authors from time to time, they can also misinterpret the Divine One!

When we interpret, we observe the text closely and then look for the one meaning God intended. Here are some tools that will help immensely in discovering the text's meaning.

- Paying close attention to **context** — The context is simply the setting in which something dwells. In 1 Corinthians 13 we need to pay close attention to surrounding chapters.
- Checking **cross-references** — Cross-references are other places in Scripture that talk about the same topic.
- Allowing **Scripture to interpret Scripture** — The best commentary on Scripture is other Scripture. When we use cross-references we are allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

## APPLICATION

Once we discover the meaning of the text, we can begin to apply it in our lives. Application needs to be anchored in the meaning of the text, but many and varied applications can come from one meaning. James, for example, talks about controlling the tongue in the third chapter of his letter. How that specifically applies in day-to-day life will probably be different in my life than yours, but it will be anchored in the same truth of honoring God through what we do and don't do. Bible study is never complete without application . . . and application starts at home. (And by "at home" I don't mean you apply the Word to your spouse and kids and then go after the neighbors! Application starts with *me!*)

## The Goal: TRANSFORMATION!

If you're just the Bible rock star who can clobber all your friends in trivia, there's a big problem. The goal of inductive study is never knowledge for knowledge's sake, but rather understanding of God's Word that transforms lives.

## FYI:

### Start with Prayer

You've probably heard it before and if we study together again, you'll hear it again. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first ask His Spirit to be your Guide. Jesus says that the Spirit will lead us into all truth.

## FYI:

### Do I have to mark the text?

Of course not! But marking the text does help us see what is repeated and important. 1 Corinthians 13 is a perfect example of how marking the text will help you see the key word and how identifying the key word will help you identify the main topic or theme of a chapter or book. If you're colored-pencil phobic, no worries, you don't have to mark. If you're willing to give it a try, though, I think it's worth a shot!

## What does the text say?

### OBSERVATION . . . START BY LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

We're going to read 1 Corinthians 13 over and over again, so relax and enjoy . . . the pressure is really off in this part, because we're just overviewing the passage looking for what is obvious and clear.

As we observe, we're going to **mark** a key repeated word and then we'll ask a couple of basic *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?* questions. Simple right?

**READ** 1 Corinthians 13 and **MARK** every occurrence of the repeated word *love*.

#### 1 Corinthians 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.*
- 2 *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 surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*
- 4 *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.*
- 8 *Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.*
- 9 *For we know in part and we prophesy in part;*
- 10 *but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.*
- 11 *When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*
- 12 *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.*
- 13 *But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

## **DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

Who is writing and who is he writing to? (You need some additional information from the letter to answer this. If you know it, write it down; if not, we'll get there.)

What is the chapter's main topic? How do you know? (Don't overthink this!)

Note each time you marked the key word *love* and make a simple list of everything the chapter teaches about it. (It'll probably be a pretty long list. Don't forget to mark the references, too.)

## **FYI:**

### **Corinth . . . A Lot Like Us**

The Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to a church in Corinth, a port city in Greece that had been rebuilt and colonized by Rome during the reign of Julius Caesar.

Corinth was a trade city where people had opportunity to break free from the typical class structure of the day.

In Paul's day, many Corinthians were pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps rich while others languished in poverty. Those who succeeded typically did so with an entrepreneurial, me-first, whatever-it-takes-to-win approach and the Church too often reflected the culture around it.

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## Digging Deeper

### Read and Summarize 1 Corinthians by Chapter

We'll be reading the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 13 together (yup, just turn the page!). The best way to get the full picture, though, is to read Paul's whole 16-chapter letter. If you have time this week, read or listen to 1 Corinthians to get the full context of the 13th chapter. It will take a bit of time, but time invested in God's Word is never wasted!

Ask the 5 W and H questions as you read, give a one sentence summary of each chapter . . . and #hashtag each with a one word theme or highlight.

1	#
2	#
3	#
4	#
5	#
6	#
7	#
8	#
9	#
10	#
11	#
12	#
13	#
14	#
15	#
16	#

Listening resources:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/audio/mcconachie/nasb/1Cor.1> (FREE streaming)

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/audiobook/1-2-corinthians-bible-experience/id401949013> (\$5.99)

### FYI:

#### Pressed for Time?

If time is an issue for you (and let's face it, who doesn't have time problems occasionally?!), consider how listening to God's Word might help you buy back some time.

Here are a couple of links to resources where you can listen to 1 Corinthians 13. The first is free, the second isn't but it's still a great price!

Stream the NASB for FREE at Bible Gateway . . .

<https://www.biblegateway.com/audio/mcconachie/nasb/1Cor.1> (FREE streaming)

Purchase the *Bible Experience* version (TNIV) of 1 and 2 Corinthians for just \$5.99 . . .

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/audiobook/1-2-corinthians-bible-experience/id401949013> (\$5.99)

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## What does the text mean?

### INTERPRETATION . . . STARTING THE PROCESS

We'll be continually observing and interpreting as we walk through this study, all the while looking to apply what we're learning. As we begin the interpretation process, we need to start by exploring the context of 1 Corinthians 13. Many people assume 1 Corinthians 13 is about a generalized emotion, others view it as "the wedding passage," and still others see it as a deep well of inspirational quotations—greeting card heaven! The context, however, moves the interpretation of the chapter in a direction that is very different from these views. Let's check out this context, the neighborhood 1 Corinthians 13 lives in.

**READ** 1 Corinthians 12–14 in your Bible paying close attention to the topics being addressed in the chapters that sandwich our main text. You may want to look at the following questions before you begin reading.

### DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 12

What do we know about Paul's readers from 1 Corinthians 12:1? Explain.

What is Paul's main topic in chapter 12? What is he concerned that his readers know about?

What example does he use to illustrate his point? How does he explain it?

In your own words, how do people fit together in the Church? What makes it possible?

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: Division

If you have some extra time this week, investigate the word translated "division" in 1 Corinthians 12:25. Begin by identifying the Greek word and then see how it is used throughout Paul's writings and the rest of the New Testament. Then record your findings below. As you do, consider whether what Paul is saying ever rears its head at your church. If it does, do you ever contribute to the problem? If so, how can you be part of the solution instead?

If you've never done a word study, there are step-by-step instructions for online word studies at the end of the lesson on page 15.

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# Notes

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What problems can show up? Why?

What does Paul tell them to do in verse 31? Given just this chapter, do we know what the “greater gifts” are or do we need more information? Explain.

What is the “still more excellent way” Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 12:31? What does that statement introduce?

## FYI:

### Spiritual Gift Studies

If you're interested in looking more closely at spiritual gifts, be sure to check out the 6-week study *Understanding Your Spiritual Gifts* or the 12-week Precept Upon Precept® *Spiritual Gifts* in-depth inductive Bible study. The 12-weeker changed my life!

How does 1 Corinthians 12 tie in to 1 Corinthians 13?

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14

How do the main points of 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 tie in with the first verse of 1 Corinthians 14? What does Paul say the Church should pursue? What should believers earnestly desire?

What two gifts does Paul specifically discuss in 1 Corinthians 14? Why do you think he mentions them?

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Briefly explain 1 Corinthians 13's context.

## **OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

Before we move on, let's look a little closer at two portions of the texts we've just read.

**READ** 1 Corinthians 12:20-26 and **MARK** every occurrence of the repeated word *body*. Then, **MARK** every reference to *members* in a different way.

### **1 Corinthians 12:20-26**

- 20 *But now there are many members, but one body.*
- 21 *And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."*
- 22 *On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;*
- 23 *and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,*
- 24 *whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,*
- 25 *so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.*
- 26 *And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

## **DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

What does Paul contrast in this section? What is the primary contrast?

## **INDUCTIVE FOCUS:**

### **Contrasts and Comparisons**

As we continue to observe the text, another tool we can use is identifying and thinking through contrasts and comparisons.

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How are the body and the members related to one another?

## FYI:

### Appropriate Concern

Jesus could not have been more clear when He repeatedly commanded His followers not to worry and taught them how to think differently about concerns (Matthew 6:25, 27, 28, 31, 34). His bottom line: don't worry (*merimnao*) about your life, don't worry about tomorrow, God has it under control.

Paul repeats Jesus' teaching in Philippians 4:6 telling his readers not to worry about anything (again using the Greek *merimnao*), but instead to pray about everything!

The only times this word is used in the New Testament with a positive sense is when people show concern for one another or for the things of the Lord. If you have time this week, check out the usage of *merimnao* (typically translated "worry" or "concern") in 1 Corinthians 7:32-34, 1 Corinthians 12:25 (our text!), and Philippians 2:20.

Worry about our own lives and worry about tomorrow should not be a part of the Christian life . . . and one of the reasons is that believers are to have appropriate concern for one another.

What different kinds of members are there? What is their relationship to one another?

According to verse 25, what should be entirely absent from the body? What would this do to a physical body?

Does the Church today tolerate division? If so, why do you think it does?

What should characterize the relationship of members of the body, again according to verses 25-26?

How does this line up with your reality?

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What does suffering with someone entail?

What about rejoicing with someone who is honored? Do you think that is easier or harder? Why?

## **OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** 1 Corinthians 14:1-6, 12, 26 and **MARK** every form of the word *edify*.

### **1 Corinthians 14:1-6, 12, 26**

- 1 *Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*
- 2 *For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.*
- 3 *But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.*
- 4 *One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.*
- 5 *Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.*
- 6 *But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?*
  
- 12 *So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.*
  
  
- 26 *What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.*

## **ONE STEP FURTHER:**

### **Word Study: One Another**

If you have some extra time this week, see what the Bible has to say about literally "one anothers" (Greek: *allos*). What does Paul say elsewhere in Corinthians? In his other writings? What does Jesus say? What do other New Testament writers have to say? Use extra paper if you need to and then summarize below the highlights of what you've discovered.

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## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: Pursue

If you have some extra time this week, investigate the word translated “pursue” in 1 Corinthians 14:1. Like other neutral Greek words, it acquires a positive or negative moral sense depending on what it’s hooked up with; a person, for example, can pursue evil or righteousness. See if you can find where else it is used in the New Testament. Then explain how would you characterize the word? How is it usually translated when it is associated with something wrong? What else did you learn? Record your observations below.

## FYI:

### Edify

The English family of words edify\* in 1 Corinthians 14 derive from the Greek verb *aikodomeo*, a compound of *aikos* (house) and *domeo* (to build). In the Church, everything we do should be to the end of building the house, building the body, building *up*, not tearing *down*.

## DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Look back at every place you marked *edify* and *edification* and then make a short list of everything this passage teaches.

What does Paul say about the one who prophesies? What does this gift produce according to verses 3 and 4?

How is pursuing love related to edifying others? Are these related in your life? If so how?

How often do you consider how your words or actions will build people up or tear them down before you speak or act? What effect does (or could!) considering this have on your life and the lives of those around you?

How do you think others in your life would answer the previous question with regard to you? Explain.

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## **Digging Deeper**

### **Where Else is Love?**

Take some time to find and consider other examples of love in the Bible . . . We'll be getting to them as we study, but it's more challenging and more fun to think through it on your own first! If the thought of this overwhelms you, move on. No worries, we'll hit the high points together. If it inspires you, though, get to it! Here are some broad categories to help you break this big task into smaller pieces.

The Books of the Law

Old Testament History Books

Old Testament Prophets

Old Testament Poetry/Wisdom Literature

New Testament Gospel Accounts

New Testament Historical Accounts

New Testament Letters

New Testament Apocalyptic Literature

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## **@THE END OF THE DAY . . .**

Take a little time to reflect on what you've studied this week. Without flipping back through the pages, what truth stood out to you the most? How is it changing how you are thinking and acting?

Now, go ahead and turn the pages and take some time to review where we've been. What truth most surprised you?

What truth did you most need to hear or be reminded of?

What is one way you can edify one of your "one another"s this week?

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## HOW TO DO AN ONLINE WORD STUDY

### For use with [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

1. Type in Bible verse. Change the version to NASB. Click the "Search" button.
2. When you arrive at the next screen, you will see a button labeled "Tools" to the left of your verse.  
Hover over the "Tool" button and a list will pop up.  
Click the first button on the pop-up list—"Interlinear C"—to take you to the concordance link.
3. Click on the Strong's number which is the link to the original word in Greek or Hebrew.

Clicking this number will bring up another screen that will give you a brief definition of the word as well as list every occurrence of the Greek word in the New Testament or Hebrew word in the Old Testament. Before running to a dictionary definition, scan places where it's used in Scripture and examine the general contexts.



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