

Loving like Jesus

In a World that Hurts and Hates

by

pam gillaspie

Leader's Guide

Loving like Jesus

In a World that Hurts and Hates

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Sweeter than Chocolate!® 1 Corinthians 13: Loving Like Jesus in a World that Hurts and Hates

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Week One

Building Up in a World that Tears Down

Class-at-a-Glance

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 10 min. | Class Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions• Ground Rules• How to Use this Study |
| Segment 2: | 5 min. | Inductive Study Basics |
| Segment 3: | 5 min. | Considering How We Think |
| Segment 4: | 10 min. | 1 Corinthians 13: A Big Picture Overview |
| Segment 5: | 15 min. | 1 Corinthians 12–14: The Context |
| Segment 6: | 15 min. | Background on 1 Corinthians |

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BEFORE YOU START**HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:****The Basics**

Well here you are! You've either been called, appointed, or dragged into leading a Bible study. Regardless, here is some good news—this study is designed to be flexible to both students and teachers alike, to give newer teachers the help they need, and to give more seasoned teachers wings to grow their gifting. With this in mind, please use the Leader's Guide to help you prepare to lead. Always remember that it's a guide, not a strict set of step-by-step rules and edicts.

Although presented as an 8-week study with weekly homework, this class can be stretched over a longer period of time with "homework" sections done either at home or during class time. If class time is limited, as is often the case for Sunday School, leaders may choose to work through smaller portions of a lesson together. Thus, it is possible for this 8-week Bible study to flex and expand to fill a 16-week session or more depending on how deep you and your students want to go.

For those who have ample time and are running an 8-week study, consider adding an additional week or two for a technology day or a guest speaker on a topic of interest. This person can be a pastor, local Bible professor, or someone well-versed on a particular topic in the text. With the advance of technology, it's now possible to bring in people from other parts of the country or the world to talk to your class via tools like Skype. Additional people and material mix things up and keep the class on its toes. This additional week gives you the flexibility to match the class length to the needs of things like, say, the church calendar. Hey, it's reality!

Some of you who are reading this Leader Guide are thrilled to be leading because you have the spiritual gift of teaching. You may find that you don't even use this guide—that's fine! If God has gifted you to teach and you like doing your own research and prep, that is great!! Praise God! Go entrust to the faithful who will be able to teach others! Others of you, undoubtedly, have been dragged in kicking and screaming. (That was me for a few years while I was still resisting my gifting!) Somebody had to lead and you were drafted. It is my deep hope that you will find help in this guide to make your leading experience not only less traumatic but also filled with great joy!

Small groups or Sunday School classes may decide to simply talk through the questions that are in the lesson but study groups will benefit from additional talk points and material.

About the Leader Guide

This Leader Guide is a basic outline, a road map of one way to go in a class discussion. Just like there are many ways from Chicago to Chattanooga, there are different ways to run a class.

Each week you'll find background information and suggested discussion questions in this guide, but you'll always need to be on the lookout in class for timely opportunities to help your students move from Observation and Interpretation to Application. We want them to learn the truths of Scripture not so they can win at Bible

* Skype is a free service that allows you to use the internet to video conference in guest speakers or those who just want to listen in to your class. Learn more at www.skype.com.

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trivia but so that their thinking will be renewed and their actions will more and more reflect the One they belong to (Romans 12:1-2). The goal, that only the Holy Spirit accomplishes, is *transformation!*

For the sake of space, we'll typically list only suggested discussion questions. Also, when possible we'll leave space for you to fill in your own thoughts so you don't have to go flipping back and forth between the student book and the leader guide. Finally, you may look at the material and think, "There is no way that I can cover all this in the allotted time!" If that's the case, you can pick and choose from the elements to craft your lesson.

Starting on Time

One way to start on time every week is to read through the week's main text(s) at the beginning of class. In doing this you will reinforce the importance of continually being in the text of Scripture itself. If any of your students choose to memorize 1 Corinthians 13, this will also be a perfect time for the brave to recite and review! As odd as it may sound, when we study deeply the temptation to stray away from the text and toward commentaries can be intense. By reading (or reciting!) the text every week and starting promptly (even if it is just you and your most prompt student!), you will reinforce the importance of the text and gain the added bonus of training stragglers to arrive on time.

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: CLASS BASICS

Introductions and Ground Rules

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Have class members introduce themselves**
- **If possible, get photos**
- **Set boundaries**

Make sure you allocate adequate time the first week of class for general introductions and ground rules. If you're teaching men or a mixed group, estimate based on the size of your class. If you're teaching women, take the time you think this will require and double it. Asking everyone to share their name and respond to a specific question will help keep things moving. If you ask for "a little bit about yourself," you're sure to get more than a little bit! Start out by introducing yourself in a concise manner to set the tone. Feel free to use an icebreaker game or other ideas you have to help people connect.

You'll also want to establish ground rules during Week One. The time to set effective boundaries in any relationship is the first meeting. A boundary can always be relaxed, but it is very difficult to establish or strengthen one if you do not set it properly at the start. This applies to both how you will lead your class discussions and how you will interact with your class throughout the week. Depending on your situation, you may ask them to contact you primarily by e-mail and make certain times of the day

Notes

off-limits. My classes know I rarely answer the phone when my kids are home from school. This is my boundary. When they are home, my primary job is being their mom. Your class will respect this and perhaps even learn the importance of proper boundaries in their own lives from your example.

Let your class know that it is your job as the teacher/facilitator to keep the discussion on track and that you may from time to time have to reel a person in, stop a rabbit trail, or discontinue until after class an interesting but off-topic discussion. Also let them know that you do not have all the answers. No one has all the answers, even those who have studied a lifetime. While acknowledging your limitations may seem uncomfortable at first, you'll find it is freeing for everyone! If someone asks a question you can't answer, either look into it further yourself or (preferably) assign it to the questioner for further study. This will draw out future teachers—they are the ones who come back with it answered and prepared to share. Assigning questions also helps people begin discerning what makes a germane question.

Encouraging your class to ask questions and helping them learn how to ask right questions is a huge part of your job as a teacher. Still, as important as questions are, more questions can be asked than we have biblical answers for. Sometimes you will simply have to answer with an honest, "I don't know."

With larger classes, a good practice that I've discovered is to have class members introduce themselves to one another in small groups and then have people in the small groups introduce one another to the larger group. This allows people who hate "public speaking" to be able to talk comfortably with a smaller group and keeps the intros shorter on the whole.

Introductions:

- Introduce yourself briefly.
- 10 Minutes at Tables . . . Have class introduce themselves to one another at their tables.
- 30 Minutes with Class . . . Introduce someone else from your table to the class. (Those who don't want to talk at this point don't have to. The chatty ones will take up the slack. Let them know this in advance so they'll feel comfortable.)

Prompts:

- *Where did you grow up? What made it interesting?*
- *What in the Bible has changed your life the most? (If you give this, make sure they have the option to pick another question as some may be new to study.)*
- *What would you consider to be a perfect day?*
- *What is your dream job?*
- *What's the most memorable or unique thing about you? (Even if it's goofy, these can be the easiest to remember.)*

Photos:

Finally, it's a great idea to take notes as they're talking and have the tables take a photo and e-mail it to you with their names. If you're 25 and remember all of the people you meet, good for you! Those of us who have a few more names in the mental bank can always benefit from pictures to help. I've started walking from table

CROWD BREAKER**Use This or Make Your Own**

In the book of Hebrews, we're told that Abraham "when he was called . . . went out, not knowing where he was going."

Where is the most interesting place God has had you live so far?

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to table and making sure they're sending the photos (with their names included!) from their phones as soon as they've taken them!

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Basics of the study guide and philosophy

- **WEEKLY STUDY material**
- **FYI boxes**
- **ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes**
- **DIGGING DEEPER boxes**

While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility with your students. Direct them to the "How to use this study" page of their books and encourage them to find a level of study that brings joy and not guilt. They can do more one week, less the next; they can mix and match and find the fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on and guiltting them with a ton of homework will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God's Word and ask His Spirit to begin healing through the power of the Word. Take some time to read the "How to use the study" page (prior to Week One) with them and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

Take special care in stressing the flexibility to long-time *Precept-Upon-Precept*[®] students as many have a finish-every-question-at-all-cost mentality. Such discipline in studying God's Word is beautiful. The every-last-question mind-set, however, can throw people off with a flexible study. Because the material is designed to flex to very advanced students, the volume of material can overwhelm people who force themselves through every question and sidebar. Assure your class that most students won't finish every question every week by design. Some weeks they will, but probably not *every* week. If every student finished every week, the study would not be flexing to meet the needs of the most advanced students. The goal in allowing the material to flex is not to have people study less; it is to have each person take the next appropriate step from where they currently are and to study and apply more as they are continually drawn into deeper relationship with Jesus.

SEGMENT #2: INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS

Observation | Interpretation | Application

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take some time to give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as we go, but giving them an overview will help put them in context! In recent years I've taken to doing a very basic review of this weekly when I have students who are new to inductive study. You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study simply means the Bible is our main source of truth. Before looking for insights from people and commentaries *about* the Bible, we get into the Word of God *itself*. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study involves three basic components: observation, interpretation, and application.

1 Observation

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover for yourself will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking the five W and H questions.

Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? Who is the author speaking to?

What subjects and/or events are covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, the events, and the teachings from the text? What instructions are given?

When did or will the events recorded occur?

Where did or will this happen? Where was it said?

Why is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?

How will it happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?

Careful observation leads to interpretation—discovering what the text means.

One important part of observing the text involves identifying key words. A key word helps to “unlock” the meaning of the text. It is vital to understanding the text and is often repeated.

Help your students remember that three basic tools of **observation** are:

- Asking the **5 Ws and H**
- Identifying **key words**
- Making **lists** of what they’ve learned from the key words

2 Interpretation

The more you observe, the greater you’ll understand God’s Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we’ll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand God’s message that was communicated to the original audience. Observation and interpretation lead to application.

Help your students remember that three basic tools of **interpretation** are:

- Paying close attention to **context**
- Checking **cross-references**
- Looking for the **one meaning** of the text

3 Application

After we’ve observed the text and discovered the meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although a text of Scripture has one interpretation—what God inspired the author to write to his original readers—it can have numerous applications. The result is a transformed life—the more you and I are in the Word of God and adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!

It is exciting to learn and know about the faith of others. It is transforming to live what we have learned!

SEGMENT #3: Consider the Way You Think

If you have enough people in your class to break into small groups, do so and have the groups discuss presuppositions they are bringing to the class. Once they've had several minutes to discuss at tables, pull them back together for a large group discussion. If you have a small class, simply discuss the questions on page 2 together.

Remember that at this point, we are listening and examining what preconceptions and terms we are bringing to the table. We want to understand that using the word "love" will bring up a variety of thoughts and emotions in different people. Don't let your students get hung up or start wrangling about English definitions of words. Let them discuss the meaning of "love" but remind them that as we go to the Scriptures, we'll let God's Word speak for itself so that we get *His* definition of love and *His* instruction on how to live a life characterized by it. As we study we'll start to measure what "we've always thought" against what God has already said.

Sample Discussion Questions:

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

How 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?

As the class discusses their answers, remind them that God's Word is truth and it is the plumb line that we use to measure everything else.

SEGMENT #4: 1 Corinthians 13 – A Big Picture Overview

- Key Talk Point:**
- We observe carefully to learn what the text says.
 - Tools help us observe: asking questions, marking key words, making lists.
 - We know from the greater context that Paul is writing to the Corinthian church.

Marking the Key Word

Help your students with a big picture overview by reading 1 Corinthians 13 out loud and marking together every occurrence of the word "love" in the text. Then discuss with them everything they learned about love in the text. If you have a white board, now would be a great time to use it.

Based on the first three verses your students should see that love is not just talking, it's not just knowing, it's not just doing.

- It's not just talking . . . If I don't have love, my words are just noise.
- It's not just knowing . . . If I know everything but don't have love, I'm nothing.
- It's not just doing . . . If I do amazing thing without love, I'm profited nothing.

Walk your students through making a list about what love is, starting with verse 4.

Love:

- is patient (v. 4)
- is kind (v. 4)
- is not jealous (v. 4)
- doesn't brag (v. 4)
- isn't arrogant (v. 4)
- doesn't act unbecomingly (v. 5)
- doesn't seek its own (v. 5)
- isn't provoked (v. 5)
- doesn't account a wrong suffered (v. 5)
- doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness (v. 6)
- rejoices with the truth (v. 6)
- bears (v. 7)
- believes (v. 7)
- hopes (v. 7)
- endures (v. 7)
- doesn't fail (v. 8)
- abides (v. 13)

Sample Discussion Question:

Again, if you have a large group, let your students discuss these questions around tables and then bring it back for a large group summary discussion.

If you're comfortable sharing, which of these do you think is most challenging in your life?

SEGMENT #5: 1 Corinthians 12-14 – The Context

- Key Talk Points:**
- 1 Corinthians 12 focuses on spiritual gifts.
 - 1 Corinthians 13 teaches how love is a more excellent way.
 - 1 Corinthians 14 says all things should be done for edification.

Context/Comments:

As you move through this section, help your students understand the importance of context as they observe how 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14 help us better understand and interpret 1 Corinthians 13.

1 Corinthians 12

In 1 Corinthians 12:1 Paul addresses fellow believers, “brethren,” in Christ. He is concerned that they understand the spiritual gifts they have in Christ. In order to explain the gifts and the relationship of people in the Church, Paul uses the physical body as an example. It is an apt illustration. As anyone who has ever experienced physical ailment knows, when one part of the body is weak, sick, or impaired, the entire body is affected. All parts of the body are needed for it to function correctly.

Paul says the same is true of the “body of Christ”—the Church. God has made each of us different parts according to His own will and plan. Like it or not, we all need one another and believe it or not, we can all function as one body in the Spirit.

As wonderful as a functioning body is, Paul points out problems that can arise if parts don’t function in the ways they were intended. If an eye thinks it doesn’t need a hand or a head thinks it can get along just fine without the feet, there will be big problems for the whole body.

As absurd as this sounds, the equivalent often happens in the Church when people don’t function in their own area of gifting and when they fail to honor the gifting of others.

In 1 Corinthians 12:31 Paul tells his readers to “earnestly desire the greater gifts” one of which he will reveal in 14:1 as prophecy. On the heels of his list of spiritual gifts in 12:8-10, Paul introduces 1 Corinthians 13 as “a still more excellent way.”

The tie-in with gifts in 1 Corinthians 13 is immediately obvious as Paul talks about tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and even giving “all my possessions to feed *the poor*” (cf. Romans 12:8) in rapid succession before launching into his definition of love and its superiority to even the most flashy of spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 14

Help your students see Paul’s clear linking of love (1 Corinthians 13) and spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12) in the first verse of 1 Corinthians 14: “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” The command to “pursue” (Greek: *dioko*; second person plural imperative) implies that the Corinthians can grow in their love; they can chase after it.

They are to desire (Greek: *zeloo*) certain gifts, but to pursue love. Because God gives the gift, the ministry, and the effect or outcome of the gift and ministry, I believe the reference to the Corinthians desiring prophecy is for the body as a whole to desire to have prophets among them. Some may disagree with me on this, but it seems to fit the context best, particularly taking into account that “desire” is in the second person plural. The two gifts Paul mentions by name in 1 Corinthians 14 are prophecy and tongues. Apparently the Corinthians elevated and desired the gift of tongues. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul sets love above all the gifts and shows that every gift must be operated and used in love as believers look out for the good of one another. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul elevates the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongues because it edifies the Church.

Sample Discussion Question:

Again, if you have a large group, let your students discuss these questions around tables and then bring them back for large group summary discussions.

How would you simply explain the relationships between 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14?

What does love have to do with spiritual gifts?

SEGMENT #6: Background on 1 Corinthians

Key Talk Points:

- The Corinthians were a divisive, me-first, competitive people.
- First Corinthians is largely a book of warnings and correctives.

Context/Comments:

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus on his third missionary journey (1 Corinthians 16:8) likely in the spring of AD 54 or 55. This puts the letter between 12 and 15 years after Jesus’ ascension. Corinth was a large city for its time with population estimates ranging from 60,000 to 200,000 people. Help your students gauge the city size by letting them know how large the cities in your area are.

A Greek city that was later colonized by Rome and rebuilt under Julius Caesar, Corinth was a major trade center with two ports. It was home to both the very rich and very poor, but ripe with opportunity to break free from social classes. To put it in modern terms, Corinth had an aggressive and entrepreneurial segment that featured divisive, me-first, arrogant, competitive people. Clearly these traits had made their way into the church as we see in Paul’s correctives addressed to division, superiority, boasting, and arrogance. Corinth was wicked in other ways as well. As “sodomite” today is associated with homosexual behavior, “Corinthian” came to be associated with fornication. If ever a Church needed to hear 1 Corinthians 13, Corinth was the one!

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

Week Two

Hidden Treasures

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 5 min. | Review |
| Segment 2: | 30 min. | Memorizing: Observation in Overdrive • 2 Timothy 3:16 |
| Segment 3: | 15 min. | Why We Memorize • Psalm 1 • Psalm 119:9-16 |
| Segment 4: | 10 min. | Is/Isn't . . . Does/Doesn't • 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13 |

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

A little review each week will cement the basics and give your class a framework for study. Although we'll use different inductive tools each week, keeping the basic components of **OBSERVATION**, **INTERPRETATION**, and **APPLICATION** in front of your class consistently will equip them for a lifetime of handling God's Word. Always remind them that the goal is transformation! We don't learn for the sake of learning; we learn because God uses His Word to transform us and conform us more and more into the image of His Son. Familiarity with the basics will give your students confidence to work through their homework and begin applying and living the texts.

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

*What is **Observation** and why is it important? What question does it answer?*

*How is **Interpretation** different from **Observation**?*

*What do we need for proper **Application**?*

Application needs to be grounded in the single God-intended meaning of the text, its interpretation.

Be aware that at this point you can run into two distinct problems:

1. Some people do not want to apply. They seek knowledge but bristle at application.
2. Others want to apply the text without dealing first with what God said to the original hearers. They want to know "What this means to me" before "What God said."

It is important for you to continually guide your class toward application that comes from the text. When discussions veer toward speculation or issues that do not promote life-change, redirect them to consider what the Author intends.

For those who gravitate toward opinions and ungrounded applications, gently direct them with questions like "Where do you see that in the text?" Continually point them

to the text and appropriate application. It may take some repetition, but they will learn. Always be gentle in your approach remembering Proverbs 16:21b that the “sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.”

Review Questions:

What is the local context of 1 Corinthians 13 and why does it matter?

What was Corinth like and how does it compare to our culture?

What are some ways that you can edify others? What are some ways that others have built you up?

SEGMENT #2: Memorizing: Observation in Overdrive 2 Timothy 3:16 – God’s Word Authoritative and Sufficient

- Key Talk Points:**
- Scripture is God’s Word: it is *authoritative*.
 - God uses Scripture to fully and perfectly equip His people for action: it is *sufficient*.

Context/Comments:

Second Timothy 3:16 is a foundational verse and one that addresses and answers the critical questions: “Can I believe what the Bible says?” and “Is it really enough?” In most evangelical circles, the overwhelming “Sunday School” response to both questions is “Yes!” but behavior shows that many seek for things beyond what has been revealed (1 Corinthians 4:6, Deuteronomy 29:29). Personally, I think this is what is beneath the *Jesus Calling* phenomenon. As I have often heard said, “If you want to hear God speaking to you, open your Bible. If you want to hear His Words audibly . . . read it out loud.”

Memorization Tips and Tools:

Take a bit of time to briefly review the Tips and Tools listed on page 18 of the Workbook, asking the class to give some examples they noticed:

- Patterns and Repetitions
- Comparisons and Contrasts
- Time Phrases
- Locations
- Terms of Conclusion

Stress with your class the importance of the first two tools particularly for handling 1 Corinthians 13.

Patterns and Repetitions

1 Corinthians 13 starts off as patterned as a quilt. (If you have a white board, now is the time to use it!)

| "If I" | GIFT | No Love | Outcome |
|--------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| "If I" | tongues | "but do not have love" | "I have become a noisy gong" |
| "If I" | prophecy/knowledge | | |
| AND | | | |
| "If I" | faith | "but do not have love" | "I am nothing" |
| "If I" | give | "but do not have love" | "it profits me nothing" |

The bottom line: **Amazing gifts without love are nothing.**

We'll look at this more next week, but for now this should help your students get an idea of how to look for patterns in the text and for some ideas of how to pull them into categories on paper.

Comparisons and Contrasts

This is what we'll be focusing on later in our lesson. Comparing what love *is* and *isn't*, *does* and *doesn't*.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Your students will likely be very familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Still, take time to walk through what Paul says that Scripture is and how it benefits believers. Be sure to see if anyone has done and wants to share the **One Step Further** on page 19 as that will probably provide the biggest "Aha!" moment, particularly for those who are familiar with the verses.

Paul says that Scripture is both **inspired** (Greek: *theopneustos*, literally God-breathed) and **profitable** (Greek: *ophelimos*, useful). If it is God's Word, then it is by nature authoritative. It is also profitable which speaks to its entire sufficiency.

Scripture, Paul says, is profitable or useful for:

- teaching (instructing in what is right)
- reproof (convicting of what is wrong)
- correction (fixing what is wrong)
- training in righteousness (strengthening what is right)

The purpose of the teaching, reproof, correction, and training is that Christians may be "adequate" (Greek: *artios*) and "equipped [Greek: *exartizo*] for every good work."

While “adequate” says “C” to me—“You’re not failing, but you’re not doing great either”—the Greek word for “adequate” couldn’t be farther from “okay.” It means being specially fitted and designed for a specific task.

If there’s a good work out there for you to do, God has you perfectly equipped . . . like an Army Ranger or a Navy Seal.

Years ago we had a S.W.A.T. team neighbor who was a former Army Ranger. While he had a huge gun safe in his house, I’m sure he was also trained to kill 16 ways with his bare hands. We always slept well at night knowing that he lived nearby . . . and liked us. Biblically speaking, he was “adequate.”

Sample Discussion Questions:

How does your view of Scripture impact how you live? Or doesn’t it?

How do you think your behavior would change if you knew and believed that you are perfectly equipped?

SEGMENT #3: Why We Memorize; Psalm 1, Psalm 119:9-16

I realize at this point that some in your class may be bristling at the thought of memorizing Scripture. Don’t fight with them. Continue to let the Word speak for itself about the benefits of it treasured in the heart. Encourage those who are fearful toward small steps in memorization; challenge those who are excited towards memorizing passages!

- Key Talk Points:**
- God’s Word gives stability during every season of life, but we must be planted in it.
 - God’s Word treasured in our hearts keeps our way pure and us from sin.

Psalm 1

The psalmist contrasts two kinds of people and two kinds of lives in Psalm 1, the blessed and the wicked. The differences have everything to do with where they are planted—literally and figuratively.

The blessed man *does not*:

- walk in counsel of wicked (v. 1)
- stand in path of sinners (v. 1)
- sit in seat of scoffers (v. 1)

In other words, he doesn’t hang out and loiter with them. He doesn’t plant his roots in the same soil. This is not withdrawal from the world, it is wisdom in knowing that

we are affected by what we spend time with. As Proverbs 13:20 says, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

The blessed man does:

- delight in the law of the LORD (v. 2)
- meditate in His law day and night (v. 2)

As a result of *delighting and meditating* in God's law, the blessed man:

- will be like a tree planted by streams of water (v. 3)
 - he will yield fruit (v. 3)
 - he will not wither (v. 3)
- prospers (does mightily) in whatever he does (v. 3)

Blessed man is righteous (v. 6)

The righteous and the unrighteous, the blessed and the wicked contrast at every turn.

While the man who delights in God's law is firmly planted, the wicked are blown around like chaff having neither stability nor roots (v. 4). Likewise they have no hope on the day of judgment and will not be in the assembly of the righteous (v. 5). While the righteous who know the Lord will remain, the wicked will perish (v. 6).

The core difference between the people in this psalm is where they are planted.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What, if anything, keeps your roots from being "firmly planted by streams of water"?

How would you explain the principle of Psalm 1 that you grow based on where you've put down roots?

Psalm 119:9-16

Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible at 176 verses, spells out what God's Word is and does. In the form of an acrostic poem based on the Hebrew alphabet, Psalm 119 shows the practical value of God's Word in the practical matters of life.

In the Beth stanza (which corresponds to the English letter “B”) the psalmist’s overarching concern is for purity and a heart that does not sin against God.

Line by line the psalmist elevates the Word saying that he has:

- treasured it in his heart (v. 11)
- rejoiced in it as much as riches (v. 14)
- told of it (v. 13)

He goes on to say what he will continue to do with God’s Word and ways:

- I will meditate on Your precepts (v. 15)
- [I will] regard Your ways (v. 15)
- I shall delight in Your statutes (v. 16)
- I shall not forget Your word (v. 16)

Help your students to think through the implications of loving God’s Word like the psalmist did—treasuring it as something of extreme value, rejoicing in it more than, say, a lottery win, and telling others about it! Instead of dwelling on worries or the concerns of life as many of us are tempted to do, the psalmist dwelled on God’s precepts and looked intently into and thought about His ways. He didn’t have a passing acquaintance with God’s Word . . . he derived deep joy from His statutes and resolved to remember His Word.

How do we keep from forgetting? We remind ourselves, we treasure, we meditate, we regard, and we delight. While the world is telling us and showing us its version of “love” continually, we need to know and prioritize what God’s truth instead!

Sample Discussion Questions:

What does your life say about the importance and relevance of God’s Word?

How would you explain the importance of God’s Word to someone else in simple everyday language?

SEGMENT #4: Is/Isn’t . . . Does/Doesn’t; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13

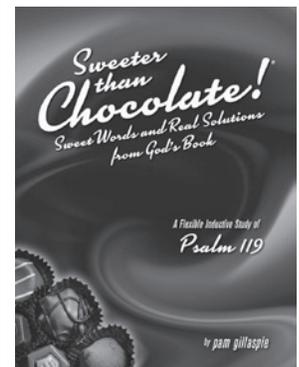
- Key Talk Point:**
- Love does because of what love is.
 - 1 Corinthians 13 uses a series of verbs to describe love.

Context/Comments:

As you walk through this section, make sure your students understand that we are separating the text in this fashion to help us remember it in English. The Greek actually uses a series of verbs for every phrase that we’re looking at, but since most of us

PSALM 119

For an in-depth look at all of Psalm 119, be sure to check out *Sweeter than Chocolate!® Sweet Words and Real Solutions from God’s Book*



Click Here
for a free sample of
Week One.

Loving Jesus
like

In a World that Hurts and Hates

won't be memorizing in Greek, we need to do the best we can with the language we have.

You may want to write this on the board and talk through the relationships between the different facets of love. Remember, we are just laying the foundation here and will be digging much more deeply into each topic in the weeks ahead.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13

Love is . . .

- patient (Greek: *makrothumeo*; from *makros* [long], *thumos* [anger])
- kind (Greek: *chresteuomai*)

Love does . . .

- rejoice (Greek: *chairō*) with the truth
- bear (Greek: *stego*)
- believe (Greek: *pisteuo*)
- hope (Greek: *elpizo*)
- endure (Greek: *hupomeno*; from *hupo* [under], *meno* [abide or remain])

Love isn't . . .

- jealous (Greek: *zeloo*)
- arrogant (Greek: *phusioo*)
- provoked (Greek: *paroxuno*; from *para* [at point of], *oxuno* [to sharpen])

Love doesn't . . .

- brag (Greek: *perpereuomai*)
- act unbecomingly (Greek: *aschemoneo*)
- seek (Greek: *zeteo*) its own
- take into account (Greek: *logizomai*) a wrong
- rejoice (Greek: *chairō*) in unrighteousness
- fail (Greek: *pipto*)

Sample Discussion Questions:

What relationships do you see between the different characteristics of love?

What are some other ways you can group them to remember them?

Which do you think will require the most attention in your life?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What has been your biggest takeaway this week?

How will you live it out?

Week Three

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 #Nothing

Class-at-a-Glance

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 5 min. | Review <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 Timothy 3:16-17 |
| Segment 2: | 10 min. | Overview: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 |
| Segment 3: | 30 min. | Spiritual Gifts Cross-References <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Romans 12• Ephesians 4• 1 Peter 4 |
| Segment 4: | 15 min. | Without Hypocrisy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Corinthians 13:1-3• Matthew 6:1-8 |

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Be sure to remind your students that 2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches us that God's Word is both authoritative and entirely sufficient to equip believers. People may appreciate God through nature, they may enjoy sitting quietly in solitude, but these practices will never equip them for battle. Best-selling, feel-good, emotional devotionals will not turn you into special forces, but God equipping you through His Word and His Spirit will.

When the Word of God is in you, then you can quietly ponder and meditate—no matter where you are, no matter what you're doing. If it's not there, it's not getting in by osmosis. Paul tells Timothy earlier in the same letter that he should study: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What risks do we run if we don't correctly observe the text? (Misinterpretation and misapplication)

What risk do we run if we don't apply personally?

What was your biggest takeaway from 2 Timothy 3:16-17?

Why does it matter that God's Word is both authoritative and sufficient?

SEGMENT #2: Overview of 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- Key Talk Points:**
- Spiritual gifts are important.
 - Love is even more important.

Context/Comments:

Paul uses five “if” statements which are each associated with an outcome when love is absent:

| If I Have/Do This | But Don't Have Love |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| I speak with the tongues of men and of angels | I have become a noisy gong or clanging cymbal |
| I have the gift of prophecy, know all mysteries and all knowledge | I am nothing |
| I have all faith so as to remove mountains | I am nothing |
| I give all my possession to feed the poor | It profits me nothing |
| I surrender my body to be burned | It profits me nothing |

Each of the “If” statements is paired with a statement about a spiritual gift which we would assume to be positive in nature. After all, how could something as stunning as mountain-moving faith or surrendering a body to be burned (as a fireman might do) not be positive? Paul, though, says both when lacking love make a person nothing. To say the contrast is startling is understatement. In a world of shades, Paul goes black and white to exclaim the importance of love even above the operation of the spiritual gifts that he has already shown himself so passionate about!

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do you think our church culture does at operating spiritual gifts in love?

What is going well? What changes do we need to make?

SEGMENT #3: Spiritual Gifts – Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4**Key Talk Points:** • Serve one another.

- Love one another.

Context/Comments:

The New Testament features four passages that address spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-13, Ephesians 4:7-16, and 1 Peter 4:7-11. The first three were written by Paul, the final one by Peter.

Romans 12

Paul's descriptions of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 is similar to 1 Corinthians 12 but much more abbreviated. In each of Paul's references to spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians), he uses the human body to exemplify how the different gifts work together to benefit the whole. When a member abdicates his proper place—thinking either too highly or too lowly of himself—the whole body suffers.

In Romans 12, Paul specifically mentions the following gifts:

- prophecy (v. 6) . . . according to the proportion of faith
- service (v. 7)
- teaching (v. 7)
- exhortation (v. 8)
- giving (v. 8) . . . with liberality
- leadership (v. 8) . . . with diligence
- mercy (v. 8) . . . with cheerfulness

To all these, Paul adds “Let love [Greek: *agape*] be without hypocrisy” (v. 9). In other words, love should be genuine and not simply a show. Shortly thereafter he exhorts the believers to “Be devoted [Greek: *philostorgos*] to one another in brotherly love [Greek: *philadelphia*]” (v. 10). As part of Christ's body, they are family and are to behave as family should.

As is Paul's way, he doesn't stop at “mildly comfortable”; instead he pushes God's ethical imperatives beyond the scope of Christian brothers and sisters to the world at large calling believers not to pay back evil (v. 17) and not to take revenge (v. 19), rather leaving vengeance to the Lord.

Ephesians 4

In Ephesians 4:11, Paul focuses on the equipping gifts that God gives to the Church to build up the body. As we've seen in the other passages, the gifts are typically given to individuals. Here, however, the sense is more that specific gifted individuals have been given to the church to build her up. These “equippers” are the:

- apostles
- prophets
- evangelists

- pastors
- teachers

Key to the Ephesians passage is the concept of growing up, specifically the body growing up and being built up together in love. Help your class identify and list the phrases related to growth or maturity:

- “to the building up [Greek: *oikodome*] of the body of Christ” (v. 12)
- “to the mature [Greek: *teleios*] man” (v. 13)
- “to the measure of the stature [Greek: *helikia*] which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (v. 13)
- “no longer children [Greek: *nepios*]” (v. 14)
- “to grow up [Greek: *auxano*]” (v. 15)
- “the growth [Greek: *auxesis*] of the body” (v. 16)
- “the building up [Greek: *oikodome*] of itself in love” (v. 16)

Paul employs a more stark contrast than that between adults and children when he compares the mature (Greek: *teleois*, mature, perfect, complete) man (Greek: *aner*, adult male or husband) to an infant (Greek: *nepios*). *Nepios* is a compound word which means one who can't speak (Greek: *ne* [not] and *epos* [word]).

Young children and infants are far more vulnerable than those who are mature and equipped as adults in Christ are to be (2 Timothy 3:16).

According to verse 13, Paul says maturity shows itself in “unity of the faith” and “knowledge of the Son of God.” When the storms blow—and they will!—the mature will be stable, but infants will be in danger of being:

- tossed . . . by waves (v. 14)
- carried about by
 - every wind of doctrine (v. 14)
 - by the trickery of men (v. 14)
 - by craftiness in deceitful scheming (v. 14)

Help your class see that growth is not just for spiritual superstars! Maturity in Christ is a corporate goal. The Church—**the we**—are to:

- attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God (v. 13)
- no longer be children (v. 14)
- grow up in all aspects (v. 15)

Love plays a key role again . . . believers are to speak the truth in love (v. 15) and the building of the body is “in love” (v. 16).

1 Peter 4

Peter also stresses the importance of love in the body of Christ and in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

Because the “end of all things is near” (v. 7) Peter calls believers to two key actions: be of sound judgment and be of sober spirit. Even more important, though, is to “keep fervent” in love for each other. The word translated “fervent” (Greek: *ektenes*) shows persistence and the verb form is often translated “stretched out.” Help your

students think through the implications of “stretched out” *agape* that is willing to overlook slights and thus “cover a multitude of sins.” I believe that as we continue to unpack 1 Corinthians 13, particularly 1 Corinthians 13:5, we’ll see the heart behind Peter’s phrase that “love covers a multitude of sins.”

The “one another”s clearly refer to brothers and sisters in Christ. For these we are to:

- keep fervent in love (v. 8)
- be hospitable without complaint (v. 9)
- employ our spiritual gifts in service (v. 10)

Sample Discussion Questions:

Romans 12

How can following God’s clear instructions regarding enemies help free our hearts to live in love?

Is this hard for you? Why/why not?

Ephesians 4

How important is maturity and why?

How can we help one another grow up?

1 Peter 4

What “one another” actions do you think you most need to focus on? What part will love play in them?

SEGMENT #4: Without Hypocrisy – 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Matthew 6:1-8**Key Talk Points:** • God sees the heart.

- God produces authentic love in His people.

Context/Comments:

First Corinthians 13:1-3 describes a string of hypocritical behaviors: spiritual gifts are being exercised—tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and giving—but all in the absence of love. They are “right actions” from a surface perspective but they don’t please a God who looks on the heart. In this section we’ll compare these “right actions” with the “right actions” Jesus condemns in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6).

There Jesus calls out “righteous” actions performed in the name of God but for the sake of men. He warns: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6:18). These actions include:

- giving to the poor to the sound of trumpets (vv. 2-4)
- praying in the synagogues and on street corners (vv. 5-6)

Later in the passage Jesus addresses fasting in the same manner (vv. 16-18). In each case—giving, praying, and fasting—the people behave hypocritically: while outwardly appearing to obey God, their intention is to garner favor with the people. Jesus says that those who truly seek God’s favor do these things but they do them *secretly*. They are God-pleasers, not man-pleasers.

Jesus clearly teaches that each behavior comes with only one reward—the praise of man in this life or the praise and reward of God in the next.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Are you aware of hypocrisy in your life? If so, how and when do you typically notice it?

Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? How are you doing at operating them in love?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is truth you’re learning changing the way you think and act?

Week Four

Love Is . . .

Class-at-a-Glance

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 5 min. | Review |
| Segment 2: | 15 min. | 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Patient – 1 Corinthians 13:4; OT References • Exodus 34:1-7 • Jonah 3:10–4:11 |
| Segment 3: | 10 min. | Patient – 1 Corinthians 13:4; NT References • 1 Peter 3:18-20 –Genesis 5:32 –Genesis 6:5-22 –Genesis 7:5-6 • 1 Timothy 1:15-16 • Acts 22:1-21 |
| Segment 4: | 10 min. | Kind – 1 Corinthians 13:4 • Romans 2:1-4 • Titus 3:3-7 |
| | | |

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is the most important thing you've learned or been reminded of up to this point?

From memory, what is and isn't love?

From memory, what does/doesn't love do?

Can anyone recite 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 from memory?

SEGMENT #2: Patient – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Exodus 34:1-7

Key Talk Point: • God's love has always been patient (Greek: *makrothumeo*).

Context/Comments:

As we unpack 1 Corinthians 13, we'll be seeking to interpret Scripture with Scripture. All too often it's tempting to let Daniel Webster or Spiros Zodhiates do the defining and interpreting for us. The way we've identified our Old Testament dig sites was by searching for the word in question—*makrothumeo*—in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, often referred to simply as the LXX.

Exodus 34:17

In Exodus 34 we find the Israelites camped at the base of Mt. Sinai. God calls Moses up the mountain where He passes by and then declares His name to him. We know that all Scripture is God-breathed and every word of God is tested and pure

(Proverbs 30:5) so no portion of Scripture is more true than another. Still, I think the clarity and specificity with which God describes Himself here is significant to note. When making a concise and self-defining statement one of the elements He includes is his “long anger” . . . we may fight a hair trigger, but our God is sloooow to anger: “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger (*mak-rothumeo*), and abounding in lovingkindness and truth . . .”

Jonah 3:10-4:11

Our slow-to-anger God had a quick-to-anger guy in the prophet Jonah.

Like Moses, Jonah knows God to be gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness. He also knows the implications. Because God is known to relent and comfort and show pity (v. 2), Jonah is not surprised (and certainly not pleased!) when He acts in compassion toward the repentant Ninevites.

While the reader might expect Jonah to reflect the God he serves, the uppity prophet instead serves as a study in contrasts.

While God compassionately relents concerning calamity, Jonah becomes “greatly displeased” and “angry” with God over His compassion. Not only this, he also uses God’s compassion to rationalize his disobedience. As the account progresses, Jonah claims he fled to Tarshish because God was going to let Nineveh off the hook anyway. Jonah’s anger doesn’t stop with God. He also becomes angry when a worm kills his shade plant and even defends his anger to God.

As annoying a character as Jonah is, help your class see that the most irritating thing is how much we resemble him at times.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How can considering God's example of long anger with people help us as we live in a broken and fallen world?

When do you find yourself inclined to “Jonah moments”? Is there any person or group you'd like God to clobber? How do you feel when He extends His long anger instead of His arm of judgment?

SEGMENT #3: Patient – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; NT References

Key Talk Point: • God's patience is tied in with His saving work.

Context/Comments:

As we examine *makrothumeo* in the New Testament, we'll be looking at the writings of Peter, Paul, and Luke.

1 Peter 3:18-20

As we examine the New Testament to see what we can learn about *makrothumeo*, we're going to find ourselves back in the Old Testament following the trail Peter sets us on in writing about God's patience in the days of Noah during the construction of the ark. Although God dealt with sins at the cross when Christ, the just, died for the unjust, He showed patience to Noah's unjust generation and saved Noah and his family from judgment.

Genesis 5:32, Genesis 6:5-22, Genesis 7:5-7

Noah did not run out to the local Wal-Mart to buy the ark. According to time phrases we can identify in the text, about 100 years pass from the time God declares that he will send judgment on the earth until the flood actually begins. Help your students see these time phrases for themselves.

Time Phrases:

- 5:32 "Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth."
 6:5 "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great . . ."
 6:10 "Noah became the father of three sons . . ."
 6:13 "Then God said to Noah, " . . . I am about to destroy . . . !"
 7:6 "Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth."

Between creation and the destruction of the earth by flood, the effects of the fall took a devastating toll on God's world:

- wickedness, continual evil (6:5)
- corrupt, filled with violence (6:11)
- earth corrupt and all flesh had corrupted their way (6:12)

While God could have meted out immediate judgment, the wicked, corrupt, and violent had 100 years to see the error of their ways and repent. In his second letter, Peter refers to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness." I believe the people had a 100-year window to see what God was doing in and through the life of Noah and to repent.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What effects did God's patience have on his man Noah?

What life lessons in patience can we learn from Noah?

1 Timothy 1:15-16

Paul's own life showcases the patience of God who saved him when He chose to.

Again we see God's patience towards sinners mentioned alongside and in conjunction with His saving work in Jesus Christ. Before God chose to reveal His Son in Paul (see Galatians 1:16), Christ demonstrated His perfect patience to this zealous rebel who showed himself to be the foremost or chief (Greek: *protos*) of all sinners. What a change! Paul who thought himself righteous for hunting Christians now realizes that in blaspheming and persecuting he was showing himself to be the worst of sinners—yet not beyond God's merciful reach. What a God who would save even him!

Acts 22:1-21

In this passage, Luke records Paul's defense before his Jewish brethren, the highlights of which include:

- Jewish by birth (v. 3)
- educated according to the Law under Gamaliel (v. 3)
- zealous for God (v. 3)
- hunted and persecuted "the Way" (9:2: both men and women) to the death (v. 4-5)

Paul was not a typical sinner; he violently opposed the cross and the people of the cross and yet God showed patience even to him.

Help your students reason through the implications of God's patience to sinning chiefs like Paul and others we see today.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What did God's patience have to do with Paul's salvation? What did it have to do with yours?

How can we apply this as we pray for and share the good news with others who don't know Jesus yet?

SEGMENT #4: KIND – Romans 2:1-4

- Key Talk Points:**
- God's kindness leads to repentance.
 - God saves according to His mercy.

Context/Comments

Both the Romans and Titus passages highlight God's kindness and saving disposition toward those who are yet sinners.

Romans 2:1-4

Romans 2:1-4 refers to both God's patience and kindness and shows how they are at work in His saving purposes to bring people to repent, to change their minds: "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness [Greek: *chrestotes*] and tolerance and patience [Greek: *makrothumia*], not knowing that the kindness [*chrestotes*] of God leads you to repentance?"

We observe in these verses that God is:

- just
- kind
- tolerant
- patient

Still, while God is kind (Greek: *chrestotes*), tolerant (Greek: *anochē*), and patient (Greek: *makrothumia*), his kindness does not allow the guilty to escape judgment but rather is intended to lead sinners to repentance. Repentance (Greek: *metanoia*) means to change one's mind. When the mind is changed, a behavioral change follows. Take some time to reason through this with your class. If God's uses kindness to lead sinful people to repentance, how should His children behave? Shouldn't they behave like He does? Discuss how they can use this truth when talking to their non-Christian friends and acquaintances.

Sample Discussion Questions:

If God uses kindness to lead sinners to repentance, why do you think we so often default to other methods?

Has kindness ever led you to repentance in relationships with other people?

Titus 3:3-7

According to Titus 3:3, before God saved us, we were:

- foolish
- disobedient
- deceived
- enslaved to lusts and pleasures
- malicious
- envious
- hateful

God rescued us from the evil mosaic that was our life through His saving kindness toward us in Christ. God's kindness sent Jesus to the cross on our behalf. God's kindness leads to repentance and is tied tightly with His saving work.

Discuss with your class how true Christian kindness acts. Does it simply keep the peace and send Christmas cards or does it graciously and gently lead people to the foot of the cross?

The word for love that appears in v. 4 is not *agape* but *philanthropia* (lover of mankind), from which we get the English word philanthropic.

Make sure that your class notes the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit. God doesn't not simply clean the slate and leave us in a broken condition. No! He saves us "by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). We are reborn (John 3:3), we are made into new creatures in Christ—the old has passed, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Sample Discussion Questions:

How can remembering your pre-Christ life help you extend kindness to those who don't know Jesus yet?

According to this passage, why can we now live in a way that pleases God?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How are these truths changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Five

Love Isn't . . .

Class-at-a-Glance

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 5 min. | Review |
| Segment 2: | 10 min. | Isn't Jealous – 1 Corinthians 13:4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis 37 • James 3:13–4:3 |
| Segment 3: | 30 min. | Isn't Arrogant – 1 Corinthians 13:4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Corinthians 4:6-7 • 1 Corinthians 4:18-21 • 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 • 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 |
| Segment 4: | 15 min. | Isn't Provoked – 1 Corinthians 13:5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 15:36-41 |

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study and why is each important?

What is the most important thing you've learned or been reminded of up to this point?

Has your thinking changed at all in our study so far? If so, how?

Does anyone want to recite what they've memorized?

SEGMENT #2: Isn't Jealous – 1 Corinthians 13:4

- Key Talk Points:**
- The life of Joseph gives an in-depth look at the results of jealousy.
 - James says jealousy and selfish ambition are demonic in origin.

Context/Comments:

As you lead your students through this section, remind them that the Greek verb *zeloo* is a neutral action that takes its meaning from context. When used positively, it is often translated "zeal." Here we see it taking on the negative sense of "jealous."

According to 1 Corinthians 13:4, "is not jealous" keeps company with the attitude "is not arrogant" and the action "does not brag." In each of these we see a theme of humility and contentment. Love doesn't need what someone else has and isn't mouthy about what it does have. Your students did a case study in jealousy this week when they looked at the life of Joseph.

Genesis 37

In Acts 7:9-10, while speaking to the Jewish leaders, Stephen calls out the jealousy of the patriarchs toward Joseph: "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household."

By looking at Genesis your students were able to see more of the account. Ask them what they identified about Joseph in Genesis 37.

Joseph was:

- seventeen years old (v. 2)
- a shepherd with his brothers (v. 2)
- a tattletale
 - brought a bad report about his brothers to his father (v. 2)
- loved by his father more than his brothers were (v. 3)
- the son of his father's old age (v. 3)
- noticeably favored/loved more than his brothers by his father (vv. 3-4)
 - given a varicolored tunic his father made for him (v. 3)
- hated by his brothers (v. 4)
- a dreamer (vv. 5, 19)
- a talker (vv. 5, 9)
 - told his dreams to his brothers (vv. 5, 9)

As you talk with your students about Joseph, help them see that it's not surprising that the brothers responded to their situation with jealousy. Many of us, given the same circumstances, would do the same. Our sin nature rears up in self-righteous indignation at slights of this kind and it's easy looking back on the account to see situations where various parties went wrong. (I, for one, would like to have a word with Jacob about his parenting and I'd like to have a word with Joseph about his mouth!) Nonetheless, the jealousy—provoked or not—is on the brothers, just like our jealousy—provoked or not—is on us.

It's clear that Jacob and Joseph shared a special bond. Joseph was not only the son of Jacob's old age, he was also the son of his most loved wife, Rachel. Jacob overtly favored the young man. He made the special coat for Joseph alone. He listened when Joseph brought back bad reports on his brothers. He kept the dreams in mind.

Jacob knew what it was to be favored and to be "the other son." In his own dysfunctional family of origin he was the favored son of his mother while his brother, Esau, was the favored son of his dad. Jacob also knew what it was to be hated by his brother although he did a bit more to bring it on himself than Joseph had.

Joseph's brothers couldn't stand him. Help your students see from the list they made the contributing factors in the brothers' disdain of Joseph. You may also want to help them compile a short list in class about his brothers' feelings.

The brothers:

- saw that Jacob loved Joseph more (v. 4)
- hated Joseph (v. 4)
- could not speak to Joseph on friendly terms (v. 4)
- hated Joseph even more for his dreams (v. 5)
- were jealous of him (v. 11)
- plotted to put Joseph to death (v. 18)
- stripped Joseph of his tunic (v. 23)
- threw Joseph in a pit (v. 24)
- sold Joseph for twenty shekels of silver (v. 28)
- faked Joseph's death, devised a cover-up, and lied to their father (vv. 31-32)

It's amazing to see where the brothers' jealousy leads them. It doesn't just stay bottled up inside. It hates, plots, sells, lies, and more! It ends up further alienating the brothers from their father, drives the father into deep sorrow, and lands Jacob in Egyptian slavery. Eventually, the brothers realize how wrong their actions have been. When the disguised Joseph accuses them of being spies in Genesis 42, they think the turn of events is because of their guilt concerning him:

- 21 *Then they said to one another, "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us."*
- 22 *Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood."*
- 23 *They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them.*

The brothers may have hidden the act, but the guilt remained.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Do you think your behavior can be a contributing factor to another person's sin?

Are there ways we can help keep others from the sin of jealousy?

James 3:13–4:3

Bitter (Greek: *pikros*) jealousy (Greek: *zelos*) and selfish ambition (Greek: *eritheia*) are the "mean kids" of James 3:14. They are best friends that hang around together and feed off each other. Often they parade as "good things." Remember, *zelos* is a

neutral attitude that can be used both of good zeal and bitter jealousy. Jealous status climbers typically don't see themselves for what they are. But James says those who say they are wise and understanding but act with jealousy and selfish ambition arrogantly lie against truth itself. You can't have wisdom and understanding and behave that way. True wisdom, wisdom that comes from God, isn't jealous, just as love isn't jealous.

The "wisdom" that jealousy and selfish ambition have is not true wisdom at all. It is a counterfeit that is "earthly, natural, demonic" (v. 15).

James says that when we are envious (Greek: *zeloo*) and can't get what we want, we fight (Greek: *machomai*) and quarrel (Greek: *polemeo*). Both Greek roots are battle words (*machaira* is a sword [Revelation 6:4] and *polemos* is war [Revelation 12:7]). Likely both you and your class have run into these modern warriors who are quick on the draw when they perceive that they aren't getting their due. Maybe you've seen this person in the mirror. I do from time to time.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Have you ever known someone predisposed to personal wars?

How can we identify jealousy in our lives when it often causes us to lie against the truth?

SEGMENT #3: Isn't Arrogant – 1 Corinthians 13:4

Key Talk Point: • When you move away from the Word, you move toward arrogance in one form or another.

Context/Comments:

Arrogance, bragging, and jealousy run in the same pack. Arrogance—puffing up—is often at the root of bragging. Those who aren't jealous, have no "need" to make themselves bigger.

1 Corinthians 4:6-7

Paul tells the Corinthians they should follow his example and "learn not to exceed what is written"—in other words, don't go beyond what Scripture clearly says. Don't get caught up in the teachings of men which ultimately pits people against one another. Stick to the Word of God and in doing so you will not puff up yourselves (if you're teaching) or be puffed up regarding a teacher you like. The practicality of this for today's world is staggering considering the fact that we have a Church overflowing with "Celebrity Christians!" When teachers in particular simply speak out the God-breathed Word and point to it instead of to themselves, pointedly to "personal

revelations,” the bloat of arrogance dissipates.

Paul pushes his point home with three questions directed to the individual (2nd person singular), each of which expects a negative answer:

- *Who regards you as superior?*
- *What do you have that you didn't receive?*
- *Why do you boast about something that you received?*

Help your students reason through the practical implications of going beyond Scripture to other alleged sources of revelation. As Paul says, arrogance is one outcome. What are others and how will they affect life in the body?

1 Corinthians 4:18-21

Some of the Corinthians were behaving arrogantly, like teenagers home alone who forget that Mom and Dad are coming back. They seemed to think that Paul wasn't actually going to show up. They talked big, but Paul says that God's kingdom is power, not big words. “Big hat, no cattle” only fools people for so long.

The relationship between arrogance and words is undeniable. Makes me wonder how much arrogant behavior could be arrested simply by keeping our mouths shut. I know I can act arrogantly without my mouth . . . it's just much harder!

1 Corinthians 5:1-2

The arrogance in these verses doesn't involve shooting off the mouth. This arrogance tolerates sin as though it were no big deal, as though there were no longer a holy God seated on heaven's throne. Paul calls out the Corinthians for gross immorality “of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles” (v. 1)—incest between a man and his step-mother. Because the church has not mourned the sin and removed the offender from fellowship, they also bear guilt. Ignoring the sin shows that they are arrogant.

This arrogance perhaps bears more relevance today than any other example. Help your students reason through the implications of the Church no longer mourning sin.

What are we watching on television and in theaters that we should be mourning about?

What are we ignoring in our homes and churches that we should be removing?

A key issue here that you'll want to address is whether or not an offender claims the name of Christ. Remember, God's kindness leads us to repentance and those who are in His family should bear a family resemblance.

Love will not simply let people merrily walk the broad road to hell.

We can't expect society to follow Christian norms, but we also cannot let society redefine biblical truth.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3

While we're interested in the use of "arrogant" in these verses, the key word in the section is "knowledge." Your students should have identified the following facts and phrases:

- "we know [Greek: *oida*] that we all have knowledge [Greek: *gnosis*]" (v. 1)
- "[The] Knowledge [Greek: *gnosis* but articulated, literally "the knowledge"] makes arrogant, but love edifies" (v. 1)

–Because "the knowledge" has already been qualified as knowledge "concerning things sacrificed to idols," Paul's point is that those who act simply based on knowledge of what is doctrinally right (in this case, eating food sacrificed to idols because idols are not really gods) are not acting in love (taking into account that others don't understand this and may be hurt and confused by their actions).

- "anyone who supposes [Greek: *dokeo*] that he knows [Greek: *ginosko*] anything . . . has not yet known [Greek: *ginosko*] as he ought to know [Greek: *ginosko*]"

–If you think you're super knowledgable, you don't know as much as you think you know. The most significant thing I learned in college was how much I *didn't* know. At 20, I thought I could solve the problems of the Church and the world, and bring a World Series title to the north side of Chicago. Now I realize that in the grand scheme, I know next to nothing.

- those who love God are "known [Greek: *ginosko*] by Him" (v. 3)

–The knowledge that is crucial is to be known by God.

When knowledge acts apart from love it's asking for trouble. Truth and love together, though, are a recipe for growth as Paul says in Ephesians 4:15: "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ."

Sample Discussion Questions:

How have you seen knowledge and love working together? Have you seen them try to "work apart" from one another? How did that go?

Based on what you've studied, how would you explain the biblical definition of arrogance?

SEGMENT #4: Isn't Provoked – 1 Corinthians 13:5

- Key Talk Points:**
- Not allowing yourself to be provoked becomes tougher as the days get darker.
 - Love doesn't remain in provoking situations.

Context/Comments:

Love "is not provoked" sits in a verse with other phrases ("does not act unbecomingly," "does not seek its own," "does not take into account a wrong suffered") that suggest proper behavior that neither takes affronts too personally nor thinks of itself too highly.

Of all the descriptions of love, this one is extremely challenging in a world that is marked by a general combativeness. Consider road rage. Driver A makes an aggressive move in traffic which is like a sharp stick in the eye to Driver B who is simply driving along minding his own business until (he thinks to himself!) "THAT IDIOT CUT ME OFF!"

Intentionally or unintentionally Driver A has entered Driver B's world. (Remember, Driver A may be a student driver who doesn't know better yet! The provocation may be *entirely* unintentional.) Driver B has a choice: rage at the action or respond in love. Love does not rationalize retaliation with "HE MADE ME DO IT!" Help your students see that love does not blindly react to negative stimuli. Love can choose not to be provoked.

Recalling that love is patient ("long-angered") and kind and also how God's patience and kindness have been shown in Christ should help us when we want to "give like we've gotten"!

Paul uses the present tense of the verb provoked (Greek: *paroxuno*) in this verse. The present tense is used for continuing action. In other words, love is not continually provoked. I think this indicates that when love is first poked with the sharp stick of provocation, it steps back; it doesn't move aggressively and angrily toward the agitating person or situation. Although this is certainly easier said than done, lead your class in reasoning through how we can put this truth into action.

Acts 15:36-41

Ministry partners and traveling companions in the mission to the Gentiles, Paul and Barnabas disagreed so sharply over an HR decision that they parted ways. The Greek word the NASB translates "sharp disagreement" (*paroxusmos*) in Acts 15:39 is the noun form of the verb translated "provoked" in 1 Corinthians 13:5. Barnabas wanted to take another chance on John (also called Mark) and Paul wasn't having it. John, who was also a relative of Barnabas, had been with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13) but had left to go back home according to Acts 13:13.

They had left from their home base of Pisidian Antioch and traveled to the port city of Seleucia in order to hop a ship to the island of Cyprus. While on Cyprus, they visited the cities of Salamis and Paphos before continuing on and sailing from the island to Perga. When Paul and Barnabas headed for Perga, John headed back to Jerusalem.

Here's how Luke puts it in Acts 13:13: "Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left [Greek: *apochoreo*] them and returned [Greek: *hypostrepho*] to Jerusalem." It's easy to read past this without a second thought. People "return" all the time in our context. When we get to Acts 15:38, though, we see that Paul views *this* return more seriously. To his thinking John had deserted (Greek: *aphistem*) and left the work of ministry.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that love is not provoked (present, passive verb). Help your class think through the possible implications of a present tense verb in this situation. Since being provoked involves a "provoker," for most people this will mean learning how to take a step back and away from the sharp stick. Some people, like Cub fans, are 90% scar tissue and will not feel a provoker's jabs, but most will need to learn how to back away from the provocation, if not physically at least emotionally and mentally.

As for Paul and Barnabas, they went in different directions rather than stay in the situation that was provoking both of them. The verb "occurred" in Acts 15:39 is an aorist, middle. The event happened, but they didn't sit in it and let it grow. I believe they did right in separating. After all, who was "right" in the situation? I think both were right because their spiritual gifting differed. Paul's apostolic gifting needed reliable companions who could stay with him on tough church-planting missions. Barnabas's gifting was exhortation and John needed an exhorter in his life to help him grow, even if it couldn't be on Paul's watch. Would it have been nice if they had reconciled immediately and went on the second missionary journey together? Perhaps. Instead, though, they would not let themselves live in a provoking state and so they travelled different directions to bring the Gospel to even more people. It was a win/win!

Sample Discussion Questions:

How can we back away from the sharp stick of provocation?

What tends to provoke you the most? What tools can you use to prevent this?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Six

Love Doesn't . . .

Class-at-a-Glance

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 10 min. | Review |
| Segment 2: | 10 min. | Doesn't Brag – 1 Corinthians 13:4 • 1 Corinthians 1:17 • 1 Corinthians 2:1 |
| Segment 3: | 10 min. | Doesn't Act Unbecomingly – 1 Corinthians 13:5 • 1 Corinthians 7:36-38 • Romans 1:22-27 |
| Segment 4: | 10 min. | Doesn't Seek Its Own – 1 Corinthians 13:5 • Luke 17:26-35 • Matthew 16:24-26 |
| Segment 5: | 10 min. | Doesn't Account a Wrong Suffered – 1 Corinthians 13:5 • Romans 4 • 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 |
| Segment 6: | 10 min. | Doesn't Rejoice with Unrighteousness – 1 Corinthians 13:6 • Romans 1:18 • 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 • 2 Timothy 2:19 |

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review**

Encouraging people to memorize is tricky business. It's helpful to have them recite what they've learned, but it's important to do so under circumstances where they feel safe. Why? Because you want them to be encouraged to keep trying, even if they "fail." As a teacher I will invite people to try to recite but never single anyone out. If your class thinks you'll never ask them to recite what they've memorized, often they won't drill as hard and as long as is necessary to learn. So cheerlead, cheerlead, cheerlead!

Review Questions:

*What is the biggest takeaway **Application** you have had thus far regarding what **love is**?*

*What is the biggest takeaway **Application** you have had thus far regarding what **love is not**?*

Does anyone want to recite what they've memorized so far?

SEGMENT #2: 1 Corinthians 13:4–Doesn't Brag

Key Talk Points: • 1 Corinthians 1:17; 1 Corinthians 2:1

- Bragging is arrogance that comes out the mouth.

Context/Comments:

Paul references verbal arrogance in a number of phrases including "cleverness of speech" (1 Corinthians 1:17) and "superiority of speech" (1 Corinthians 2:1). Paul's calling was to preach the unadulterated Gospel, the cross of Christ, the testimony of God. To use clever (Greek: *sophia*) or wise speech by man's standards would have made the cross empty. Ask your students for some examples of "clever speech" today and how they think it detracts from the cross.

The power of Paul's message was not skilled argument or powerful personality. The power was *and is* the message of the cross. He says this clearly in Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." The Gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection—is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

Loving
like Jesus

In a World that Hurts and Hates

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do people use clever speech in the Church today?

How can knowing that the Gospel is “the power of God for salvation” give you more confidence in sharing your faith and reaching out in true 1 Corinthians 13 love?

SEGMENT #3: 1 Corinthians 13:5–Doesn't Act Unbecomingly

- Key Talk Points:**
- Unbecoming behavior is indecent, disgraceful, dishonorable.
 - Paul appears to use it both with regard to certain types of heterosexual and homosexual behaviors.

Context/Comments:

Acting unbecomingly (Greek: *aschemoneo*) covers miles of ground. As we look at two examples of unbecoming behavior, help your class see that Paul seems to be using it in 1 Corinthians 7 to refer to inappropriate heterosexual behavior and in Romans 1 to homosexual behavior which he also deems *aschemoneo*.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38

In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul writes a wide range of questions about marriage. In verse 36 he addresses a specific situation of a man (Greek: *tis*, pronoun for anyone; indefinite, nominative, singular masculine) thinking that “he is acting unbecomingly” toward his *parthenos* (noun, accusative, singular, feminine). Two questions are raised: *Who is the male (the “anyone”)* and *Who is the female (the parthenos)*? That *parthenos* literally means “virgin” or “maiden” doesn't solve the interpretive dilemma since we don't know from the text who the man is (see FYI page 89). Is he the virgin's father who needs to let her marry or is he the fiancé who needs to marry rather than burn with passion?

Given the context of 1 Corinthians 7 (specifically vv. 5-9) I believe it is the fiancé who is not to act unbecomingly by burning with passion. The solution? Don't burn; get married! As simple as this sounds, such counsel is wildly counter-cultural today in a hold-commitment-at-bay society. My son and new daughter-in-law were married a month after college graduation, both 22 years old in a state (Illinois) where the average man marries at 29 and the average woman at 27.

With the ever-quickenning moral decline in the western world, it's easy to overlook common-place “unbecoming” in the face of more radical degradation. We habituate. What once repulsed us we now casually look past. What once was relegated to shady theaters we invite into our living rooms. God doesn't habituate. Sin doesn't

become less sinful because we turn a blind eye. In Paul's day and in ours, true love does not act unbecomingly.

Romans 1:22-27

If you've ever wondered why people behave the way they do, read Romans 1. Not unlike today, the people described in Romans 1 say they are wise but show themselves foolish. Because they exchange (Greek: *metallasso*) truth for a lie God gives them over (Greek: *paradidomi*) to the lie they desire and to "a depraved [Greek: *adokimos*] mind [Greek: *nous*]" (v. 28) so they can no longer differentiate lie from truth.

They make terrible decisions:

| EXCHANGING THESE | FOR THESE |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| God's incorruptible glory (v. 23) | a corruptible image in the form of creatures (v. 23) |
| God's truth (v. 25) | a lie (v. 25) |
| the natural function (v. 26-27) | the unnatural, indecent acts (v. 26-27) |

Their decisions result in terrible outcomes and judgment as God gives them over to:

- impurity (v. 24)
- degrading passions (v. 26)
- a depraved mind (v. 28)

Their depraved minds lead to correspondingly evil actions:

- dishonored bodies (v. 24)
- natural for the unnatural (vv. 25-27)
- things that aren't proper (vv. 28-29)

Again, the word that we are primarily interested in for this study is *aschomosune*, translated here "indecent acts." The indecent acts Paul is referring to in Romans 1 are homosexual—women with women, men with men. This is an enormous hot button today not only in our secular culture but in many churches. Help your students reason that if homosexual behavior is an example of *aschomosune* (unbecoming behavior) and if love does not act unbecomingly (*aschomoneo*), then so-called "love" among homosexuals is not biblical love. It may be emotionally and physically charged, but it's anti-truth, counterfeit, self-destructive hatred.

Use judgment with how far you take this discussion and whatever you do, speak the truth in biblical love. On a pastoral note here, I've found that the best connection I have to converse with those struggling with homosexuality is my fight against worry. If you have ever fought against worry, you know that it feels like it is literally a part of the fabric of your makeup. You simply cannot flip a switch to turn it off any more than you can think your hair a different color. Nonetheless, just as I've come to realize that my tendency toward worry doesn't make my sin of worry acceptable, the same is true of *any sin* mankind faces. Satan doesn't play fair. The Christian life is not a cake walk, but it is possible to walk in God's ways when He makes us new creatures in Christ and empowers us with His indwelling Holy Spirit!

Sample Discussion Questions:

How has "unbecoming" become mainstream?

How can you stand for true love in the face of counterfeit love?

SEGMENT #4: 1 Corinthians 13:5—Doesn't Seek Its Own

Key Talk Point: • Self-seeking behavior is antithetical to both discipleship and love.

Context/Comments:

Culture's persistent message to people is "Look out for number one!" Discuss with your class how that message is delivered daily in different aspects of life as you compare 1 Corinthians 13:5 with the texts from Luke and Matthew.

Luke 17:26-35

In Luke 17:26-35 Jesus talks to His disciples about His coming return saying it will be like previous times of judgment during Noah's day and during Lot's. In each case, people were going merrily along their wicked ways when judgment struck seemingly out of nowhere. Lot's wife sought to keep her former life and instead lost her life altogether. Jesus tells His disciples that "saving" one's own life is a recipe for disaster. Only losing life to Him will save it.

Matthew 16:24-26

In Matthew 16:24-26 Jesus explains to His disciples what coming after Him will cost. Those who follow Him will:

- deny themselves (v. 24)
- take up their own cross daily (v. 24)
- follow Jesus to death (v. 24)

Losing life results in finding it; saving life will lose it. You can't seek both simultaneously. Not surprisingly, self-seeking is counter not only to biblical love but also to the core of living as a disciple.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How does the desire to please self fight against discipleship and love?

How would you explain the relationship between discipleship and the ability to love in a 1 Corinthians 13 way?

SEGMENT #5: 1 Corinthians 13:5–Doesn't Account a Wrong Suffered

Key Talk Point: • God provides the greatest accounting example in Romans 4!

Context/Comments:

When Paul says that love “does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,” he uses the Greek verb *logizomai*, the same word that populates Romans 4 where God not only *doesn't account* our sins but also *actively credits righteousness* to our account instead!

Romans 4

As you talk through this section help your students see how love's behavior grows out of a renewed and selfless life. A person who isn't seeking his own won't easily be provoked and keep score when he is. Conversely, a self-seeker by definition highly focuses on the wrongs of others to advance his self-elevating agenda.

In Romans 4, Paul repeatedly uses the theologically weighty verb *logizomai*.

- God credited Abraham's belief as righteousness before Moses gave the Law (v. 3)
- Man credits wages based on work performed (v. 4)
- God credits the faith of those who believe in Him as righteousness (v. 5)
- God credited righteousness apart from works even in the time of David who lived under the Law (v. 6)
- God does not account sins He has covered and forgiven (vv. 7-8)
- God credited faith to Abraham as righteousness before he was circumcised (vv. 9-10)
- God credited Abraham's faith as righteousness for his sake and for our sake (vv. 23-24)
- God credits faith as righteousness to “those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (v. 24)

According to man's accounting, if you work you get paid. Simple. God's accounting is different. Righteousness is credited to your account on the basis of faith alone. Righteousness can't be bought by what you earn and what you have already actually earned is death. But this He doesn't take into account; He rather forgives and covers the sins of those who have believed.

Help your students reason through the life implications of *logizomai*. How should the radically forgiven behave toward others who need radical forgiveness? You may want to take time to read Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:21-35.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Help your class see from this text that instead of accounting wrongs God reconciled sinners to Himself. Although we're cross-referencing this text as we study *logizomai*, the key word in it is reconciled (Greek: *katallasso*). As you examine the text, help your students see how the two are related. Instead of keeping score, God reconciled people to Himself and sends His reconciled to be ambassadors! It may help to have your class list what they learned from the text about being reconciled.

Reconciled:

- God reconciled us to Himself through Christ (v. 18)
- God gave us the ministry of reconciliation (v. 18)
- God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (v. 19)
- God committed to us the word of reconciliation (v. 19)
- Christians are Christ's ambassadors bringing His appeal (Greek: *parakaleo*): "Be reconciled to God" (v. 20)
- Reconciliation involved God making Christ who was sinless "to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (v. 21)

God reconciled the world to Himself in Christ. Our job is to be ambassadors who announce His reconciliation message.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How will thinking we are the reconcilers potentially mess us up?

Where and how are you and can you be ambassadors?

SEGMENT #6: 1 Corinthians 13:5—Doesn't Rejoice with Unrighteousness

- Key Talk Point:**
- Romans 1:18, 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12, 2 Timothy 2:19
 - While we can and must show God's love to unrighteous people, love does not rejoice with unrighteousness.

Context/Comments:

As you look at the Romans, 2 Thessalonians, and 2 Timothy verses together, help your students see the contrasting traits the Bible asserts between unrighteousness/wickedness and the righteous.

Unrighteousness and wickedness:

- suppress truth (Romans 1:18)
- are marked by deception (2 Thessalonians 2:10)
- will not receive the love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10)
- are deluded (2 Thessalonians 2:11)
- believe what is false (2 Thessalonians 2:11)
- do not believe the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:12)
- take pleasure in wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:12)

By contrast, the righteous:

- rejoice with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6)
- receive the love of the truth and are saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10)
- believe the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:12)
- abstain from wickedness (2 Timothy 2:19)

The key repeating trait that separates the righteous and the unrighteous in these verses is their relationship with the truth. Love cannot rejoice with unrighteousness because unrighteousness wars against the truth: it suppresses it, will not receive it, and will not believe it.

The implications for life are profound. Discuss with your class what this means for interacting with those whose beliefs, values, thoughts, choices and actions are unrighteous. What is the only way they will ever be able to hear truth? It is through the work of the Holy Spirit. You can't argue people to righteousness or morality. You can be a witness, you can give testimony, but the battle is spiritual and the battle is the Lord's. Also remind them what James says about man's anger and God's righteousness: "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20).

Sample Discussion Questions:

How can these verses help us deal with our current immoral society?

If unrighteousness includes resistance to truth, how can Christians stand for truth and be heard?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Seven

Love Does . . .

Class-at-a-Glance

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 10 min. | Review |
| Segment 2: | 15 min. | Rejoices with the Truth – 1 Corinthians 13:6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke 15:1-10 • 1 Corinthians 12:24b-26 |
| Segment 3: | 15 min. | Digging Deeper – 1 John 4, The Other Love Chapter |
| Segment 4: | 20 min. | Love and All Things – 1 Corinthians 13:7 Believes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matthew 24:1-28 • Matthew 10:16-22 • Hebrews 11 Bears <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Corinthians 9:1-12 • 1 Peter 4:8 Hopes and Endures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romans 8:18-25 • Romans 5:1-11 |

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

How would you explain inductive Bible study?

How did you love well this week?

How has your thinking been challenged?

Would you like to recite what you've memorized so far?

SEGMENT #2: Rejoices with the Truth – 1 Corinthians 13:6

Key Talk Point: • Jesus' parables explain rejoicing.

Luke 15:1-10

Jesus tells the Pharisees and scribes two parables after they grumble about His association with tax collectors and sinners. In each he poses a question that assumes a positive response.

The Sheep:

In the first situation He asks who wouldn't go after a missing sheep after finding out only 99 of the 100 were accounted for. The good shepherd, He says, will go after the lost sheep and carry it back on his shoulders "rejoicing" (Greek: *chairo*) and call together his friends and neighbors to "rejoice with" (Greek: *sunchairo*) him.

The Coin:

Jesus retells the same story with a lost coin center stage. In this rendition, a woman loses one of her ten silver coins. She lights a lamp, sweeps and searches the house until she finds it. Like the shepherd she calls her friends and neighbors to "rejoice with" her when she finds it.

In both parables, Jesus draws a parallel with the joy in heaven over a sinner who repents. What a contrast with those who rejoice in unrighteousness! Love rejoices with the truth!

1 Corinthians 12:24b-26

Just a few verses prior to 1 Corinthians 13 Paul says the body should not have division; rather the members of the body should care (Greek: *merimnao*) for one another. It's interesting that the word translated "care" is the same word translated "worry" in Matthew 6. Believers are not to worry about what they will wear or eat or what tomorrow will bring. They are, however, to properly "care" for one another and be united so they suffer with (Greek: *sumpascho*) those who suffer and rejoice with (Greek: *sunchairo*) those who are honored.

As it were, the Corinthians were a dysfunctional bunch. When they should have mourned over gross sin in their midst and removed it, they did nothing. As a body we are responsible to one another. We cannot ignore sin and expect the body to be healthy. We certainly *cannot rejoice* over behavior that God calls sin even if the world calls it politically correct.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do we live well in an unrighteous world?

How can we love without rejoicing with unrighteousness? What challenges are there? What resources do we have?

SEGMENT #3: Digging Deeper – 1 John 4, The Other Love Chapter

Key Talk Point: • People who know God are people who love.

1 John 4:7-21

In what could aptly be called "the other love chapter," 1 John 4 spells out more on the topic of love. Take some time to review with your class the basics of what this chapter tells us about love and what they learned by marking *love*.

Love:

- John twice addresses his readers in this section as "Beloved" (vv. 7, 11)
- We are to love one another (v. 7)
- Love is from God (v. 7)
- Everyone who loves is born of God (v. 7)
- God is love (v. 8)
- God's love was made manifest among us (ESV) in sending His Son (v. 9)
- God loved us and sent His Son (v. 10)
- Because God loved us, we are to love one another (v. 11)
- If we love one another, God abides in us (v. 12)

- If we love one another, God's love is perfected in us (v. 12)
- Love is perfected with us (when God abides in us) (v. 17)
- Perfect love casts out fear (v. 18)
- There is no fear in love (v. 18)
- God loved first (v. 19)
- We love because God first loved us (v. 19)
- It's impossible to love God and hate a brother (v. 20)
- Those who love God are commanded to love their brother also (v. 21)

God's love gives (God sent Jesus for us); God's love also empowers and transforms. Those who are loved are, in turn, to love others with a love (*agape*) that seeks God's best for the other person. Thus, we are to love because He loved us. Again, God empowers us because He abides in us.

Love is "perfected" or "completed" (Greek: *teleioo*) in us through abiding. When we abide in God and God abides in us, our love is perfected. Our love (*agape*) is God's work in us. This perfected love produces confidence (Greek: *parresia*) and casts out fear. Perfect love and fear cannot co-exist because fear involves punishment. A mature love will not fear that because Jesus has paid the price. The only reason we're able to love at all is because God first loved us!

Love involves speaking the truth but it also involves acting truthfully: graciously, mercifully, sacrificially. If you say you love the unseen God and don't love the brother in the room with you, you're lying about loving God. It's simple, at times frustratingly simple.

Sample Discussion Question:

How do you think 1 John 4 supports and compliments 1 Corinthians 13?

SEGMENT #4: Love and All Things – 1 Corinthians 13:7

Key Talk Point: • Context rules in interpretation.

Context/Comments:

Before you begin discussing the "all things" section, make sure you review the following interpretive principles with your class:

- Context rules in matters of interpretation.
- Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture.
- Scripture will never contradict Scripture.
- Clear teaching helps us understand unclear teaching.
- Interpret Scripture literally, taking into account literary genres.
- Look for a single meaning.

Remind them that as we look at some of our cross-references we'll be seeing some things that the text *can't* mean, essentially ruling out some misinterpretations quite quickly.

BELIEVES ALL

Matthew 24:1-28

Jesus responds to His disciples' questions about the sign of His coming and the end of the age. As He does He gives them repeated warnings against believing wrong things or people beginning in verse 4:

- "See to it that no one misleads you" (v. 4)
- "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many" (v. 11)
- "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There *He is,*' do not believe *him*" (v. 23)
- "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them" (v. 26)

Prior to Jesus' return, deception and lawlessness will be on the rise, according to verses 11 and 12. With increased lawlessness, Jesus says "most people's love will grow cold." Discuss with your class how lawlessness can cause love to grow cold and reason with them how we can guard against this.

In verses 23-26 Jesus specifically says *not to* believe certain things including false Christs, false prophets, and signs and wonders designed to mislead even the elect. Clearly, 1 Corinthians 13:7 cannot mean Christians are to blindly believe everything they hear. Jesus makes this abundantly clear.

Matthew 10:16-22

In one of my favorite passages of Scripture, Jesus sends His sheep out among the world's wolves and tells them to be "shrewd [Greek: *phronimos*] as serpents and innocent as doves" (v. 16). Let's be honest, it's not a good bet. If I weren't raised a non-gambling Baptist, my money would be on wolves over sheep . . . every time! Sheep among wolves can't afford to be stupid or naive! Innocent, yes, but they must be savvy-shrewd like serpents. They need to know that they're being hunted by cunning *predators!* They are *the "prey"* in the equation. And they have to beware, pay attention, lean in and not go wandering around in grass-nibbling oblivion.

The specific wolves Jesus warns about will scourge them in their places of worship, the synagogues. They will bring them in front of the high rulers of the land who will turn them over to hostile courts because of their testimony about Jesus. Worse still, wolves in the biological family will betray and put to death their own brothers, children, and parents. The wolves hate the sheep because the sheep belong to Jesus.

Even in the midst of the persecution, Jesus will provide. He tells His disciples not to worry about what they will say because the Spirit will speak in them and the testimony of Jesus will be proclaimed to rulers and to the Gentiles.

We can believe "all things" that Jesus has told us about the world and about wolves . . . we can't believe everything the wolves of the world say.

Hebrews 11

In faithful verse after faithful verse, Hebrews 11 shows what biblical belief entails. Remind your students that “faith” (or “belief”: Greek, *pistis*) is the noun form of the verb “believe” (Greek: *pisteuo*). According to the preamble of Hebrews 11 (vv. 1-3) the people of God generally believed what they could not see; even Moses “endured, as seeing Him who is unseen” (v. 27).

Sample Discussion Question:

How would you explain “love believes all things” in light of the Matthew passages and Hebrews 11?

How can you be “shrewd as a serpent” while still walking in love?

BEARS ALL**1 Corinthians 9:1-12**

Remind your class that the Greek word translated “bears” in 1 Corinthians 13:7 is *stego* which also means “to cover.” In 1 Corinthians 9:12 the NASB translates it as “endures.” Although Paul and Barnabas could have claimed “rights” based on their service to the Corinthians, they did not. They did not stake claim to their rights to:

- eat and drink (v. 4)
- take along a believing wife (v. 5)
- refrain from working (v. 6)

Because of their work for the church, the church should have provided for Paul and Barnabas, but so that they would not hinder the gospel in any way, the two apostles chose to “endure all things.”

1 Peter 4:8

Peter uses a different word to convey a similar teaching when he says that “love covers [Greek: *kaleptei*] a multitude of sins.” Certainly Peter is not saying that Christians should turn a blind eye to sin. We’ve already seen Paul set the Corinthians straight on that one. Nonetheless, while gross sin must be grieved and dealt with, we’ve already seen in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that love doesn’t keep score. Likely that is Peter’s intent here. When fervent love doesn’t keep account of wrongs suffered, the little offenses of life can be forgiven without the threat of bitterness taking root.

Sample Discussion Question:

How did Paul and Peter bears all things?

How does bearing all things differ from condoning sin.

How are you at bearing with people instead of calling out every violation? How are you at bearing with people without holding onto grudges?

HOPES AND ENDURES ALL**Romans 8:18-25**

Hebrews 11:1 says that “**Faith** is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” In Romans 8:24 Paul writes that **hope** (Greek: *elpis*) by definition is unseen: “hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?” Instead of seeing, hope waits eagerly (Greek: *apekdechomai*) for what it fully knows from revelation will happen. Love believes all things that God says and hopes for everything He has revealed.

Because God is entirely trustworthy, the hopes He reveals (resurrection, eternal glory etc.) that we hope for, though invisible, are fully reliable. Every year I hope in the Chicago Cubs who I see, but my hope in God who is unseen is entirely reliable while my Cubs . . . well, maybe this is the year, and then again, maybe it is not. Romans 8 shows us how “love hopes all things” shows up in lives as people who have the first fruits of the Spirit live in eager anticipation of, as Romans 8:19 says, “the revealing of the sons of God.”

Romans 5:1-11

Hope and endurance travel together. Paul writes that “tribulation brings about perseverance [Greek: *hupomone*; or endurance]; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (v. 3-4).

This isn't a progression most of us would choose. Jesus told His disciples that they would have tribulation in this world (John 16:33), but rarely do people try to cut to the front of *that* line! Still, although preceded by tribulation, perseverance, and character proven in and by fire, so to speak, this worthwhile hope “does not disappoint [Greek: *kataischuno*; or shame, dishonor].” Why? It is a result of God's love poured out in the hearts of those who have His indwelling Holy Spirit. Love believes everything God says and therefore can also bear, hope, and endure all things through that love.

Romans 5:8 summarizes God's love and the Gospel so succinctly: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

God extended His love toward us while we were:

- helpless (v. 6)
- ungodly (v. 6)
- sinners (v. 8)
- enemies (v. 10)

Take this opportunity to remind your class of the wonder of the Gospel! We never know for sure where people's hearts are and even if you're in a room full of "reconcileds," it's good to be reminded of the Gospel of our salvation!

Sample Discussion Question:

How can remembering our condition when Christ died for us help us love those who hurt and hate?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Eight

Love Remains

Class-at-a-Glance

| <i>Segments</i> | <i>1 Hour Class</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segment 1: | 5 min. | Review |
| Segment 2: | 10 min. | Done Away – 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 |
| Segment 3: | 30 min. | Prophecies, Knowledge, Tongues – 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 |
| Segment 4: | 15 min. | Love Endures – 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matthew 22:36-39• Matthew 5:43-48• Galatians 5:16-26 |

Loving
like Jesus

In a World that Hurts and Hates

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Let's take a few minutes to review where we've been. Let's summarize what . . .

Love is . . .

Love isn't . . .

Love doesn't . . .

Love does . . .

How has what you've learned about love been changing the way you think and act?

Which characteristic of love did you progress in most during this class?

How are you doing with applying what you are learning?

Does anyone want to recite what they've memorized?

SEGMENT #2: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13—Done Away

- Key Talk Point:**
- Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will cease.
 - Love remains.

Context/Comments:

Paul returns in these verses to referencing three spiritual gifts—prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. All three, he says, have a shelf life. Prophecy will be “done away” (Greek: *katargeo*, literally made inactive or idle), tongues will “cease” (Greek: *pauo*, come to an end, leave), and knowledge will be “done away” (Greek: *katargeo*).

Paul is clear: prophecy, tongues, and knowledge won’t persist forever. Still, tough interpretive questions remain: *Is Paul using these three gifts to represent all gifts? If he is not, when do/did these gifts cease?* Some believe based on this text that with the closing of the canon of Scripture certain gifts ceased. Others believe Paul is simply contrasting the permanence of love with the eventual cessation of *all* spiritual gifts. Whatever you do in leading this discussion, do it in love!!

Sample Discussion Question:

Have you ever heard this topic discussed without love? How did it go?

How can operating in love help us discuss this topic?

SEGMENT #3: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13—Prophecies, Knowledge, Tongues

- Key Talk Points:**
- The partial won’t last.
 - The partial leaves when the perfect comes.

Context/Comments:**The Partial Won’t Last . . .**

In verse 9, Paul begins describing the “partial” (vv. 9, 10 Greek: *meros*) saying that he and his contemporaries both knew and prophesied “in part” (*ek merous*). Clearly both gifts were active during Paul’s day as was the gift of tongues since we know from the context that they were a hot-button issue. Paul further paints the picture of what “the partial” (*to ek merous*, v. 10) is like when he compares it to his childhood and to seeing in a mirror. The English phrase “we see in a mirror dimly” loses something from the Greek. What the NASB translates “dimly” is the Greek phrase *en ainigmati*, literally “in [an] enigma [or riddle].” Have your students compare this with Numbers 12:8 where God says He spoke to Moses face to face and not in riddles

(ESV; from LXX Numbers 12:8's *ainigmaton*: again translated "riddles" in ESV). While we may think of a mirror as a clear picture, a first century mirror was not and Paul contrasts it with perfect face-to-face knowledge.

Paul says the partial will be done away when the perfect (Greek: *teleios*) comes. The Greek *teleios* refers to something that is complete, mature, finished, something that has met its goal. A child, then, is perfect (complete) when it has become a man or a woman. Sight is perfect when it sees face to face and not by way of reflection, especially if the mirror is inferior. Knowledge is perfect when it knows and is known completely.

When the Perfect Comes . . .

Continue to stay close to the text as you discuss.

Paul describes his "now" as knowing and prophesying in part and as seeing in a mirror dimly. He obviously considered himself as living during the time of the partial.

According to verse 10, that time will be done away "when the perfect comes." Some believe that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge were critical to the Church prior to the establishment of the canon and have ceased because the Church now has the complete revealed Word of God in Scripture.

The difficulty with holding to this view too tightly is that the contrasting "face to face" and "know fully" might put the "then" further into the future, since they sound like conditions that reflect the Second Coming of Christ.

Let your students discuss whether or not they think "the perfect" has come and why they believe what they do.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What is obvious about the partial and the perfect?

What do we need to hold loosely? Why?

How can you show love to brothers and sister who believe differently than you do? What other issues come up when you have differences of belief? Superiority? Trust? etc. etc.

SEGMENT #4: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13: Love Endures

- Key Talk Point:**
- Love lasts.
 - Love exceeds.
 - We can only love like Jesus when we are empowered by His Spirit.

Context/Comments:**Love Endures Forever . . .**

According to 1 Corinthians 13:8-13, love abides (Greek: *meno*, to remain) and never fails (Greek: *pipto*, to fall). While the spiritual gifts Paul mentions are ephemeral—here today, gone tomorrow—faith, hope, and love remain, and love exceeds them all.

Likely your class will have some differing opinions on what the correct interpretation of this section is. Even if they agree, they will probably run into people in the Church who disagree from time to time. Help them talk through how the main takeaway point of this chapter can help them live in harmony with other believers who interpret some things differently.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do you show love without compromising truth?

How do you determine when you need to speak up versus shut up?

Matthew 22:36-39

When a Pharisee lawyer asks Jesus to name the greatest commandment, His answer is love God and others: "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND! This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Although the Pharisee asked for the greatest commandment, Jesus came back with not only the greatest but also the one that can't be separated from it. The one who loves God will be compelled to love his neighbor. The first commandment is supreme, the second entwined. You cannot divorce loving a holy God from loving messy people. So foundational are these commands that Jesus says all the Law and the Prophets (here He is referring to the whole Old Testament) depends on it. If you keep these two commandments, you will fulfill the intent of everything else.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How are you doing at loving God and loving people?

What are your biggest remaining challenges? Why do you think these challenges are hanging around? What is your next step?

Matthew 5:43-48

The Jewish people were familiar with the command to love their neighbor that the Lord gave to Moses in Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD." They had heard "You shall love your neighbor" from God but also "hate your enemy" from some other source. That is not a biblical command and if it were an attempt by the people to summarize God's command, it twisted His intention entirely. The Leviticus context, in fact, extends love to showing kindness to *strangers and aliens* (v. 34)! Hating your enemy is not in the Bible, but it is in fallen human nature.

Jesus tells His followers not to follow the desires of that nature. Rather, they are not only to love their neighbors; they are also to love and pray for *their enemies*. Talk about a tall order! Specifically, Jesus says "pray for those who persecute you" (v. 44). For most Americans, this is a foreign idea. Still, as the United States is morphing into a fully post-Christian nation and becoming accordingly hostile to the faith, we now know what it means to be marginalized; soon we will know full-blown persecution too! Persecution is not new. It does not catch God off guard and shouldn't catch His people off guard either. Remember Paul's words to Timothy before his own death at the hands of Rome: "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Loving our enemies is what sets Christian love apart from natural love. People love others who love them. Those who belong to the heavenly Father love even those who hate them. This love can *only* originate in the heavenly Father who is perfect and loves perfectly!

Sample Discussion Question:

How are you doing at loving your enemies?

How are you doing at praying for those who persecute you, the Church, and the Judeo-Christian life?

Loving
like Jesus

In a World that Hurts and Hates

Galatians 5:16-26

As you close your class time together, help your students see that knowing the facts about 1 Corinthians 13 won't be enough for them to love like Jesus in a fallen world. They need to know what 1 Corinthians 13 love is, but they also need the Spirit to empower them to do it. In Galatians 5:16-26 Paul lays out the contrast between walking by the Spirit and walking by the flesh and explains how they war against one another.

Help your students think this through in light of 1 Corinthians 13. If love doesn't take into account a wrong suffered, the flesh will certainly keep score. If love doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, the flesh will do its dead-level best *to rejoice* in it. If love is patient and has long anger, the flesh will lash back with short-fused vigor. You see the point. Whatever 1 Corinthians 13 love-characteristics the Spirit empowers, the flesh will war against them, every one! Even a cursory glance at Paul's deeds of the flesh list shows that they all stand in direct opposition to love: enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying . . . the list goes on.

When Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit he begins with love: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (vv. 22-23). It is only by the indwelling Spirit that we can ever love like Jesus loves!

Final Wrap-Up Questions:

What has been your biggest takeaway from studying God's Word these past weeks? How is it changing the way you think and act? How will you remember it and live it out?

What's your next step in the Word as this study is coming to a close?