

Small Groups @ TBC Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: December 9th, 2018

Speaker: Paul Ferguson

Title: Love – 1 Corinthians 13

Introduction: Although the most common place you will find this reading is at a wedding – nothing wrong with that – its original context was not the beauty and romance of a wedding but the mess that was the Corinthian church, with its party spirit, spiritual one-upmanship, broken relationships and general disorder. It is in this context that Paul plants this most beautiful tree so to speak. It comes to us like a lull in the storm or as one commentator puts it, like the slow movement in a symphony.

Review: Invite one or more who have heard the talk to give their own brief review.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13

Discuss as a group

Language has limitations and even though the Queens English is the language of heaven (we all know that) it too has limitations. We have one word for love. The Greeks had at least four.

- Storge means affection, the sort of love that is found in good family relationships.
- Philia means friendship.
- Eros is the intimate love between husband and wife.

What these three loves – human love as CS Lewis calls them - have in common is that they are by virtue of their nature reciprocal. They give and they receive, and they are wonderful.

Leaders: feel free to be selective and creative with your use of these notes. **Don't feel you have to use all of the material**, but do try to keep the shape of Review – Read – Reflect – Respond and **DO make room for the 'And Finally' questions!**
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However, the kind of love that Paul is talking about in our reading is called agape.

- Agape is love in the Christian sense – God’s love for human beings and kind of love Christians are called to exhibit.
- Read these three scriptures 1 John 4: 8; 1 John 4: 10; Romans 5: 8 and explore what they say about the nature of God and agape?
- Jesus embodied agape within his teaching, living and dying. Can anyone give some examples of this?
- Read Matthew 22: 36 – 40. What does this tell us about loving God and loving others?
- If loving God has a great connection with loving others it means that love is an active thing. Paul’s pen-portrait of agape love in our reading is written using verbs. Read 1 Cor 13: 4 – 7 and discuss how we might more adequately express agape to one another?
- Agape comes without strings attached and is expressed in humble service. Read Luke 10; 23 – 37 and John 13: 1-17 and discuss.
- The most challenging aspect of agape is that it loves enemies Luke 6: 35 – 36. Is this a step too far? How can we practically do this? Has anyone got an example of this happening? Pray for our brothers and sister who are being persecuted for their faith and have to regularly forgive their enemies.
- The other loves (storge, philia, eros) find their place within the context of agape. Discuss how love is transformed by agape love?
- Encourage one another love with agape love.

Reflect: And finally:

As you conclude, ask each person:

- What is the main thing you are taking away as an action point?
- How can we pray for you?
- Is there anything we can check on next time we meet?

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