

DISCUSSION IDEAS
THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

February 26th, 2017

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KEY TRUTH:

NOTHING BUILDS UP THE FAMILY MORE THAN LOVE.

THE SETTING: We have looked at the many truths about grace-gifts. What they are; how we get them; who gets them; why they are given; why they are different, etc.

♦ **DISCUSSION POINT ONE: YET – THE APOSTLE PAUL SAYS: " I WILL SHOW YOU A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY".**

What could be more excellent than using what God has given us?

How could serving God and using the gifts He gave us become useless?

To begin to answer these questions, look at 1 Cor. 12:7 plus 12:31-13:1. What is the reason we have been given gifts?

If you had the gift of Leadership, how well would it work if you strode in to the room with a bull whip and shouted "FOLLOW ME!!"?

♦ **DISCUSSION POINT TWO: LUUUHVE or LOVE?**

When God speaks of "Love", what is He talking about?

What kinds of love are there?

Isn't it interesting that languages emphasize a certain value?

One language might have hundreds of words for "fish". Why? Because it is important to them.

Our English language has basically ONE word for "Love".

What does that say about our outlook?

The language God used to give us the New Testament writings had more than one word for love. Most of us are aware of the word "Agape" (pronounced ah-gah-pay).

What does this word mean? For example, look at Luke 6:27-35, and Matthew 5:43-48.

What part do feelings play here?

♦ **DISCUSSION POINT THREE: WHAT IS AGAPE LOVE LIKE?**

Look at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Love is what?

Love does not what?

Love is not how?

What about love insisting on its own way?

Can love be irritable or resentful?

Can love get a kick out of wrongdoing?

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How does love relate to the truth, even when that hurts?

Discuss how love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

What does it mean that love never ends?

How do all these compare with emotional love?

Can we love someone who disgusts us?

Can we love someone who is nasty to us?

What does that look like?

♦ **DISCUSSION POINT FOUR: NOW COMBINE THE IDEAS OF GRACE-GIFTS AND AGAPE LOVE.**

Carefully read 1 Corinthians 13:1–3.

Count the number of "if"s in these verses.

How do these "if"s, plus their results, affect our use of God's gifts?

How will our being characterized by AGAPE affect our church body?

How will our being characterized by AGAPE affect our influence in the world?

How will our being characterized by AGAPE affect our own personal peace of heart?

♦ **FOR MEDITATION:**

Meditate this week on God's love displayed through yourself.

Read 1 John 4:18-19, Matt. 22:37-40, Romans 13:10, Romans 15:1-3 and Gal. 5:22-23.

Then re-read 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 at one sitting to really absorb the context.

♦ **FOR PRAYER:**

Our Grace Church Elders: Continue to pray for our elders as they seek how to do their part in God's plan.

Gettises: Pray for the Gettis family as they settle in down in San Jose, Costa Rica, and as David prepares for an intensive six weeks of Spanish Language study starting March 1st. Pray for his brain :-)

Thank God for Cindy and the boys recovery from some sort of flu.

Cindy writes, "Please pray for a young lady I met at the park named Elba. She is a Nicaraguan with a very sad story. I invited her to a Bible study I attend. I pray God brings her, as she didn't have any church or community and obviously needs it. She gave me her number so pray I have wisdom with how to reach out to her.

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"We've seen God's grace and provision in many tiny and big ways. The missionary community here is very tight-knit and has been so kind to us. David starts school next week. I'm learning the stores, parks, buses, cooking (gallo pinto, yum!)." ("Gayo" Pinto is a pinto-beans and rice with chicken dish.)

Shelter Valley: Continue to uphold the Shelter Valley believers, and the GCC team that serves there. Pray for Scott and Leslie Stevens as Scott heads up this ministry. Pray for continued growth in understanding among those who attend about God's Plan and what it really means to follow Him.

Home Groups: Pray for our home groups.

Pray for the leaders to grow in understanding and skill so that those in each group will truly grow in their walk in the Spirit and in true agape love.

Pray that more folks will take part in a home group and be encouraged as a result.

Pray that each one of us would seek to learn how to use our individual spiritual gift(s) to build up the Body of Christ.

Pearsons: Continue to pray for John and Bobbie Pearson as John completes a living area for his 101 year old mother, and for their son, John Caleb, who is dealing with severe cancer. He is currently in Seattle for tests, and is in an autoimmune trial which begins soon. John and Bobbie flew out on 2/25 to be with him, and plan to return home on Friday, 3/3.

Barangonan Island: Let's continue to pray for the Lord's love and power to be seen in Barangonan Island.

The Ings are in Puerto Princessa taking care of business, before they move on to Manila for a March 19 departure. Pray for wisdom, clear understanding of God's Word and continued obedience to the Holy Spirit on the part of the island church leaders.

Praise and continued prayer: Continue to uphold the Tagbanwa believers who go to a neighboring island every Friday to teach about God. Pray too for the hearers to respond.

"Continue to pray for them as there continues to be a solid group listening and interacting with God's Word. We often get to go, and its exciting to see `the body' in action.

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"Not only are there teachers, but others go to support and engage this new group who is hearing. If you can believe it, there are even some who catch fish for the families who go so they won't miss a meal!

"Continue to pray for strength and endurance for those who go, as well as understanding for those who hear."

Thank God and uphold in prayer the "TFG" (Time For God) group of children and young folks who meet every day!

Pray with the strong, self-motivated women's group as they study God's Word and grow to be mature believers.

Persecuted Believers:

Let's not forget to uphold our fellow believers around the world who are experiencing real and intense persecution for following Jesus.

By the way, you know, you can still pray effectively even though you may not be able to pronounce their names ;-)

THIS WEEK:

- 1. China: Alimujiang Yimiti was leading ethnic-Uyghur Muslims to Christ in western China when he was arrested by Chinese public security officers. Initially, officials closed his business after accusing him of using it as a cover for "preaching Christianity among people of Uyghur ethnicity. When he was tried in 2008, 2008, the charges were increased to subverting the Chinese government and endangering national security. Alimujiang, a former Muslim, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. His wife is allowed to visit him only once every three months, for 15 minutes each time, and his two children miss him greatly.**
- 2. Also China: Chinese government authorities have begun pressuring house churches to register with the government and join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Officials have approached key leaders of many house church networks in recent weeks and delivered an ultimatum: Register with the TSPM within the next two months, or else. House church leaders, who oppose joining the TSPM, believe their only option is to create awareness of their situation and ask Christians around the world to pray for them**
- 3. Chiapas, Mexico: A Christian family in Chiapas, Mexico, was forced to flee their home after being threatened by members of their Zapatista community. Mardomio and his family were ordered by Mardomio's father, the village "religious teacher," to stop attending church and to return to their traditional beliefs, but they continued to attend church secretly. When they invited their pastor to their home**

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for a special celebration, Mardomio's father and some other villagers disrupted the celebration and beat the pastor before running him out of town. Mardomio's children were then banned from the local school, and his family was ordered to leave the village. They have had to move several times but continue to meet with other believers for worship. Please pray for Mardomio and his family.

4. A Godly teenager in Nigeria:

Eight-year-old Nankpak Kumzwam watched his mother lie face down on the ground as a screaming Islamic militant ran towards them with a machete. Her cheek was already stained with dried blood from a gunshot wound, and she looked physically and emotionally exhausted. The family had slept on the ground the previous two nights while fleeing marauding rioters, and they just received the heartbreaking news that the rioters had killed Nankpak's father.

When Nankpak regained consciousness after the machete attack, he instinctively knew his mother, sister and brother were now also dead. Bleeding from machete wounds and the gunshot wound he had suffered the day before, the child hiked through the bush to find help, eventually arriving at a friend's house.

After receiving treatment, Nankpak moved in with an uncle until VOM workers helped enroll him at a boarding school located in a safe area. The ministry supports numerous persecuted believers in northern Nigeria by providing them medical care, food, living expenses, education, vocational training and spiritual encouragement.

Nankpak, who has now completed high school, hopes to become a doctor so he can care for persecuted Christians. He is ready to serve wherever God calls him. "I don't really need to be afraid," Nankpak affirms. "I was the only person who was able to escape. I believe God has a reason."

Nankpak thinks often of his family, and especially misses his mentoring father. "Many times he went from one place to another, speaking the Word of God," Nankpak recalls of his father's dedication to the Lord's work. "Whenever he was at home, we spent much time discussing the Word of God." The young man's father also taught his children to live peacefully among Muslims. "He always told us to love one another...and to share the Good News."