

Building Better Relationships
Pt. 4: Love Defined
1 Corinthians 13:4-7

We are continuing our sermon series on building better relationships. We talked about love being the foundation of the best relationships, therefore, last week we began looking at a Biblical definition of love. The Apostle Paul describes that love as we continue in our key verses today:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

- 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
- 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
- 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
- 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
- 8 Love never fails.

Paul makes 16 statements here about Biblical love. We examined 7 of those last week.

8. Love is not easily angered.

Someone once said, "The more shallow the pot, the quicker it boils."
The same can be said of people: "The more shallow the pot, the quicker it boils."

Love is not easily angered. Notice it doesn't say that it is NEVER angered. Just that it is not easily angered. The truth is, we are all human, we all do dumb things, and occasionally we deserve to have someone angry at us.

But you shouldn't be easily angered, not quick to be angry.

Romans 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

James 1:19 "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

Have you ever seen the movie, "Elf"? Remember when the little guy gets mad at Buddy the Elf and attacks him. And Buddy simply responds, "He's an angry elf." He didn't get mad, he didn't get angry, he didn't lose his temper, he didn't get into a fight.

I think most of us can probably work on improving our response to anger.

Typically, I think that anger begets anger. One person gets angry so the other person reciprocates with anger. But look at what the Bible says:

Proverbs 15:1 "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Love is not easily angered.

9. Love keeps no record of wrongs.

When you forgive, you are doing yourself just as big a favor as you are the one who wronged you. Every time you remember the wrong they have done you, you are allowing them to hurt you again. You are allowing them to rob you of happiness and joy at that moment. Holding grudges, bitterness, anger...hurts you far more than they hurt anyone else. Forgive. Wipe the slate clean and you'll be a much happier person.

Keep no record of wrongs. After all, that's what God does for you!

Hebrews 8:12 "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

God loves you. He wants to forgive and forget every wrong thing you've ever done. He extends that forgiveness through Jesus Christ when you receive Him as your Lord and Savior.

10. Love does not delight in evil.

Apply this truth to friendships: If two friends are together and they gossip about the another friend, that's an evil thing.

If you love that friend you don't backstab that friend by gossiping about them. Love takes no pleasure in gossip. Love does not delight in evil.

Apply this truth to the relationship between a parent and a child. If the parent belittles and insults the child, that's an evil thing.

If you love the child you will encourage them and build them up, you don't take pleasure in tearing them down. Love does not delight in evil.

Apply this truth to a married couple. If one of them is involved in an adulterous relationship, that's an evil thing. If you honestly love someone, you don't engage in that kind of an evil activity. Love does not delight in evil.

Romans 12:17 "Do not repay anyone evil for evil."

Romans 12:21 "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Have you ever been wronged by somebody? Love overcomes the wrong. Love overcomes the evil.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Love overcomes evil. Love does not participate in evil.

Love does not delight in evil.

11. Love rejoices with the truth.

Real, honest relationships are always built on the truth. There are no secrets. There are no deceptions. There is no phoniness. There is no need to hide anything. Truthful relationships are always the best relationships.

Relationships in which secrets are kept, relationships lacking in total honesty, will never reach their fullest potential.

Love rejoices with the truth. Sometimes that can be a painful thing, a difficult thing, but honesty is always the best thing.

Ephesians 4:15 "Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."

There are two critically important words in this verse. Notice the words, "in love." We are to speak the truth, but we are to do so in love.

Some people are of the mistaken notion that they can hurt people's feelings so long as what they are saying is true. They wield the truth around like a baseball bat, beating people up, as it were.

You are supposed to speak the truth, but you must do so in love.

There has got to be sensitivity and compassion and tenderness when you speak the truth.

Galatians 6:1 "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

Notice the word gently. If you have to confront someone and you are doing so in love, you will be gentle in the way you deal with the situation.

Paul also gives a warning here. When you are doing this, watch yourself, so that you aren't tempted. What does he mean by that? Tempted how? What is the temptation here?

Things like: Self righteousness. Holier than thou attitude. Egotism. Insensitivity.....things that are not loving.

Tell the truth in love.

12. Love always protects.

I think it's just a natural instinct of love to protect. Whether it's a husband protecting his wife or a mother protecting her children or an older brother protecting a younger sibling or a friend protecting a friend....I think that when you love someone, you don't even think about it, you just instinctively protect them.

Love always protects.

Protective love is certainly one aspect of Jesus' love for his followers. I'll give you a couple of examples.

One example was when Jesus was being arrested. His concern wasn't for himself, even while being arrested he wanted to protect those he loved.

John 18:8 "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go."

He says, let them go, don't arrest them, don't brutalize them, don't crucify them, take me, let them go. Love always protects.

Another classic example is seen while Jesus is literally hanging on the cross. He's being crucified, He's in the process of dying. But look what happens.

John 19:25-27

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son,"

27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Jesus wanted to protect his Mother. He wanted to be sure she was cared for after he was gone. He ignores his own suffering to make sure she will be taken care of. Even while dying he was protecting the one he loved.

Love always protects.

13. Love always trusts.

Love is not suspicious. It has confidence in the one loved.

There is no cynicism in love.

Another word for trust is faith. You have faith in a person.

Can you imagine a marriage without any trust? What kind of marriage would that be?

What would happen in a family where the parents refused to trust their children?

What if your boss didn't trust you to do your job?

How long can two people stay friends if they don't trust each other?

Love always trusts.

A lack of trust will lead to a break in the relationship.
We find an example of that in the life of the Apostle Paul:

Acts 15:37-41

37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them,
38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. (Acts 13:13)
39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,
40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.
41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Paul's distrust of John Mark was so severe that he parted company with Barnabas, who was his very good friend and missions partner. A lack of trust has severe consequences upon a relationship.

However, the good news is that trust can be restored. Over time, given the opportunity, broken trust can indeed be repaired.

Paul eventually was able to trust John Mark again and their relationship was restored to a strong, loving relationship. Years later when Paul wrote a letter to Timothy we see evidence of this restored relationship:

2 Timothy 4:11 "Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry."

Somewhere along the line, Paul gave John Mark a second chance and eventually that trust was restored. Maybe there's someone in your life who needs a second chance to restore that trust.

Give it a shot, the relationship is worth it.

Love always trusts.

14. Love always hopes.

Love sees the silver lining. Love sees the light at the end of the tunnel. Love believes things will get better. Love is an optimist.

You are familiar with the parable of the prodigal son. The younger of two sons takes half of his father's estate and takes off. The father never gave up hope that the son would one day return. Because of his incredible love for the son, he never gave up. He hoped the son would come to his senses, he hoped the son would return home. Love always hopes.

Luke 15:20 "So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

The son was still a long way off when his father saw him. You can just picture the father standing on the porch, searching the horizon, straining to see if his son would return on this day.

He never gave up hope. Love always hopes.

The reward for hope is most clearly seen in our relationship with the Lord.
Isaiah 40:30-31

30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Love always hopes.

15. Love always perseveres.

Love has staying power. True love survives the stresses and strains that all relationships eventually go through.

There will always be circumstances and situations that could potentially destroy a relationship. Love overcomes those circumstances and situations, whatever they may be. It always perseveres.

Cliff Barrows says that there are 12 words, found in four statements, that are absolutely essential for the survival of a good marriage. (And really, for any good relationship.)

#1, "I was wrong,"

#2. "I am sorry,"

#3. "Please forgive me,"

#4. "I love you."

"Any relationship," he says, "has to have those 12 words in it or it simply won't work."

If the love in your relationship is going to last, if it's going to persevere, if it's going to make it, these twelve words are essential.

Song of Solomon 8:7 "Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away."

Love always perseveres.

16. Love never fails.

David Walker, Campus Crusade for Christ, in Canada, wrote, "For the Lord sees clearly everything that a man does, examining every path he takes." Amazing, isn't it? He sees improper motives, lack of faith, immorality, dishonesty, greed, violence of mind and actions, adultery of the spirit, self-righteousness, pride, drunkenness, lying, cheating, stealing, judgmental spirit, gossiping, resentment, bitterness, an unforgiving spirit, impatience, irritability, self-centeredness, rebelliousness, selfish ambition, love of position, indifferences to things of eternal value, excessive materialism, preoccupation with and a consuming desire for possessions. Nothing misses his sight. And in it all, his grace is extended to his children."

In spite of every bad thing we do, every bad thing we think, every bad thing we are, God's love for us never, ever fails.

Love never fails.

1 John 4:19 "We love because he first loved us."

That's great news! God's love for you never fails. God's love for you never, ever wanes. It never, ever weakens. It never, ever declines. It never, ever ends.

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is absolutely nothing you can do to change his love for you. It's not a matter of how good or bad you are. God loves you. And sometimes that means that God loves you in spite of yourself!

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

He didn't die for us because we were good enough or we had earned it or because of our great love for him. Christ died for us because His love perseveres, in spite of our lack of love for him.

Have you responded to that love?