

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – October 3, 2021

Theme: Love: A More Excellent Way

Topic: The Excellency of Love

Main Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, John 13:31-35.

Key verse: 1 Corinthians 13:1 *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal”*(NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: One of the key lessons from our just concluded quarter series on the person and work of the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit bestows diverse spiritual gifts on believers. And He decides who gets what gift(s). Furthermore, the exercise of these gifts should rather be to the common good of the Church, than for showmanship or self-glory. In Paul’s day, Corinth was a multicultural city - different nationalities, social and religious backgrounds. So, the Church in Corinth must have had such a diverse mix of individuals. This mix must have led to the problems associated with the Corinthian Church. In his letter to the Corinthians, Apostle Paul sought to address some of the issues in the Church, which had raised questions. One of those issues was that of spiritual gifts. And wraps up his teaching on spiritual gifts with the bold statement in 1 Corinthians 12:31: *“So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts. But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all”* (1 Cor.12:31 NLT). Thereafter, he launches into a teaching on love as that way of life in the Church (1 Corinthians 13).

1. **Read John 13:34; 1 John 3:11; 2 John 1:5 (a) How do these verses corroborate Apostle Paul’s assertion that love is ‘a more excellent way’? (b) How would you explain 1 Corinthians 12:31 to a young believer? (c) In the light of these, how can the church ensure a proper view of spiritual gift?**

In 1 Corinthians 12:31, Apostle Paul sought to draw the believer’s attention to a *more excellent way*. The Greek word translated as ‘way’ is the word ‘*hodos*’ which means path. The imagery is that of a road (love) and the vehicles (spiritual gifts) which the different road users (believers) own. It is the road which takes the different road users to their destination, irrespective of the vehicle in and with which they travel. Someone has observed that a man with the faith that can move great mountains will set them down right in the path of somebody else – or right on somebody else – if such a man doesn’t have love. No wonder 1 Corinthians 13:1 (AMP) says, *“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love [for others growing out of God’s love for me], then I have become only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal [just an annoying distraction] ... Follow the way of love...”* (1 Corinthians 13:1)

2. **Read 1 John 4:7-12; 1 Corinthians 13:8-9, 13; Colossians 3:14 (a) How do these verses emphasize the excellence of love over spiritual gifts? (b) What additional emphasis does 1 John 4:8 make? (c) How do these help our understanding of 1 Corinthians 13:1-3?**

‘*Agape*’ is the Greek word translated as ‘love’ in 1 Corinthians 12:31; 13. According to Wikipedia, ‘*Agape*’ refers to unconditional love, *“is the highest form of love...It is the love of God for man and of man for God... It embraces a universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstance. It goes beyond just the emotions to the extent of seeking the best for others. Within Christianity, it is the love originating from God to mankind. It refers to the covenant love of God for humans, as well as the human reciprocal love for God, which necessarily extends to the love of one’s fellow human beings”*. The word “love” (*agape*) is used in the New Testament in speaking of the deep and abiding affection of God and Christ for each other (John 15:10; 17:26) and for us (1John 4:9-10 John 4:9 AMP) *“By this the love of God was displayed in us, in that God has sent His [One and] only begotten...”*. It is also used of Christians in their relationship with one another (John 13:34-35). Christians are to love, because they belong to God, and “God is love” (1John 4:8). Little wonder Jesus taught that love is the greatest commandment – love for God, love for one’s neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). Love in its true reality and power is seen only in the light of Calvary (1 John. 4:7-10.) We can then appreciate Jesus’ new commandment that we *“love one another... By this all will know that you are My disciples...”* (John 13:34-35).

3. **(a) How did God exemplify this excellency of love in Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10? (b) What standard did Jesus set in Matthew 5:44-47? (c) In what practical ways can we demonstrate or deepen this kind of love among us?**

Prayer: Thank You Lord for showing us what love is. Help to us abound more and more in Your love for us and through us. In Your name we pray. Amen.