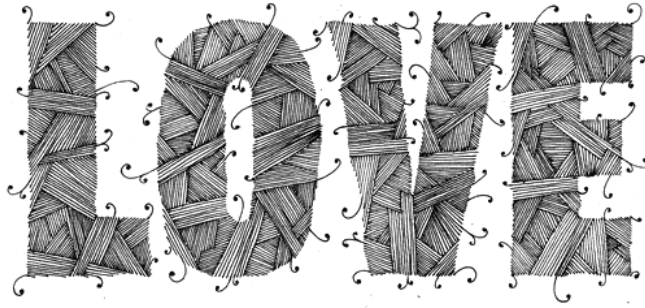


Attributes of Agape



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Three observations:

1. You need love for **communication**. If you do not have love, your **words** will sound like noise to people, and they will not listen to you.

I Cor. 13:1, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

2. You need love for **reputation**. All your **Bible knowledge and faith** are vain if you do not have love. You as a person amount to "nothing" without love. If you want to impact the world, you need to know how to love.

I Cor. 13:2, "And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

3. You need love for the right **motivation**. All your **sacrifice** is vain if you do not have love.

I Cor. 13:3, "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."



The picture of love in 1 Corinthians 13 is unparalleled. It is a picture not of a proud boastful self-serving person, but of a humble, trusting lamb. It is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. The key to lasting spiritual fruit in our lives as Christians is to learn to love, i.e. to become Christlike. Love is not an emotion, but an action. *God so loved the world that he gave...* (John 3:16). Love is not like a doormat or a dictator, but is a heroic self-sacrificing act that always puts others first. Husbands are told to love their wives

“as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). Self-sacrifice is the ultimate definition of love.

Attribute 1: Love is patient

1 Cor. 13:4, “Love is patient”.

The Greek word translated “patient” is *makrothumia*. It means “long-tempered” and is the exact opposite of our expression “short-fused.” **Long suffering is the ability to control anger or frustration.** It is learning self-restraint with all kinds of difficult situations, especially with people. The word is used almost exclusively of being patient with people as opposed to circumstances or things. A lack of patience will turn your home into a war zone. Patience refuses to give in to heated emotions. Patience waits for a godly outcome.

Attribute 2: Love is kind

1 Cor. 13:4, “Love is...kind”.

The word “kind” is translated from a Greek word, *chresteuomai*, that means useful. It means useful, to lift a burden, to furnish what is needed. Kindness always puts others needs before one’s own. It is to be useful to others, hence good-natured, good, gentle. It is showing active goodwill to others. **Kindness is the sympathetic sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease, and shrinks from causing pain.**¹ Kindness actively looks for ways to positively contribute to another’s life.

Attribute 3: Love is not jealous

1 Cor. 13:4, “love does not envy”.

The Greek word *zeloo* means “to be hot, fervent, to be zealous, filled with zeal whether for good or evil.” This could be translated as follows. “Love never boils with jealousy”; “Love knows no jealousy”; “Love is never envious”. Love is not zealous for “my ...rights, things, opinions, ideas, way, etc. at all cost.”

Envy is pure selfishness. It means you wish the good things happening to another were happening to you. It means you think you are better than the other person. The Bible forbids any Christian for having this attitude. Paul says in **Philippians 2:3**, *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* Love means you want the very best for others. You do everything you can to help them succeed.

The opposite of envy is selflessness. It means you will sacrifice so that the other person can succeed. Envy (rather than loving by choosing not to envy) is at the root of much sinfulness. It is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). It is childish (1 Cor. 3:3). It is a driving force in sinful hearts (Jms. 4:1-2). It is one of the most devastating of sins. **Proverbs 27:4** *Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?*

¹ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 256.

Attribute 4: Love does not boast

1 Cor. 13:4, "love does not...boast".

This idea comes from the Greek word, *perpereuomai*. which means braggart. Love does not seek to "promote self" in our words and actions. This could be translated, "Love is not anxious to impress" This phrase has been translated - "love makes no parade." **Bragging takes the focus and honor off God and places it squarely on "me."** Love does not parade ones skills, accomplishments, intelligence, possessions, physical appearance, etc., in front of others for their attention and/or approval. Do you want people to discover who you really are? Or do you work hard to just leave "the right" impression; create a false image of the real you? Love is quiet about personal achievements. **Proverbs 27:2** *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*

Have you ever been in a difficult discussion with a loved one, and when you were in a corner, you began to paint yourself as the most spiritual person on the planet? You say things like: "I would never do that". To boast means to be "rash in bragging about one's own excellences or endowments" (Barnes). This is an attitude of *superiority over others*. It is usually combined with a feeling of contempt or disregard for the other person.

Attribute 5: Love is not arrogant

1 Cor. 13:4, "love...is not arrogant".

This word "arrogant" is from the Greek word *phusioo* that means to inflate, blow or puff up. In the N.T. it is used figuratively of pride or self-conceit. This could be translated as follows. "Love does not put on airs." "Love does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance." It doesn't allow or expect life to revolve around itself. Pride is an issue of the heart. Understanding how God describes you and Himself should help you toward conquering pride by putting on humility. God hates pride (Prov. 6:16-17). Learning to love means that you are humble about your gifts, abilities and place in life. You realize everything you have is a gift from God (Jms. 1:17). *"To whom much is given much will be required"*.

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Paul says, "Follow after LOVE." PURSUE LOVE. That is a tremendous statement for the Apostle to make. He is saying, "Run after love! Make love the chief aim. Give your energies and your concentration to this one thing. Learn what love is and then pursue it."

You'll know something of the strength of this word PURSUE, dioko, when you learn that Paul used that same word in speaking of his persecuting the church of God before he became a Christian. "I persecuted, I PURSUED, the church of God!" The suggestion there is of going after something with all the intensity of one's being.

Paul says "GO AFTER LOVE, with all the intensity of your being, physically, mentally, spiritually. Go after LOVE above everything else."

Attribute 6: Love is not rude

1 Cor. 13:5, "love is not...rude".

This phrase comes from the Greek word, *aschemoneo*, which means uncomely, indecent, to behave in an ugly way, disgrace or embarrass someone. Love works hard at always saying or doing the appropriate or fitting thing. Love is considerate of other people; it is not rude or unmannerly. Love does not recklessly kid, joke at the risk of offending another. This idea is related to shame. Love does not act shamefully, unmannerly, impolitely, or crudely. It is thoughtlessness, ingratitude, disrespect for other's feelings. Love is always considerate of others when speaking or acting. We must not justify a lack of consideration with:

- "That's just the way I am."
- "I just say what's on my mind."
- "Everybody knows where they stand with me."
- "You shouldn't be so sensitive anyway."

Jesus was the "Perfect Gentleman" in every situation! He always acted appropriately.

Attribute 7: Love does not insist on its own way

1 Cor. 13:5, "love... does not insist on its own way".

The Greek word *zeteo* means to strive to find. Love acts in unselfish ways. The question is not: "What's in it for me." This can be translated as follows: "Love does not insist on its rights." "Love does not pursue selfish aims." The person who is concerned with getting all he can from others is not loving. If you are concerned with only what you can GET, you must ask if Christ, who sacrificed His life for us, dwells in your heart. Christ did not insist on His own way.

- **Isaiah 53:7**, *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*
- **1 Peter 2:23**, *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

Attribute 8: Love is not easily offended

1 Cor. 13:5, "love... is not irritable".

The Greek word *paroxuno* translated "**irritable**" means to sharpen, whet, incite. In the N.T. it means to provoke or rouse to anger or indignation. Love is not touchy, or moody. Love is not hypersensitive or easily hurt. Love is not sharpened to wrath or aroused to anger. The battle cry of one who is easily irritated is-"Don't you get it, **I am the one that matters.**" This person cares for no one but self. This person is upset by anything that is said or done that infringes on their agenda, forces a schedule change, or puts a bad light on their character. Excuses for anger:

- It's just a weakness.
- It's just letting off steam.
- It's just the way I am.
- It's their fault. I'm the victim.
- It's the only way I can get results.
- They pushed me over the line.
- I was born this way. I inherited it.

Do others have to “walk softly” around you for fear of an explosion?

Attribute 9: Love keeps no record of wrongs

1 Cor. 13:5, “love is not... resentful”.

This term or phrase *logizama* is a bookkeeping term. It means to take account. This could be translated as follows:

- “Love does not take into account a wrong offered.”
- “Love does not keep records of wrongs.”
- “Love does not keep account of evil.”

Love is not in the record keeping business. In the business world this is necessary - in the church of Jesus Christ it is sinful. Love does not retain hurts, sins, etc. for future reference when forgiveness has been sought and granted. Love does not bring up a past offenses to use in making a point. Love does not keep account of evil. Are you a record keeper? Do you desire to keep everyone in your debt by keeping records? **1 Peter 4:8**, *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

Attribute 10: Love does not gloat over other's failings

1 Cor. 13:6, “it does not rejoice at wrongdoing”.

Love takes no pleasure in the failings and sins of others. When a friend or a loved one falls into sin, we must grieve with them. When we love someone we must not gloat over their sins or the consequences of sin, but be grieved at them. We should help to restore them. We should seek to help our brother or sister to reconcile. If he or she asks for forgiveness, forgive them immediately.

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is not so much about forgetting. We hear the phrase “forgive and forget”. Well, there are some things we have a hard time forgetting. And even though God forgives us, he chooses to put those sins in the sea of His forgetfulness. In other words, to forgive is to choose *never to bring the offense up again*.

Attribute 11: Love rejoices in spiritual victories

1 Cor. 13:6, “love... rejoices with the truth”.

John Gill said this has the idea of rejoicing when the truth of the Gospel has its power over someone's life. Love for truth means having to say hard things at difficult times (Prov. 27:5, 6); confronting sin in others and providing Biblical (truth) solutions. Albert Barnes said this, “The word *truth* here stands opposed to iniquity, and means virtue, piety, goodness. It does not rejoice in the vices, but in the *virtues* of others. It is pleased, it rejoices when they do well.”

Many arguments begin because of a wrong idea of what the other person is saying. They say something, and you are totally offended because you think the worst. They are offended because you thought something so evil of her. And so the cycle goes.

You must deal with life in honesty. Ask the other person to repeat what was said, then REPEAT it back. Ask them: “Is this what you said?” And they'll say, “No, of course I do not meant that”.

“Well, what do you mean...etc. “ If something is wrong in a relationship, you must be careful to establish the truth. Often bitterness arises in the heart because we do not seek out the truth. Truly, much of what separates people is not even true! It is imagined faults. Love rejoices in the truth.

Tonight we complete our study of 1 Corinthians 13. We have four descriptions of love. Love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. And Paul closes by saying: LOVE never ends. It's effects never fail.

Love is so strong because it rests in the sovereignty of God. The ultimate and perfect example of love is the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Attribute 12: Love protects the reputation of others

1 Cor. 13:7, “Love bears all things”.

This Greek word *stego*, translated **bears**, means to cover over in silence. Love treats kindly the reputation of fellow believers. It means to “bear with” the prickliness of people. Love chooses to hide the faults, weaknesses, and prickliness of others.

Consider how David sang about King Saul after Saul's death. 2 Samuel 1:19 – David said of Saul, “Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!” David lifted up the reputation even of those who harmed him.

The point is not that love ignores other's sin but shields and protects from unnecessary exposure. Love refuses to broadcast and flaunt the sins of others – out of love for God and others. Love gets no vicarious thrill out of hearing others' faults. Love defends and protects the person as if they were right there in the room. Do you enjoy getting the dirt on someone? Do you pump others for that kind of information?

- **Matthew 18:15-17**, *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church.*

Do you protect the reputation of others. Are you careful to reconcile with people in the right way? Are you quick to forgive and restore?

Attribute 13: Love is eager to believe the best

1 Cor. 13:7, “love... believes all things”.

Love chooses to give the benefit of the doubt. Love does not function under a guise of suspicion but trusts. Love believes unless there is hard, concrete, clear evidence to the contrary.

- **Proverbs 18:13, 17**, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. 17 The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.”

One of the most difficult issues to repair in a relationship is broken trust. Do you rush to conclusions, maybe even basing it on a feeling, hunch or similar scenario you know about somebody else?

- Love doesn't put the worst possible perspective, interpretation or slant on the words and actions of others.
- Love doesn't assume or accuse without facts.
- Love doesn't judge motives. No one knows the heart except God (2 Chron. 6:30).

Mephibosheth was brought to the king's table. Normally when a new king was brought in during ancient times, every one from the former king's family was put to death. While everyone else might have been suspicious of a son of Saul, David sought out Mephibosheth and treated him kindly.

Yes, this kind of love may be setting itself up for hurt, but...it is doing what love does and pleases God. Love is not suspicious of every act; judgmental of every word, and doubtful and distrusting in every scenario.

Attribute 14: Love is optimistic

1 Cor. 13:7, "love... hopes all things."

Love doesn't write "hopeless" over **anyone** or **any circumstances**. This biblical optimism grows out of faith in God, not men. Hope is the joyous anticipation of good to come. This hope in God must be woven into the practical fabric of our lives. Hope is not anchored in having things your way, wishful thinking, or thinking you can bargain with or manipulate God to act on what you think is in your best interest. Hope is attached to God Himself to do what is right, good and best for all and knowing that He will give sufficient grace to handle any situation that His plan has for you (Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 12:9).

Example Barnabas with Paul and later with John Mark... We need to remember that God is still working on all of us!

When we look at the Cross of Christ we see hope. He can change any one of us! Look at who God uses. He takes a Peter and makes him a leader among apostles. He takes a persecutor of the church (Saul of Tarsus) and transforms him into an apostle.

Attribute 12: Love never gives up

1 Cor. 13:7, "Love...endures all things."

The Greek word *hupomeno*, translated **endures**, is a military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs. This could be translated as follows: "Love endures without limit". Battles have been won because a small pocket of men refused to quit and run. Love never gives up!

It means to remain under – that is to endure or sustain a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions or provocations in faith and patience. "All things" – every sort of offense, pressure, affliction, difficulty, victory, defeat etc. Love endures! It eliminates attitudes such as: "I can't take it anymore"; "Things have got to ease up"; "If things don't change, I'll crack".

I think a good example of this is Joseph. Whether he was in the promised land, the pit, Potiphar's house, the prison, or the palace, he never gave up on trusting God.

Attribute 13: Love never fails

1 Cor. 13:8, "love... never ends".

Love always prospers! To love is to be like Christ, and it will endure forever!

Love never fails. The word 'fail' is an interesting word in the Greek. The common translation of the word is 'to fall.' Literally it means 'to fall to the ground' but its meaning has the finality of something falling into decay. It is used to speak of the petals of a flower that drop to the ground from decay.

Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." The essence of Christlike conformity is to love. Lay down your life. That will last forever. You will love forever. You will not walk by faith forever because it will become sight. You will not always preach and prophesy and give the gift of knowledge and wisdom in counseling and Bible studies. All that will drop like a flower pedal when Jesus comes. Let's read about it!

Verses 8-13, "Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Many other things serve a purpose, but LOVE is the fulfillment of the entire law, and it will never fail and never end. There will come a day when we stop preaching. There will come a time when the gifts of knowledge and discernment will no longer be necessary.

But love never ends. If you want to come to full maturity, then love!