



## How Love is Practiced in our Serving (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

- In chapter 13, Paul addresses the central regulating virtue of love (“*a still more excellent way*” – 1 Cor. 12:31b). This love is what makes the body of Christ function in the way God designed her.
- God’s love is a caring and self-sacrificing attitude and action that willfully gives itself in seeking the highest good of others. In chapter 13, Paul describes this supernatural love that must flow in and through His body for ministry that builds up in three ways:
  - Love is an essential priority (v. 1-3)
  - Love is an edifying practice (v. 4-7)
  - Love has an enduring permanence (v. 8-13)
- In verses 4-7, Paul describes 15 verbs of action that will teach us three ways love behaves for the good of the body and its ministry.

### ① God’s love responds differently to all people (13:4a, b)

- God’s supernatural “*love is patient*” (v. 4a). This is the word for patience with people, not circumstances or events. It describes someone who has a long fuse and slow to get angry. This love has the ability to be wronged again and again and will not retaliate or blow up (Prov. 14:29; 16:32; 19:11)
- God’s supernatural “*love is kind*” (v. 4b). This kindness is a sweet-hearted usefulness that benefits others in a practical way. It is the flip side of patience (longsuffering endures the wrongs of others, kindness pays them back with good deeds)

### ② God’s love resists differently to selfish attitudes (13:4c-6a)

- God’s supernatural love “*is not jealous*” (v. 4c). Love does not want what others have nor does it wish others didn’t have what they do.
- God’s supernatural “*love does not brag*” (v. 4d). Love does not verbally boast about its accomplishments or successes or make others feel inferior to you.
- God’s supernatural love “*is not arrogant*” (v. 4e). Love does not puff itself up, which was a problem that Paul addressed several times (1 Cor. 4:6-10, 18; 5:1-2; 8:1). Pride destroys the practice of God’s selfless love.
- God’s supernatural love “*does not act unbecomingly*” (v. 5a). Love is not rude or shameful but has good manners and uses tact.
- God’s supernatural love “*does not seek its own*” (v. 5b). Love does not insist on its own right, but focuses on serving others selflessly like Jesus did (Mark 10:45)
- God’s supernatural love “*is not provoked*” (v. 5c). Love does not have a hair-trigger temper. It is not easily offended.
- God’s supernatural love “*does not take into an account a wrong suffered*” (v. 5d). Love does not keep a tally of wrongs and bear a grudge.

- God's supernatural love "*does not rejoice in unrighteousness*" (v. 6a). Love is never glad when others go wrong, but wants to help others deal with and overcome their sins.
- God's supernatural love "*rejoices with the truth*" (v. 6b). Love is excited to see God's people informed, convicted, and corrected by God's transforming truth.

### ③ God's love reacts differently to challenging circumstance (13:7)

- God's supernatural love "*bears all things*" (v. 7a). Love defends the character of others as much as possible within the limits of truth. Love will not deliberately expose and emphasize the weaknesses of others.
- God's supernatural love "*believes all things*" (v. 7b). Love believes the best about others until it is proven otherwise. Love displays a level of trust that is not suspicious and doubting of the other person's character and motives without good reason.
- God's supernatural love "*hopes all things*" (v. 7c). Love is not pessimistic but displays a godly optimism that trusts the promises of God.
- God's supernatural love "*endures all things*" (v. 7d). Paul uses a military term about sustaining the assault of an enemy. Love is able to hold up under trial in spite of difficulties and not bail out.