

Relationships Matter: When It is Difficult to Love

Life Group Curriculum

Introduction

1 Corinthians 13 is a well-known bible passage frequently quoted at weddings. However, based on the context of the passage it was not intended for a romantic relationship but for a gifted church that was dangerously straying away from the Gospel. In our “Relationships Matter” study, we intend to learn to love when the relationship is difficult. Through personal reflection, life group discussion, studying the Bible, and Sunday’s sermon, we plan to grow our love in all of our relationships.

This curriculum is structured to be both thought-provoking and action-provoking:

1. **Reflection Matters:** Each week, you will reflect on who you are and how the Holy Spirit guides, encourages, strengthens, or reminds you.
2. **Context Matters:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 is our focal passage. We will read it within the context of the entire letter to have a more accurate interpretation and application of the passage. Reading different translations also gives us a fuller picture of the meanings of some words or phrases when they are translated differently.
3. **Great Commandment Matters:** We will memorize Jesus’ Great Commandment to remind ourselves that loving God and others is a mandate from God.
4. **Relationships Matter Challenge:** You will be challenged to focus on one or two relationships that you want to work on. You can pick a family relationship, a professional relationship, or a friendship. The idea is to intentionally love your “neighbor” as yourself.

Confidentiality Matters: In order to provide a safe space for people joining your Life Group, please be mindful that everything shared in the group stays in the group. Do NOT talk about members’ sharing or struggle with other people unless you have the permission from the member.

5. **Prayer Matters:** We ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and guide us through this “Relationships Matter” journey. Write down your struggles and victories when learning how loving others is difficult.

Week One: What Matters More
1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Mark 12:30-31

Reflection Matters

Briefly and honestly evaluate your relationships:

Relationships Matter - Self-Assessment

ASSESSING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS	Poor					Great				
Spouse or marriage prospect:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or In-Laws:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Child:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Relative:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Boss/Supervisor:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Neighbor:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Brother/Sister in Christ:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Friend:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Look at the relationships that you rate 3 or higher. Share with the group ONE quality you see in these relationships.

Look at the relationships that you rate under 3. Share with the group ONE quality you see in these relationships.

Context Matters

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (ESV) and read a different translation:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 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. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

1. Dissect the sentence structure in 13:1-3:

If..	But...	Then...

2. What situations happening in the church in Corinth was Paul concerned about? Skim through Chapter 12 or read 12:27-31. In your own words, summarize one of the core issues in the church in Corinth.
3. Read the conditions in verses 1-3 again. What are the three spiritual gifts that Paul compares? Why do spiritual gifts gain “nothing” if we express them without love (13:1-3)?
4. What does God want to teach you through these verses?

Great Commandment Matters

Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthian 13 is aligned with Jesus’ Great Commandment. Memorize Mark 12:30-31 (NLT):

Jesus says, “And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.” The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.

- 5. Read Mark 12:28-34. What matters to Jesus? What is our motivation to love others? How much do we look to our actions, acquisitions, or achievements to give meaning to our lives?

Relationships Matter Challenge

Based on the “Relationships Matter” self-assessment you did at the beginning of today’s study, identify one or more relationships that you plan to be intentional in building or rebuilding for the next 4-5 weeks. Pick a “difficult” relationship or a relationship that God is calling you to strengthen. Briefly share with your Life Group the reason you pick this relationship to work on.

The distanced or difficult relationship(s) you want to go deeper:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Prayer Matters

Write down your prayer, expressing your desire to love God and others more this week. Pray with your Life Group or an accountability partner about the **Relationships Matter Challenge**.

Week Two: When It is Difficult to Love, Be Patient and Kind

1 Corinthians 13:4a

Reflection Matters

- What is the biggest takeaway from this week's sermon?
- Share your progress with the Relationships Matter Challenge.

Context Matters

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4 (RSV): *Love is patient and kind;*

1. What kind of challenge did Paul face during his missions in Corinth?
(1 Corinthians 4:10-14; Acts 18:1-17)
2. Besides the spiritual gifts issue (Chapter 12), what other issues made the Corinthians difficult to love each other?
 - a) 1:10-12 & 3:3-4 _____
 - b) 1:21-22 _____
 - c) 5:1 _____
 - d) 8:9 _____
 - e) 15:12 _____
3. The word "patience" is also translated as "suffers long" in the King James Version. How would "long suffering" and kindness alleviate the division and superiority issues in the church in Corinth?
4. What is the deeper message implied when love is "long suffering" (see Psalm 86:15)? Personalize and read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: replace "love" with "God."
5. What does God want to teach you through today's verses?

Commandment Matters

Memorize Mark 12:30-31 (NLT)

Jesus says, "And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." The second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." No other commandment is greater than these.

6. How is "loving others as yourself" as important as "loving God"?

Week Two: When It is Difficult to Love, Be Patient and Kind
continued

Relationships Matter Challenge

Love is an action not just emotion (1 John 3:18). Relationships involve not only one person. We can sometimes be difficult too. Do the “Am I Difficult to Love” quiz below. How can you be more patient and kind to the person you picked last week?

Am I Difficult to Love?	
1. Do you feel others' emotions?	Always / Sometimes / Never / I want people to feel my emotions first
2. Do you think love is a myth?	Yes / No / I don't know / Love is more than a feeling
3. Do you trust people?	Most of the Time / Sometimes / Rarely / Only certain people
4. Do you think you are selfish?	Yes / No / Maybe / I have not noticed
5. Is it difficult for you to make sacrifices for others?	Yes / No / I don't know / It depends
6. What would you do if someone hurts you?	Forgive / Forget / Revenge / Communicate
7. How soon do you want to resolve a conflict with someone you are close with?	ASAP / Wait till that person calls me first / Depends on the situations / I'll initiate contact when I'm no longer angry

Prayer Matters

Ask God to help you be more patient and kind this week when difficult situations arise.

Week Three: Love Like Jesus Loves Me

1 Corinthians 13:4b

Reflection Matters

- What is the biggest takeaway from this week's sermon?
- Share your progress with the Relationships Matter Challenge.

Context Matters

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4b (ESV): *Love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant.*

1. What were the strengths of the church in Corinth? (1:4-7)
2. How can knowledge and arrogance become the enemies in relationships? (1:18-21; 8:1-3; 12:12-26)
3. How did Paul respond to the pride in the church in Corinth? (2:4-5; 4:6)
4. What does God want to teach you from today's verses?

Great Commandment Matters

Memorize John 13:34 (MSG):

Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another.

5. What is our source of love?

Relationships Matter Challenge

Continue to be intentional this week to work on the distanced/difficult relationship you have chosen. Consider if pride can be a barrier for you to care about this person. What is something you do that is more important than what others do that causes you to treat them in an unloving manner?

How Can I Love Others Like Jesus Loves Me?
1. Accept others like Jesus accepts me (Romans 15:7)
2. Value others like Jesus values me (1 Peter 2:17)
3. Forgive others like Jesus forgives me (Colossians 3:13)
4. Believe in others like Jesus believes in me (John 14:12)

Prayer Matters

Pray for God’s grace to humble yourself before God and others. Being able to love others is part of God’s nature in humanity. However, our brokenness and pride can interfere with our relationship between us and others as well as us and God. If you want to receive Jesus’ unconditional love today, say a prayer and ask Him to forgive and accept you. Share about your decision to accept Jesus’ love to your group leader/friends.

Week Four: Love is Not Control

1 Corinthians 13:5

Reflection Matters

- What is the biggest takeaway from this week's sermon?
- Share your progress with the Relationships Matter Challenge.

Context Matters

Read 1 Corinthians 13:5 (NRSV):

Love is not rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs.

1. In what ways did the Corinthians insist on their own way of doing things?
 - a. _____ (6:1-2)
 - b. _____ (7:17-19)
2. Why do we get upset when things don't happen the way we want?
3. What did Paul suggest to the Corinthians about their need to be in control in verse 5 (also see 6:12, 10:24)?
4. What insights did you glean from today's verses?

Great Commandment Matters

Memorize John 13:34 (MSG):

Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another.

Relationships Matter Challenge

Are there any anger or resentment issues in the relationship that you are working on?

Three Questions to Ask	1. Am I irritated or resentful?
	2. What do I really need from this person?
	3. How can I express what I need to this person?

Prayer Matters

Write down your prayer about your anger/resentment issues. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you peace and work on the emotional issues affecting your relationships with others. Seek professional help if necessary.

Week Five: Love Speaks the Truth

1 Corinthians 13:6

Reflection Matters

- What is the biggest takeaway from this week's sermon?
- Share your progress with the Relationships Matter Challenge.

Context Matters

Read 1 Corinthians 13:6 (NLT):

Love does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

1. "Injustice" or "unrighteousness" is another translation for the word "wrongdoing" which is commonly translated in other versions. Based on the context of the letter to Corinthians what unrighteous acts were they involved in?
2. How did Paul confront the Corinthians with their sins? (10:1-13 & 11:27-29)
3. Why is it important to speak the truth? (Ephesians 4:15; Proverbs 27:5)
4. What does God teach you through these verses?

Great Commandment Matters

Memorize Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT):

'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Week Five: Love Speaks the Truth
continued

Relationships Matter Challenge

Grasp the opportunity to speak the truth in love to the person you want to connect with. How can you speak the truth in love?

This Week I Will Choose	
	Kind words: Transform worry to joy (Proverbs 12:25)
	Pleasant words: Encourage learning (Proverbs 16:21)
	Honest words: Make us feel loved (Proverbs 24:26)
	Wise words: Heal broken hearts (Proverbs 12:18)

Prayer Matters

Write down your prayer about how you want to speak the truth in love with the person you chose.

Week Six: The Secret of Lasting Relationships

1 Corinthians 13:7-8

Reflection Matters

- What is the biggest takeaway from this week's sermon?
- Share your progress with the Relationships Matter Challenge.

Context Matters

Read 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 (ESV):

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

1. What does Paul say about the gifts of prophecy, the gift of tongues, and the gift of knowledge in 13:8-13?
2. Instead of focusing on the problems, what perspectives does Paul share in this letter to unify the church in Corinth? (3:23, 9:23, 12:4-6, 13:13)
3. Read through 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 again. What does Apostle Paul want the Corinthian Christians to know about this "perfect love"? Does he ask the Corinthians to be more spiritual by trying harder to love others?
4. What do these verses tell us about who God is? What is the secret of a lasting relationship?

Great Commandment Matters

Memorize Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT):

'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Week Six: The Secret of Lasting Relationships
continued

Relationships Matter Challenge

Evaluate the relationship(s) you chose to work on. What worked well? How have you been taking a step further to “love your neighbors” just as Jesus loves us. Do the Relationships Matter Self-Assessment post-test.

Relationships Matter Self-Assessment (post)

ASSESSING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS	Poor					Great				
Spouse or marriage prospect:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or In-Laws:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Child:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Relative:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Boss/Supervisor:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Neighbor:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Brother/Sister in Christ:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Friend:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Prayer Matters

Honor Jesus who demonstrates the perfect love: the ultimate gift from God that redeems through Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross! Celebrate how much God has empowered you to build, deepen, change or rebuild a relationship in the last few weeks. Ask the Lord to give you strength to keep on loving your neighbor as yourself and the way God loves you!