



**Mustard Seed Children's Ministry
Sunday School Lesson for 30 July 2006**

"God Teaches Us How to Love"

GOLDEN TEXT: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

To stress that the Bible teaches us to love one another and to help understand that whatever our gift(s) from God, we must use them in love to benefit others. To tell what Christian love does in terms of attitude and actions.

WORD WISE (make sure you understand these words):

Charity - godly love; Bible love; love that acts in the best interest of others.

Sounding Brass - brass instruments, like in a band or orchestra.

Tinkling Cymbal - instrument that makes a ringing, clanging or clashing sound

Envy - to resent someone's possessions or achievements; to be jealous.

Vaunt or Puff Up - to speak boastfully or to brag; inflated pride.

Faith - belief and trust in God

Hope - to feel or expect that things will turn out well

LESSON BACKGROUND:

Each person in God's family is given at least one gift to help build up the church and to benefit others. God does not give us these special gifts so that we can claim to be better than others; rather, he gives them so that we can use them in love to build up those whose lives we touch. The church at Corinth had become captivated by the gifts or special abilities given to them by the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, in 1 Corinthians 13, to remind them of the excellent way of love and to show them that all we do in the body of Christ is counted as nothing unless done in love.

If we love the Bible way, love will show in every attitude, thought, word and deed. We would set aside our own feelings for the benefit of others and to build up the body of Christ. Paul taught that of all gifts, charity (love) was the greatest gift. All other gifts must operate out of love. Evangelism, feeding the poor, prophecy, faith, and every other aspect of ministry must be exercised with love. We must make sure our hearts are always filled with the love of Christ before undertaking any ministry. After describing the calling of God and spiritual gifts to the Corinthian church, Paul explains that each of these gifts must operate in love to be of any benefit. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes love as the greatest gift and explains the way of love.

TELLING THE LESSON:**1. How does Paul describe a person who does not have charity or love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)?**

According to Paul, no matters how spiritual you may look or behave, if you do not have love, you are "nothing." It does not matter whether you are gifted to speak in "other" or "unknown" languages - if you do not have love you are just making a lot of noise (like a sounding brass or cymbal). Even having the gift of prophecy, knowing and understanding secrets of God, and having mountain-moving faith means nothing if you do not have love to motivate these gifts. Feeding the poor, generous giving or participation in any other area of ministry must be done from a heart of love to benefit the giver.

2. What is charity (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)?

Charity is godly love (Christian love) that acts in the best interest of others. Charity is not the personal attachment kind of love, nor the warmth of family ties but rather a love that always has the welfare of others as its goal. To help us understand, Paul tells what love does and what love avoids.

To love the Bible way is to exhibit patience and kindness. To love is not to be jealous because of another's possessions or accomplishments. It is not to brag about one's self, not to act unbecomingly, not to try to get the best for oneself, not to become harsh, and not to keep an inventory of wrongs done. Love "hangs in there" - it does not give up in bearing, believing, hoping and enduring all things.

3. Will charity ever fail (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)?

Paul says that charity will never fail. This love is necessary for every spiritual gift to serve God's purposes. Love is forever and will keep on working after all the other gifts have served their purposes and have vanished away. Love is a possession of every member in the body of Christ; unlike prophesy, revelation and understanding - these are given in part - no one person is given the whole revelation, and these parts will not be necessary anymore when "that which is perfect is come."

4. What does Paul mean about speaking, understanding and thinking as a child (1 Cor. 13:11-12)?

Paul only states what is natural and right. As a child, you are expected to be childish or immature in all things - including speech, understanding and thinking. But as we become older and more mature, we start to put away childish actions. It is the same with the church as it matures. There is a time in the church when our speech, understanding and thinking is immature, but as we grow in grace, we become more focused on Christ. In the beginning, our image and understanding of God may be dark and confused because we are only able to reflect what our "childish" mind sees. As we mature, we understand that this childish image of God's glory is limited, and we, by faith, look for something better and know that when we see our Lord, Christ Jesus, we shall understand fully and see perfectly. Love will be made perfect.

5. Why is charity greater than faith and hope (1 Corinthians 13:13)?

Charity (love) is greater than faith and hope because it is the quality of God. It is important that we believe in God (faith). It is also important that we have confidence in God's promises for us (hope). But love keeps faith and hope from becoming selfish. Love motivates and adds value to every good thing.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE:

Showing Bible love is not easy. We must acknowledge that Jesus was the only person who could ever love perfectly. Although it may not always be easy to love, Jesus tells us to "love one another" (John 15:12). Let's be patient and kind to other people. Let's not be jealous. Let's not brag or be selfish. Let's not be quick to get angry and say mean things. Let's not dwell on all the bad things that have been done to us. Let's trust Jesus to help us and allow Him to love others through us.

HELPING TO REMEMBER:

Materials needed: colored construction paper, white copy paper, stapler, scissors, crayons, markers, stickers, stars, magazines (optional), etc. Have each child take a sheet of construction paper and several sheet of white paper and fold to form a book. Have an adult staple the pages together at the fold. The cover of each book can be decorated to each child's liking; write on the cover "Bible Love," "Showing Love" or some other title for their book. The white pages can be used to draw pictures that show love in action. If magazines are available, pictures can also be cut out that show love in action.

Two additional activities are included at the end of the lesson.

EXPLAINING THE GOLDEN TEXT:

"Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"
(1 Corinthians 13:13)

Paul said that believing God (faith) is important. Knowing God has good plans for us (hope) is also important. But for living with other people, Bible love (charity) is the most important of all. Bible love is the greatest of all gifts and should be the priority of every believer.

PRAYER

Dear God, I love you. Thank you for your great love. Please open my eyes and my heart to understand how to love others. Help me to use my gifts in love to serve others, in Jesus' name. Amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

The lesson for next week will discuss and help us to understand forgiveness, *Giving Forgiveness*. Scripture lesson text will be 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 7:2-15.

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ACTIVITY 1: How Does Your Love Rate?

Circle your current level in these characteristics of love. For the characteristics that you rate lowest, pray and ask God to help you grow in these areas.

	Lowest									Highest
Patient	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Kind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Free from Envy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Free from Boasting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Courteous / Polite	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Considerate of Others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Think Good not Evil	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rejoice with Truth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hopeful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Persevere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Activity 2: Word Scramble

Unscramble the letters to reveal characteristics of love.

- 1 H E O P
- 2 R I O E E C J
- 3 D I K N
- 4 R T U O O C E S U
- 5 E I N P T T A
- 6 E B E E I L V
- 7 H I A F T
- 8 E V E R S P R E E
- 9 R Y T H A C I
- 10 S R A E I O D C N E T

Answer key for word scramble:

1-hope, 2-rejoice, 3-kind, 4-courteous, 5-patient
6-believe, 7-faith, 8-persevere, 9-charity, 10-considerate