

# ***A More Excellent Way***

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*Slide Notes*

## **Love God, Love People**

- Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.  
— Matthew 22:37-40 (NKJV)

## **Loving People is the Harder Part**

- What’s not to love about God?
  - And He’s not so needy.
- However, in an intimate love relationship with God...
  - He will regularly mess with your life more than any person ever could.
- If God is not regularly messing with your ways, your attitudes, and your comfort...
  - then something is deficient in your love relationship with Him.

## **1 Corinthians 13**

- The Love Chapter – Agape
- Finest explanation of characteristics of agape
- But it’s very interesting how Paul introduces agape love...
  - But earnestly desire the best gifts.  
And yet I show you a more excellent way. — 1 Corinthians 12:31
  - Paul had just finished a masterful explanation of spiritual gifts and the Body of Christ
  - “But wait, there’s more!”

## **1 Corinthians 13:1-2**

- Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. (v1)
- 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, but have not love, I am nothing. (v2)

## **I Get This...**

- ... for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? — 1 John 4:20

## **Then there's Verse 3!**

- And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. — 1 Corinthians 13:3
- Paul takes it to a whole new level!

## **Loving Choices Are Not Enough!**

- 1 Cor 13:3 says you can do loving things without being loving.
- I sure don't want to only act like I feel!
- But I can't afford to leave it at that.
- I observed that I can make loving choices while being resentful or criticizing inside.
- Choosing to love when you are not "feeling it" can help move you forward...
- But agape love is something deeper.

## **Agape Motivates Choices & Actions**

- For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. — John 3:16
- Jesus' whole life modeled agape for us.
- A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. — John 13:34
- His was a love from the heart, not just outward actions.

# Characteristics of Agape

## Agape Does Not or Is Not...

- Envy
- Parade itself
- Puffed up
- Behave rudely
- Seek its own
- Provoked
- Think evil
- Rejoice in unrighteousness

## Agape Does or Is...

- Suffers long
- Kind
- Rejoices in truth
- Bears all things
- Believes all things
- Hopes all things
- Endures all things
- Never fails

## Also an Interesting Finish

- Not only did Paul introduce chapter 13 in an interesting way...
- But he also transitioned into chapter 14 with a command...
- "Pursue love..." — 1 Corinthians 14:1
- Greek word for pursue here is dioko
  - ... to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing ... to press on ... swiftly to reach the goal
  - dioko is most often translated "persecute"  
– to pursue in a hostile manner
  - Both are aggressive!

## How Can We Pursue Agape?

- Our core beliefs and values must change to more closely match those of God.
- There are two parts to this transformation...
  - And do not be conformed to this world
  - but be transformed by the renewing of your mind... — Romans 12:2
- Choosing loving actions help reinforce the transformation process...
- But they do not substitute for the transformation of your heart

## Steps to Growth

- So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises [in Christ] to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone. ...
- ... The more you grow like this, the more you will become productive and useful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop these virtues are blind or, at least, very shortsighted. They have already forgotten that God has cleansed them from their old life of sin. — 2 Peter 1:5-9 (NLT)
- We love each other as a result of his loving us first. — 1 John 4:19 (NLT)

## Pursue the More Excellent Way