



Week 1 Study Sheet

The 7:47 Principle

Introduction

Throughout time, much ink has been used to describe what love is. We share stories of loved ones united through romantic prose and tell tales of sacrificial acts of valor to define what love is. God's Word, the whole Bible itself tells the greatest love story - of God's love for his creation. Jesus tells us this, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13 NRSV) Through his words directed toward his disciples, we understand one foundational truth about what love is, it is sacrifice.

Paul understood this sacrificial love. He gave up status, freedom, and eventually his own life to spread the good news about this love. As he pens his letter to the church at Corinth, he pens a love letter to a congregation that is struggling to understand what love is. One of the first gentile specific churches, Paul is dealing with cultural norms in the society that either degrade what love is or assault the very nature of love. As much a letter of correction, it deals with Chloe's people who report quarrels (1:11), sexual immorality (5:1), taking one another to court (6:1), infidelity (7), partaking of food sacrificed to idols (8:1), and even drunkenness and gluttony during the Lord's Supper (11:21). With this backdrop, Paul pens one of the most used passages defining love in chapter 13. In a society that seems so distorted, Paul clarifies the purpose of love: what is received from God is to be shared with others around in very practical ways.

Pray

Lord, let love become the banner of our life. Let us not simply be static definitions of love, but dynamic examples of love where we live, work, learn, and play.

Read

[John 13:12-20](#)

Discuss

- How did the actions of Jesus in this passage reveal love?

Read

[John 13:31-35](#)

Discuss

- What key words, themes, and thoughts are used by Jesus in this passage?
- What does Jesus reveal about himself in this passage?
- How is love defined within this passage and the chapter?
- How does our love for one another reveal that we are his disciples?

Read

[Ephesians 5:1-2](#)

Discuss

- How do we imitate Jesus?
- What are tangible ways to live in love with one another?
- What does this passage reveal about Jesus?
- How can we be a fragrant offering to God?

Practice

Start this week by defining love. Fill in the blank: Love is _____. Create a working document where you can add to this definition each week. As you begin defining love, put it into action. Spend this week living as an example of love as you've defined it. Share this word and action with a small group weekly as you build upon this definition.



Week 2 Study Sheet

Love is Patient, Love is Kind

Introduction

A key element to understanding and interpreting Paul's writing is to understand its genre. Paul wrote letters to the churches he helped start. We call these writings epistles, literary works in the form of one or many letters. Paul often used the same letter writing formula that we use today: opening greeting, the body of the letter, and a formal closing. Paul also used other literary techniques within his correspondence to various congregations and leaders. Through his letters, we benefit from Paul's in-depth knowledge of the Old Testament, rhetorical prowess, and practical applications.

Paul's letters are written to specific church bodies, within specific circumstances. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul's words of greeting are longer and more flattering unlike his words to the church at Corinth. When he addresses the church at Ephesus, he addresses a more developed church. His words and focus on love within the church at Ephesus connect with the Revelation 2 criticism that they had lost their first love. The church at Philippi seems to understand and practice this well, while the church of Ephesus needs more direction and instruction to make love practical among one another.

Pray

Lord, thank you for how you patiently love us. Let us learn and practice love with patience and kindness toward others.

Read

[Ephesians 3:14-21](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words resonate as you read through these verses?
- According to this passage, how is love patient and kind?
- How does God's love surpass knowledge?
- How can we reveal Christ's love in our hearts to others?

Read

[Philippians 2:1-11](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words capture your attention as you read through these verses?
- How would you characterize love from Paul's words?
- How does Jesus' example challenge us from this passage?
- How can we reflect the example of Jesus where we live, work, learn, and play?

Practice

Make a list of things that Jesus is challenging you with regarding patience. Often when we are not kind it is because we have lost patience. In what areas of your life do you need to grow in patience? Recruit others to help you grow in patience this week.



Week 3 Study Sheet

The Comparison Trap

Introduction

Many cities masterfully display their greatness. They are studded with monuments and statues that tell of their glorious achievements. They build skyscrapers and shipyards that boast of their grand economic feats. Small towns can be proud too. Hometown pride runs deep for the high school with a championship winning team or the local business that becomes a global success but retains their small-town values. Having a well-known hometown makes a person proud of where they lived or grew up.

Paul understands this well. When he writes to Rome, the congregation there is surrounded by well-known ancient wonders of the world. “All things lead to Rome,” was not a statement of fiction but of fact. Rome was the capital of the known world and during this time most things came to her or from her. Philippi was no Rome, but it was a proud city. It was the bridge between the Byzantine east and Roman west. It served as a port city that connected these worlds. Both proud cities with proud residents. Yet, Paul stressed to both congregations the importance of humility. For them to love others, they must learn to submit their pride and boasting to the unity of Jesus.

Pray

Oh Lord our God, may your mercy overcome our pride, may your grace bestow humility that all would see only your love within us.

Read

[Romans 12:9-16](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words resonate as you read through these verses?
- What key characteristics of love can you identify?
- What things does love not do?
- How does this passage reveal the nature of God?

Read

[Philippians 3:1-11](#)

Discuss

- What phrases or words capture your attention in this passage?
- What does this passage reveal about the character of Paul?
- How do you relate with Paul in this passage?
- How can we reveal the nature of love by applying this passage to our lives?

Practice

Spend the week practicing hospitality. Paul believed that the cure to envy and pride is hospitality (Romans 12:13). Take time to define what hospitality means to you, and work to actively crucify envy and pride as you serve and share your treasures and talents with others.



Week 4 Study Sheet

Mind Your Manners

Introduction

It can be easy to take offense at someone else's rudeness. It can be hard to notice our own rudeness. Many things contribute to our interpretation of rudeness. Maybe you grew up in a town where everyone waved at everyone. Now you're in a big city where you are afraid that the person waving at you is trying to sell you something or making a nasty gesture. Maybe you lived in a city where you understood that yielding meant that you allowed the other person to enter traffic before you, but now you are in a city where it is either stop or go!

For us, the best way to deepen our understanding of what love is begins with understanding what love is not. Love is not rude. Paul understood that rudeness was a fruit of self-seeking. The church at Corinth struggled with their own self-seeking desires. They were known for their economic wealth and therefore harbored the spirit of self-seeking. One could probably conclude this from reading the first 11 chapters of Corinthians. Paul helps us see the fruit of the other side when he writes to the churches of Ephesus and Philippi. Take a moment before you pray and think about things that are the opposite of rudeness and self-seeking. What actions and thoughts come to mind as you reflect?

Pray

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV)

Read

[Ephesians 4:17-32](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words resonate as you read through these verses?
- What things “darken our understanding?”
- In what ways can our hearts be hardened?
- How can we lose sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit?
- How can we “put off” our old self?
- How is Paul teaching us to share love with others?
- How can we invite God to help us yield our speech to him?

Read

[Philippians 3:12-4:1](#)

Discuss

- What phrases or words capture your attention?
- How can we be driven but not self-seeking?
- How is Paul an example of how to pursue God?
- What “earthly things” do people seek?
- As followers of Jesus, what things should we seek?
- How does God guide you to pursue him?

Practice

Practice sharing encouraging words with those where you live, work, learn or play. Paul reminds us, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:15 NIV) Ask God to bring to mind someone who needs to hear good news and make a list of how you can encourage and affirm them. Share those words with them verbally, write them a letter, or send a text.



Week 5 Study Sheet

The Heart Full of Hurts

Introduction

Isn't it interesting how easily we can recall the names of everyone who has ever wronged us in life, but rarely even try to recall the names of all who have been kind. We can remember Susie teasing us in first grade about our worn-out shoes or Billy who made fun of our haircut in high school. We can remember Zack who cheated us out of the promotion for, or Rachel who knowingly flirted with the guy we liked. These wrongs are not right, and they often keep us up at night. But should they?

Love doesn't remember the bad things people do, rather it focuses on the loving actions of those around us. Paul spends the first part of chapter 6 in Corinthians speaking against the lawsuits and actions of those who are a part of the Corinthian church. The church's infighting is a direct result of their lack of forgiveness toward one another. Jesus models forgiveness of wrongs in one of his last conversations recorded in John 21:15-19. Jesus was speaking with Peter, who had denied knowing Jesus three times. Jesus knew this wrong had happened, but instead of remembering Peter's wrong, Jesus offered forgiveness, direction, and truth.

Pray

Jesus, we choose to remember the things that are good and true in our life. Help us to forgive those who have done us wrong so that we may rejoice in your truth over our life.

Read

[Romans 12:17-21](#)

Discuss

- What phrases or words capture your attention?
- Why would it not be right in the eyes of the Lord to repay evil with evil?
- In what ways can you live at peace with others?
- How does God's wrath reveal his nature regarding wrongdoing?
- Why should we be hospitable to our enemies?

Read

[Philippians 4:2-9](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words resonate as you read through these verses?
- What things should we rejoice in?
- What tools does Paul give us to be forgiving?
- What truths should we focus on in life?

Practice

Keep a record of good. Love does not record wrongs, but it does rejoice in the good. Start this week by journaling your gratitude. Make a list of the people, things, and attributes of God that you are grateful for this week.



Week 6 Study Sheet

Love is a Package Deal

Introduction

We often declare that Jesus is love, but what does that really mean? When we align the defining words of Paul with the actions in the life of Jesus, we see clearly what love is. Jesus, being fully God, took on the full nature of man. As man he was born an infant, lived through childhood, and survived puberty. He learned to read and write. He learned the trade of his earthly father. He hoped he could carry out the calling upon his life. He trusted that if he offered his body to his heavenly father that God would respond to his actions with love. The King of Kings was humbly born in a manger and died on a cross. He lived all the things.

His brother must have understood what Jesus faced in this earthly life as he penned, “Dear brothers and sister, when trouble comes your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you, know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.” (James 1:2-3 NLT) In what ways has love helped you through a trial? Love bears all things because it pushes through every trial with hopeful imagination relying on the love of God to carry us through all situations.

Pray

Almighty God, give us such vision of your purpose and such an assurance of your love and power, that we may ever hold fast the hope which is in Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen. (Bosco Peters)

Read

[Ephesians 6:10-20](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words resonate as you read through these verses?
- Why do we need the full armor of God to love others?
- How does the armor of God help us endure all things?
- How do we pray in the Spirit?
- How does praying in the Spirit help us in all things?

Read

[Philippians 4:10-20](#)

Discuss

- What words or phrases capture your attention?
- What is Paul’s example of trusting God in all things?
- How can we be content in all things?
- How do we rely on God in all things?
- How can our community help us in all things?

Practice

Pray for one another. In what areas in life do you need more faith? What things can you not bear? Where have you lost hope? What trial are you going through? Share your burdens with another and ask for prayer. Pray for someone else. Report back to each other to encourage one another.



Week 7 Study Sheet

The Limitless Life

Introduction

Paul could have been overwhelmed when he received news of the failures of the Corinthian church. They were not reflecting Jesus in their community, they were fighting with one another, and they were morally compromised. However, Paul was not fazed by their carnality. Remember, at one point Paul had hunted down and persecuted many of the early followers of Jesus. The Book of Acts tells us that he was present at the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr. (Acts 7:58) Paul knew failure. He also knew the relentless love of God. In his conversation in chapter 9 of Acts, Jesus himself calls Paul to follow him. This same relentless love of God has called many of us. It has transformed our lives.

We will have failures in life, we live in a world broken by sin. But God will never fail us in transforming those failures for our good and his glory. It is his love for us that prevents him from failing us. God so loved us, that gave us the promises of the Old Testament and the hope of the New Testament. God so loved us that he sent his Son to live perfectly knowing that we could not. His love never fails us because his Son never failed him.

Pray

Nothing can separate, even if I run away, your love never fails, I know I still make mistakes, but you have new mercies for me every day, your love never fails. (Lyrics from Your Love Never Fails by Jesus Culture)

Read

[1 John 1:5-2:14](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words resonate as you read through these verses?
- Why would God be described as light?
- In what ways can we walk in the dark?
- How can we maintain fellowship with God?
- What example does John give us of God's unfailing love?
- In what ways can we respond to God with our love?
- What are some tangible examples of being light and being dark?
- How can we share God's unfailing love with others from John's example?

Practice

The Old and New Testaments are narratives and testaments of God's never-failing love. Survey the Old and New Testaments, document all the ways that God has not failed to fulfill his promises. Use the following examples to study but feel free to add others. Genesis 1, 3, 9, 12, Exodus 20, 1 Samuel 3, 2 Samuel 12, Isaiah 9, Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 37, Zechariah 14, Luke 2, Acts 2, and Revelation 22.



Week 8 Study Sheet

Love Is

Introduction

Paul's description of love is driven by action. He was addressing the behavior of a church, and practical application was required. "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT). Paul clearly defines what love is and what love is not through verbs.

Another author in the New Testament looks at love in a radically new way. John who is attributed to authoring the Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John, and Revelation does not describe love as a verb, but rather a noun. He simple states, God is love (1 John 4:8). For John, love is defined by who God is, not just what he does. God is love because he is patient and kind, jealous but gentle, long suffering and forgiving, just and true, and is always present. God is love not because he does these things, but because he is these things in his very being.

Pray

O Lord our God, grant us grace to desire you with our whole heart; that so desiring, we may seek and find you; and so, finding, may love you; and so loving, may hate those sins from which you have delivered us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Anselm, England/1033-1109)

Read

[1 John 3:11-24](#)

Discuss

- What themes, phrases, or words resonate as you read through these verses?
- What noticeable ways of love does John offer us?
- How does John reveal the character of God?
- In what ways do you remain in fellowship with God and others?

Read

[1 John 4:7-21](#)

Discuss

- What phrases or words capture your attention?
- In what ways have you seen God's love come into your life?
- How does God show his love for us by sending Jesus?
- Why is loving one another an authentic way to experience God among us?
- How has the Spirit helped you love others?
- How does love cast out fear?

Practice

Reflect God's love where you live, work, learn, and play. We have spent the last few weeks defining what love is. Consider how you can show God's love. Invite a friend to join your group and attend a worship service at Oak Hills Church. Look on the OHC website for ways you can serve on campus. Pray over the many global opportunities that we have and yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit. At Oak Hills Church love is action that points to the author of love, God.