

Call to Worship

Sing to the Lord all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. (1 Chronicles 16: 23,24,28)

Prayer

Lord, fill me that I can worship you with love, passion and joy. I lift my heart, my hands to you in praise for you are so wonderful, so lovely. I bring an offering to you today – myself. Only through Jesus. Amen

Song: “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” by Henry Van Dyke

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore You, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.
2. All Your works of joy surround You, earth and heaven reflect Your rays,
Stars and angels sing around You, centre of unbroken praise;
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain praising you eternally.
3. Always giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest!
Loving Father, Christ our Brother, let your light upon us shine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.
4. Mortals, join the mighty chorus, which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us, joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

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Prayer of Intercession

Father God, you are the Lord of my life, and I come to you today confessing to you that I have made mistakes. I have not lived my life as you wanted, not loved when it was needed, not obeyed you when I really do know what you want of me. And I confess to you my lack of faith as I pray to you, the one who can move mountains. Give me faith Lord as I pray for those who face mountains every day.

- Mountains of health issues, and I pray for those of my friends and family who find each day difficult, painful, or depressing. I pray for hope and for healing.
- Mountains of conflict between countries which seem insurmountable. I pray for the vulnerable and innocent as they suffer in these conflicts.

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- I pray for our government both in South Australia and federally. I pray that they will act with integrity and honour and compassion as they face difficult decisions, and I pray that this country will be united under you.
- I pray with those Christians around the world who face the mountain of persecution every day. Pour out your grace on them Lord, sustain them with the gift of faith.

Father, I bring these prayers to you in the name of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus. Amen

Bible Reading:

- 1 Corinthians 13

And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all my possessions to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Song: AHB 364 *by Charles Wesley*

1. Christ from whom all blessings flow, perfecting the saints below,
Hear us, who thy nature share, who thy mystic body are.
2. Join us, in one spirit join, let us still receive of thine;
Still for more on thee we call, thou who fillest all in all.
3. Move, and actuate, and guide: various gifts to each divide;
Place according to thy will, let us all our work fulfil.
4. Freely may we all agree, touched with loving sympathy;
Kindly for each other care; every member feel its share.
5. Love, like death, has all destroyed, rendered all distinctions void;
Names, and sects, and parties fall; thou O Christ, art all in all.

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All You Need is Love?

Message: "All You Need is Love?"

Let's imagine for a moment that you have a highly skilled pastor, minister, friend or mentor. They preach and lead Bible studies with clarity, depth of understanding, and enthusiasm. They pray with great faith and mountains are moved, healings happen, miracles occur. They speak strongly into current events and take a faith-based stand on the issues of the day. They teach tithing and beyond, and model that in their own lives. In their worship times they extol Almighty God in tongues. When the world ridicules them or treats them badly, they stand stoically and are firm in their convictions.

Oh, to have a pastor like that! They must be close to the perfect Christian. The apostle Paul doesn't think so. All these things are commendable, and we should aspire to them. But Paul says there may be a missing ingredient. If you bake bread without yeast, or bake a cake with plain flour, not self-raising flour, things will fall flat. And if you excel in all the gifting mentioned above, but leave out love, all that stuff is useless.

Some of us, among countless others, have chosen 1 Corinthians 13, particularly from verse 4, as their Bible Reading at their wedding. There is nothing wrong with that because it speaks into the marriage relationship, but few would know of the intention of its inclusion in the letter to the Corinthians. The church in Corinth was a bit of a mess and Paul wrote to them what is basically a letter of correction. They would have had leaders and people with all the above gifts and attributes, but still the church was fractured. Their Holy Communion celebrations were a disaster with some missing out because they could not afford to contribute to the lavish table, and their meetings did more harm than good (1 Corinthians 11:17). Add to that a level of sexual immorality and you can see why Paul had to write a letter! That is the context for 1 Corinthians 13.

Given all the issues that Paul outlines, he introduces chapter 13 with these words, "And now I will show you the most excellent way". In that context 1 Corinthians 13 is not only a great statement about love, but also helpful for reflecting on our own actions and relationships. It's important at the outset to say that Paul is not aligning with the Beatles hit, "All you need is love". God empowers us in service to him, walks with us through pain and suffering, God has gifted us, and blesses us with the fruits of the Spirit, all important parts of our daily Christian life, but all of which must be underpinned by love.

The much-loved verses from 4 to 7, so widely used in wedding ceremonies, are more than a great definition of love, it makes us examine our behaviour, thoughts and attitudes as we live out our lives in Christ. Let's take some time of quiet to sit before God and let the Holy Spirit speak to us about how we measure up to love like this. Take each statement, read it, listen, rejoice, be chastened, confess. Follow wherever the Spirit leads you concerning your church relationships, your marriage relationship, contact with your friends, your colleagues, even the person at the checkout, and other drivers!

Spend time with each one.

- Love is patient - think back, how have I handled frustrations, shortcomings in others (my Achilles' heel is technology and those experts on the phone who don't want to deal with this dinosaur!)?
Patience demonstrates your love for others.

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- Love is kind - think back, when have I not been actively kind? Remember, even being neutral, disinterested, apathetic is not kind.....
Kindness demonstrates your love for others.
- Love does not envy - think back, when have I thought, "I wish I had what he/she has", "I wish I said that first", "I wish I was like him/her". Remember, resentment and even hate follows in the footsteps of envy.....
Not being envious, being satisfied with who you are and what you have, being secure in God's love for you, and rejoicing with others, demonstrates your love for others.
- Love does not boast, it is not proud, it is not self-seeking - think back, have you told stories where you are the hero, where you have pumped yourself up with a bit of self-aggrandisement? We do this because of our need to build our self-esteem among others. The Lord's words to Paul were, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"
Humility, and affirming others, demonstrates love.
- Love is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs - think back, have I been short tempered and provided myself with excuses for being like that (I'm tired, it's their fault)? Have I dug back into the rubbish heap of wrongs and offences against me. Doing this feeds and nourishes resentment.....
Forgiveness demonstrates love for others.
- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. I know of the sweet delight in that second chocolate muffin. I know I shouldn't, but it is so nice. It's the same if I hug to myself resentment, greed, lust, and prejudice. I know I shouldn't, but I think that will satisfy me.....
The truth is that this is our old selves trying to reclaim that which is redeemed by Jesus. There is no room for love for others there.
- Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Always! Can I say that when I think back? Have I failed?.....
Plenty of times. But God's grace, shown to us in Jesus, never fails. Love never does (verse 8). And the more we let God's Holy Spirit have his way in us, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus and love grows in us.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:31 to eagerly desire particularly the greater gifts, those gifts that are essential to the body of Christ, for its health and its growth. Prophecy preaching, teaching messages of wisdom and knowledge, healing miracles, tongues and their interpretation. But consider this. None of them make the cut when we go to heaven! Why would they in a place where knowledge, wisdom, healing and understanding are complete. 1 Corinthians 13:13 – "These three remain, faith hope and love. But the greatest of these is love".

Yep. Love makes the cut!

All You Need is Love?

Song: AHB 537 *by Kate Wilkinson*

1. May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day,
By his love and power controlling all I do and say.
2. May the word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour
So that all may see I triumph only through his power.
3. May the peace of God my Father rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.
4. May the love of Jesus fill me as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self-abasing, this is victory.
5. May I run the race before me strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus as I onward go.

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Benediction

Lord, as you walk with me this week, help me to walk in your truth, in the love and grace of Jesus, and in the strength and presence of the Holy Spirit. Amen

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA