

A More Excellent Way

And now I will show you the most excellent way. **—1 Corinthians 12:31**

Paul's ultimate purpose was to show exactly what the New Testament means by love and to show if we are like Jesus, what Jesus meant by love. What is this most excellent way?

Love is first to be seen as a demonstration. Paul says, "I will show you the most excellent way."

It is a demonstration in words: Paul promises to demonstrate the most excellent way by language. By any account it is one of the most sublime pieces of writing on record; even many non-Christians stand in awe of it. These words are the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and they should convict us. I know of a man who read 1 Corinthians 13 every day for a year—on his knees. He was never the same again!

It is also a demonstration of works. We are not saved by works; we are not saved by love; we are saved by faith. Paul is writing to those who are saved. If they will live this way, they will dazzle the world. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

But it is also a demonstration of wisdom. What Paul calls love, James calls wisdom. Why? Possibly because James, a Hebrew, grew up in the wisdom tradition of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. All of the wisdom in the Book of Proverbs can be demonstrated living by love.

It is a demonstration of the will. When I call love a demonstration of the will, I mean it is a choice. Every single one of us can live this way. It doesn't matter what our IQ is, our age, or our maturity. The Christians at Corinth had been saved for four years, and Paul calls them "childish." But this

is the way to grow up. Love is a choice. We must never wait for a mood or feeling to overwhelm us. That may never come. Love is voluntary, an act of the will—what we deliberately and consciously choose to do.

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