

What Is Love?

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. **—1 Corinthians 13:4-5**

☒ A fresh definition of love can be quite difficult to come by. A two-word definition is “selfless concern,” and if I had to narrow it to one word, it would be “unselfishness” or “brokenness.” That is what Paul meant by “the most excellent way.”

First, Paul describes love as grace renewed. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 he says, “And we ... being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” Believers often find themselves going from glory to glory in church or in their quiet time. Often the transition is accompanied by suffering, but every experience of being changed carries with it a fresh baptism of love, of unselfishness. It is like the calm after the storm. It is this calm that is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5. This is a description of grace renewed. It is not only a renewal of faith and trust, but it is a peace that is devoid of bitterness.

Second, Paul describes love as guilt removed, and that in two ways: first, we don't feel guilty, and second, we don't make others feel guilty. When grace is renewed, and we are changed from glory to glory, the guilt is removed, and we feel so good. Guilt is the most crippling thing in the world. But when the guilty feeling is gone, the need to make others feel guilty is not there. It is when we feel totally forgiven, totally absolved, that we will find it easy to forgive others.

Third, it is also a description of the Golden Rule: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,

for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12). In other words, treat people the way you would like them to treat you. How do you feel when people make you feel guilty? How do you feel when people blame you? It makes you feel like dirt; you feel awful. God keeps no record of wrongs.

Perhaps your marriage is in trouble. If that is the case, start living like this. Don't wait for your wife or husband to do it—you do it. It will heal your marriage. "Do to others what you would have them do to you."

Excerpted from *Just Love* (Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1997).