

**Lesson 63**

**TEXT** 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

**OBJECTIVE** The students will be able to enumerate a number of reasons why divine love is the greatest of all things.

**KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER** And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. — 1 Corinthians 13:13

**KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH** “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” — Colossians 3:14

**ANSWER  
TITLE:**

# **The Greatest of These**

**SEARCH  
TITLE:**

# **Love**

### **REFERENCE INFORMATION**

Love is the essence of Christianity, an undying expression of Jesus’ doctrine. It is more potent for the building of the Church than any, or all of the various manifestations of God’s power. Love is the Church’s most effective weapon. Without love, all the various gifts of the Spirit are of no avail. Love is the perfection of human character. Love is the most powerful force in the universe.

Even if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, even if I give my body to be burned, if I have not love, it profits me nothing. What a thought-provoking passage! The gifts of speaking like an angel, of prophesying, of having all knowledge, of faith that moves mountains, of charity to the last dollar—all are of no use unless we have the spirit of Christian love. What a call to self-examination!

### **YOUR OPENER**

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# Love

**TEXT:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

**KEY VERSE:** And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.  
— Colossians 3:14

Someone has said, "Love is properly the image of God in the soul; for God is love. By faith we receive from our Maker; by hope we expect a future and eternal good; but by love we resemble God; and by it alone are we qualified to enjoy Heaven and be one with Him throughout eternity." Love is the fulfilling of the Law. The Law did not have power to change men's lives, but Christ, who is love personified, did!

1. The first three verses of our text reveal that many good things can be absolutely worthless without love—the Christlike kind of love. List these good qualities opposite the verses below.

- 1 Corinthians 13:1
- 1 Corinthians 13:2
- 1 Corinthians 13:3

2. Pick two or more of the qualities named above. How can these qualities be shown without love (that is, with a wrong motive)?

3. Question 2 developed how certain human qualities can be exercised without the presence of divine love. Now show the merit of these qualities when divine love is present.

4. In verses 4-7, we are given the elements of love—those of which Christian love is made. Each of these elements can be given common names: they are virtues which we hear about often. And with Christ in our hearts they can be practiced by every person in every situation in life. Alongside each of the elements listed on the next page, write a synonym that is more familiar in our day.

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## RESPONSES

1. Ask the students to read the appropriate verses and give their responses, which will include speaking with tongues of men and angels, having the gift of prophecy with the understanding of mysteries, having faith to remove mountains, giving all one's goods to feed the poor, and giving one's body in martyrdom. Discuss with the class that doing any or all of these things would be futile unless the divine love of God in the heart prompted the actions.

2. Encourage students to cite specific examples. Answers may include the following thoughts.  
1 Corinthians 13:1 — a "hallelujah" or "praise the Lord" sounds flat when there is no real Spirit behind it.

1 Corinthians 13:2 — a person could have a degree in theology, and knowledge of the original biblical languages, but without a born-again experience and being led by the Spirit, he may speak half-truths or false doctrine. Great faith, if it is in secular things and not a saving faith, may bring advantage in this life but no eternal gain.

1 Corinthians 13:3 — though a person may display a philanthropic nature, his earthly gifts will bring no eternal benefit, so of what real value are they? A deeper discussion of the above thoughts can bring out that many actions of modern society are accomplished from a selfish point of view, hence will be of no eternal benefit.

3. Discuss with the students that when a person's testimony or message is filled with the divine love of God, it becomes an instrument that God uses to win souls. Ask the class: "To what persons does God reveal the deep treasures of His Word?" Is it not to those who seek and serve Him with a loving heart? Who has the greatest faith in God? Is it not the one who has the deepest love and trust for God in his heart? Bring out in discussion how the most beneficial giving of one's substance is that which is motivated from the standpoint of loving one another as God has loved us.

4. Patient, kind, content, humble, courteous, unselfish, even-tempered, fair, sincere, trusting, hopeful, long-suffering are equivalent words. Discuss how each of the words given is a part of love. Can any of these elements be eliminated and complete love still be present? Your conclusion should be that it might be possible to have a measure of these virtues without love, but one would not have divine love without these virtues.

## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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Love suffereth long . . . Beareth all things  
And is kind  
Love envieth not (Clue: think positive)  
Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up  
Doth not behave itself unseemly  
Seeketh not her own  
Is not easily provoked  
Thinketh no evil  
Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth  
in the truth  
Believeth all things  
Hopeth all things  
Endureth all things

5. List three things mentioned in verse 8 to which divine love is superior. Why?

6. "Now and then," is an expression in modern English language. Find two instances in our text where these words are used. Contrast the *now* with the *then*.

7. In your estimation why would the Apostle declare that divine love is the greatest attribute?

5. Divine love is shown to be superior to prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. Divine love excels in that it never fails. Prophecies will come to an end, tongues shall cease, and knowledge shall vanish. Ask the students how important these things were to the Early Church, and to the church today. Their responses should bring out that prophecies (whether predicting future events, or preaching the truths of God's Word), tongues (as given under the power and inspiration of the Holy Ghost), and knowledge (of things God has revealed in the past and His promises of the future), have been very important to the spiritual health of the church. However, though these things are of use during the Gospel dispensation, they will be of little use throughout eternity.

6. The words "now" and "then" are used twice in verse 12. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but *then* face to face: *now* I know in part; but *then* shall I know even as also I am known." In contrasting the *now* with the *then*, there are many possibilities for discussion. Thinking of eternity and eternal matters, how few things are entirely clear to us now, but then we shall see everything clearly and completely. Now we know in part, even at the best, but then we shall know as we are known. How completely are we known? God knows our thoughts. Who knows the number of the hairs of our head? God does!

7. The Apostle summarized his discourse on divine love with this thought, and it brings this lesson to a conclusion as well. Why would divine love be greater than faith or hope? Is faith not needed in order to please God? See Hebrews 11:6. Are we not saved by hope? See Romans 8:24. Discuss with the students that faith and hope have a very important part in serving the Lord in this present life, but how much will they be needed in eternity? "For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Romans 8:24). Divine love in the heart makes it possible for the Divine Nature to come to fruition in the life of a person. This is necessary for our spiritual life on earth, and it will continue in even a greater measure in eternal life. The love we have for God as we serve Him now will be increased many times when we see Him face to face and realize how much we are indebted to Him for His innumerable mercies to us.

## YOUR WRAP-UP

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## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What is love?

What do you think is the greatest love?

What have you learned from reading 1 Corinthians 13?

Who should we love?

How can we show love?

In reviewing the past quarter's lessons, why would we conclude that love is the sum of all these Christian attributes?

How does longsuffering demonstrate love?

What is the meaning of "charity [love] never faileth"?

Can you be self-centered and show true love at the same time? Why or why not?

In the ANSWER story, who was writing to whom?

## THINGS TO DO

Construct a chart, like the one below, on a blackboard or an overhead transparency, listing twelve elements of love. Opposite each one, fill in the name of a Bible character who was an example of that trait. Make two more columns to tell "when" and "how." With the aid of your students, fill in each of the blanks.

Love is . . .	Who	When	How
Forgiving	Jesus	On the Cross	Forgave the Thief
Patient			
Kind			
Content			
Humble			
Courteous			
Unselfish			
Even-tempered			
Sincere			
Trusting			
Hopeful			
Lasting			

Stand a tree branch in a can filled with sand. (If desired, spray the branch white first.) Explain to your class that this is a love tree. Give a number of hearts, cut from various colors of construction paper, to your students. Tell

them that for each thing they do that week which shows love to someone, they may write it down on one of the hearts. On the following Sunday they may hang the hearts on the tree. How many hearts will your tree be decorated with? If it's OK with your students, read what is written on the hearts and review briefly the many ways we can show love to those around us.

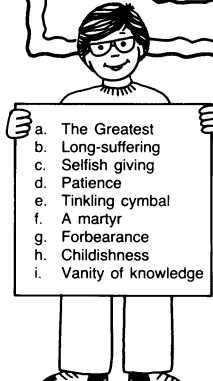
Bring a label from a can of food. Point out that this label is what people read to find out what is in the can. Compare the label to Christian love. People may "read" our love and, by recognizing it, will know that Christ is in us.

Any light bulb, no matter if it's 40 watt, 60 watt or 150 watt, is made to produce light when connected to the right source. The same is true with people. No one is ever too young or too old to show love for others. People will see God's light in each good deed you do.

## Answers for ANSWER

### What Is Love?

The greatest thing in a Christian's life is real love. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and match the words below with the definitions given. Put a star next to the ones that show love.



E   Your talk is a hollow sound with no sincerity, just noise.

  C   Give your goods to the poor so you can have a tax write-off.

  I   Be a Know-It-All with a high IQ but no love.

  F   Be willing to die for the cause of Jesus.

  B   Endure troubles for a long time.

  G   Tolerate the faults of others.

  H   Think and act as a child.

  A   Have charity.

  D   Be able to wait without complaining.