



# IN THE NAME OF LOVE DEVOTIONAL

LOVE AND POWER | NOVEMBER 15, 2020

**GRACE**  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** How can a Christian leader such as a parent, employer, teacher, coach, etc. balance their power or authority with love in the way they treat others?

**Key Passage:** *“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”* (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

The Bible has much to say about love. The Bible declares that “love is of God” and “God is love” (1 John 4:7–8). God is the Source of love, and everything He does is driven by love. God initiates a loving relationship with us; thus, any love we have for God is a response to His sacrificial love for us: 1 John 4:10 says, *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* This is important to understand because, as we live within God’s love, we will be able to love others. The closer you draw to God, the more you’ll sense His love, and the more you sense His love, the greater your capacity will be to extend love to others!

**Discuss:** Why do you think people have a difficult time accepting God’s love for them?

**Discuss:** Why do you think people have a difficult time expressing God’s love to others?

The Bible uses several different words for “love.” Depending on the context, love may refer to brotherly love (*philia*), or to romantic love (*eros*), or to love for family (*storge*). However, there is a special Greek word for the type of love that God displays: *agape*. *Agape* refers to a sacrificial love that seeks the best for others. *Agape* love is mentioned repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 13. A key point in our text for today, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, is that nothing can equal the value of *agape*. Love has no substitute.

- **Eloquent words cannot substitute for love.**

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”* (v.1)

In Bible days, some Jewish people believed angels had a special language and that only spiritually elite men could understand and speak it. Paul is asserting that even if this were true, if the spiritually elite man doesn’t have love then he just making an annoying noise like a “noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (v.1a) Constantly hearing only a deafening gong or a clanging cymbal would get on your nerves pretty quickly! Words without love are just noise. People resent and reject unloving words, but they will respond to words spoken in love.

**Discuss:** How can you make sure that your words are motivated by love?

- **Powerful abilities cannot substitute for love.**

*“And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” (v.2)*

We would certainly be impressed with a person who could accurately predict the future through “*prophetic powers*” (v.2a), but Paul says such a special ability is nothing if used without love. Also, our world is exploding with information and “*knowledge*” (v.2b) – we’re smarter now than we’ve ever been before. Yet our world still struggles with the same old problems of crime, prejudice, hate, etc. Why? Because what people need most is not more knowledge, but more love. Paul says that without love, knowledge is nothing. Even “*all faith*” (v.2c) that has confidence that could move mountains is nothing if love is missing. Christianity is about experiencing the love Jesus has for you and then using your powerful abilities in love-driven ways.

**Discuss:** What is the biggest difference in someone whose accomplishments are marked by love as opposed to someone who isn’t?

**Discuss:** How can you make sure that your abilities are driven by love?

- **Sacrificial actions cannot substitute for love.**

*“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” (v.3)*

Paul has addressed how words (v.1) and abilities (v.2) are no substitutes for love. Now he addresses how dramatic displays of sacrifice such as giving away all we have to the poor (v.3a), or even delivering up our bodies to be burned as martyrs (v.3b) also fail as substitutes for love.

*Agape* is always sacrificial, but not all sacrificial actions come from love. For example, some cults and religions practice forms of sacrifice, but it’s not for God or for the good of others, it is for themselves—their sacrifice is for the purpose of gaining people’s applause or out of legalistic fear of not pleasing their god. Some have even sought martyrdom as a way to become famous or to try to gain special favor with God. Paul declares that there is no benefit to suffering or sacrificing if the motive is not *agape*.

**Discuss:** How can you make sure that your sacrificial giving is motivated by love?

**Discuss:** In what specific ways has Jesus’ love for you changed the way you love others?

**Resources:**

“Ten Things You Should Know about the Love of God” article at [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org)

1 Corinthians 13 Resources at [www.preceptaustin.org](http://www.preceptaustin.org)

*The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* by D.A. Carson