

Morning Overview

Lesson: 1 Corinthians: Love

Lesson Objective:

Today we cover parts of Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. Paul has a great concern for the Corinthians. The influence of the surrounding culture with its competitiveness, achievement, and success has infiltrated the Church and corrupted it. The Corinthians strive to be the best, to have the best spiritual gift and life, but their demonstration is sorely lacking and missing the mark. Not only are the Corinthians filled with pride but also strife. Paul urges them to remember that in God's kingdom the humble are "successful" and those who demonstrate love have the greatest spiritual gift. Paul goes so far as to list out what love is like (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). As you read this list, think about who love is describing – Jesus – and then think about how you've experienced those same things from Jesus today, this week, or this year.

Teaching Summary:

- God's promises do not change despite circumstances, people and even our inability to believe them. God keeps His promises even when we do not trust Him or follow His commands.
- God has promised to always be with His people. He is with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The Church is growing, but also experiencing persecution. Because of the persecution, followers of Jesus scatter.
- The scattered Church takes the Good News and tells others about Jesus.
- Paul writes a letter to the Corinthian church urging them to put aside their divisions and arguments.
- Paul tells them that their penchant for being the best or superior is actually hurting them, not helping.
- Paul wants his Corinthian friends to know they have great spiritual gifts, but they are lacking the most important one.
- Love is what Paul emphasizes as the unifier of the Corinthian church. It will give them a single focus and mission.
- Love is the greatest gift.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Story: *The Gospel Story Bible*, Pages 264-265

Scripture Memory for March: Acts 20:24 (ESV)

But I do not account my life *(cross forearms to make an "X")*
of any value nor as precious to myself, *(form a "O" with both hands)*
if only I may finish my course ... *(make hash marks with hand on opposite arm)*
to tell *(make a "talking" hand)*
the Gospel. *(open hands to form a Bible)*

Craft: Love is not a Clanging Cymbal

Supplies: 2 tins, cymbal sticker, bandaid

Instructions: 1. Place sticker in center of one tin

2. Have child place one finger from each hand on back of tins and place bandaid over finger onto tin to use as a handle.

3. Children can tap tins together to represent clanging cymbal.

If child has already done craft first hour, have them work on a coloring sheet



Story

Transition

Boys and girls, today in our lesson we learn about something that never runs out, will last forever, and is the greatest thing any of us could ever have. What do you think it might be? [Allow kids to answer] Well, let's read our story and find out what exactly it is...

The Church Is Growing

The Church was growing. The Bible tells us every day more and more people believed the Good News! They believed that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from our sins and He rose from the dead! This was called the Good News. More and more people believed in Jesus and the Church was growing!

Followers of Jesus went to tell others about the Good News. The Good News was spreading far and wide. Some people, however, did not teach the right things. But the Apostles taught that good works were a result of believing the Good News.

Paul had written a letter to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a big, busy city that sat between two oceans. This meant lots of ships, traders, and business people would come to Corinth to buy, sell or trade their stuff. This made Corinth a very rich city too. People in Corinth were successful, rich, or what we would call "winners."

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church to ask them to put aside their differences so that "all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). There were lots of fights and arguments going on in Corinth, and Paul wanted these to stop. "You have jealousy and arguing among you. This shows that you are not spiritual. You are acting like people of the world" (1 Corinthians 3:3). The Corinthians were not acting like followers of Jesus. They were, in Paul's words, acting like people of the world – those who did not follow Jesus.

God Chooses the Weak

The Corinthians were used to being the best. The best looking, the most successful, the smartest, the most athletic, and the most spiritually gifted. The followers of Jesus in Corinth bragged that they had lots of spiritual gifts. They might have thought they were the best! The Bible tells us Paul thought the Corinthians were very gifted spiritually. They spoke very well, had lots of wisdom, and they were not lacking in one gift at all (1 Corinthians 1:4-7)!

But this did not make the Corinthians humble; it made them proud. Paul warned against being proud and wrote, "God chose what is foolish in the world to embarrass the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to embarrass the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no one can brag in the presence of God" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

The Corinthians thought they were awesome at everything. Winners at everything. Successful at everything. But God has a different way of deciding who or what is awesome, winning or successful in His kingdom. It's the humble, the weak, the low and despised who God wants.

The Corinthians could not understand God wants humble people not proud people in His kingdom. In the Corinthian's mind they believed they were the best, but they were not. They lacked something very, very, very important: Love. Love is the greatest, most important spiritual gift of all. It is the thing all followers of Jesus should want to be the best at.

If I Don't Have Love

Paul starts off telling the Corinthians that if he, Paul, had some incredible spiritual gift, such as speaking in different languages, so a bunch of people could understand him, or even talking to angels, it would not matter if he did not have love. A person could have the coolest, best spiritual gift, but if they did not have love it did not matter. Having a great spiritual gift but not love, Paul tells us is like "a noisy bell or ringing cymbal" that does not stop. It's annoying, loud, and rude. Paul then goes on to say, if he had the gift of prophecy – understanding very deep and wonderful things of God – and faith so great that it can move mountains, but did not have love, he says, "I am nothing." Paul says he could give everything away to feed the poor, or even sacrifice his life for others, but none of it matters if he, Paul, does not have love. If a person has the best gifts in the world and does not have love, it means they are using the gifts for themselves, for selfish reasons.

Paul wants his Corinthian friends to really believe that love is important. Love is the most important thing because love is from God. Love is how we show someone we truly care about them and that they are important. Paul writes a long list of what love is like:

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done. Love takes no pleasure in evil but rejoices over the truth. Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, and always continues strong. Love never ends" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Then the apostle tells the Corinthians something very hard. All the spiritual gifts they think they are best at, those will all go away one day. Every single one of them will end except one gift: Love. Love is the only gift that lasts. When God comes to make all things right, love will endure and be there for all eternity. Paul tells the Corinthians, and us too, that faith will end one day. We will see Jesus and our faith will be sight. Hope will end one day. Jesus will come back and make all the sad things untrue, all the hurting disappear, and the broken things will be healed. But love, love will never go away. Love will be what we get to do with God for all eternity. Love is what God shows us by sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins and rise again three days later. So, the Bible tells us the greatest gift is love.

Questions for Review

Have children answer "yes" or "no."

- The Church is growing – adding more and more people. (Yes)
- The Holy Spirit is growing the Church. (Yes)
- The Corinthians were nice to each other and did not argue. (No! They were rude and mean to each other.)
- The Corinthians thought they were the best at everything, even being spiritual. (Yes)
- Paul says God uses the weak, foolish, and despised things to embarrass the strong and smart. (Yes)
- Paul says if he has some of the greatest gifts, but not love he is like a noisy bell. (Yes)
- Paul wants his Corinthian friends to know love is the most important gift. (Yes)
- Paul tells his Corinthian friends that love is always in a hurry and rude. (No! Love is patient and kind.)
- Paul says that love does not remember wrongs done. (Yes)
- Paul writes that love will endure forever. (Yes)
- Only the gift of love will be in heaven. (Yes)
- What is the Good News?