



Shelby Christian Church

CORE 52: LIVING IT – LOVE * JOHN 3:16, 1 CORINTHIANS 13, ROMANS 5:8, 8:38-39
1 JOHN 3:16-17 * 7/27/2025

INTRODUCTION

What is one food that you would say you “love?”

What’s your best memory of eating that particular food?

Why do you love it? Is your love related to the ingredients? Nutrients? Healthiness?

We live in a culture that is in love with being in love. We use the same word to describe the way we feel about food, sports, pets, celebrities, family members—even God. But generally what we mean when we say we “love” something is that we enjoy the way that something makes us feel. If we want to understand the love of God, we must first realize that the way He loves is very different than the way our culture loves.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:16

What does this verse tell us about God's attitude toward the world?

What did God do to show His love, according to this verse? What does it mean that God “gave” His Son? How does this point to Jesus’ mission?

Who is the offer of eternal life available to?

What is the result of believing in Jesus? How does this verse summarize the message of the entire Gospel?

John 3:16 invites every person to respond to God’s love. It’s not about earning God’s favor but about receiving what He has already given. For believers, this verse is a daily reminder of our identity in Christ and the mission to share this life-giving message with others.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13

What spiritual gifts does Paul mention in verses 1–3, and how do they compare to love?

How does Paul describe love in verses 4–7? Which qualities stand out to you? Which do you find most challenging to live out?

What does Paul say about the permanence of love in verses 8–13? How is biblical love different from the world’s idea of love?

Why do you think Paul emphasizes that love is greater than faith and hope?

When you take this chapter out of the romantic wedding setting, what does it mean to you?

1 Corinthians 13 challenges believers to evaluate their lives not by giftedness, but by love. It reminds us that the greatest evidence of spiritual maturity is not how much we know or do, but how well we love others—with patience, kindness, humility, and truth.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 5:8

Why is it significant that Christ died for us “while we were still sinners”?

How does this verse challenge the idea that we need to earn God’s love or forgiveness?

What does this teach us about the nature of God's love compared to human love?

Romans 5 speaks about the peace, hope, and reconciliation believers have through faith in Jesus Christ. In verse 8, Paul shifts to emphasize the depth and timing of God's love—shown not after we cleaned up our lives, but while we were still in rebellion against Him. It reminds us that Jesus came for sinners, not the self-righteous. This truth offers deep assurance: if Christ died for us at our worst, we can trust His love will sustain us at all times.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:38-39

What kinds of things does Paul say cannot separate us from God’s love? Why do you think Paul lists such a wide range of things?

What does this passage teach us about the nature and strength of God's love?

How might this assurance have encouraged the original audience of Romans—many of whom faced persecution?

Why is it significant that Paul is “convinced” of this truth?

These verses are the culmination of Romans 8, a chapter celebrating the life, hope, and security believers have through the Spirit and through Christ. Paul’s powerful conclusion underscores that nothing can break the bond between God and His people—not sin, suffering, opposition, or even death. It sustains us through suffering, empowers us through weakness, and anchors us in hope. This is not just emotional reassurance—it’s a theological truth that can transform how we face every day.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:16-17

Why does John connect love for others with tangible, sacrificial action?

What does it reveal about someone's heart if they ignore a brother or sister in need?

How does this passage challenge our cultural understanding of love as primarily emotional or verbal?

How do these verses reflect the difference between genuine Christian love and superficial religion?

In 1 John, the apostle is addressing a church facing internal division and false teaching. These verses follow the warning against hatred and Cain-like selfishness (vv. 11–15), and now John defines what real, godly love looks like: love for fellow believers. These verses challenge us to stop talking about love and start living it out. It's easy to admire Jesus' sacrifice and yet resist sacrificing for others. But John makes it clear: if we are recipients of divine love, we must become channels of it. Sacrificial generosity is not extra credit—it's evidence of genuine faith.

APPLICATION

Do you remember the first time you "fell in love?" How did you know?

If love is a verb more than a noun, share the most extraordinary act of love you have ever witnessed or received.

Read together 1 Corinthians 13 again two times. In the first reading, identify the person closest to you (spouse, child, best friend, sibling) and underline the one attribute of love that you need to improve in your relationship. In the second reading, do the same thing only think about a person you may be at odds with (a colleague, family member, neighbor, business partner, ex).

Plan a practical community project that this group could do together to practically share the love of Jesus.

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

John 3:16

This verse is part of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader seeking to understand Jesus' teachings. John 3:16 summarizes the essence of the gospel: God's love, His gift of Jesus, and the offer of eternal life to all who believe.

God's love is the initiating force behind the gospel. "So loved" doesn't just mean intensity—it implies the manner in which He loved: a giving, sacrificial love. "The world" includes all people, not just Israel—this highlights the global scope of God's love, even for those who reject Him.

God's love is not just emotional—it leads to action. "Gave" refers to the sending of Jesus, including His sacrificial death on the cross (see Romans 8:32). "One and only Son" (Greek: *monogenēs*) means Jesus is unique, fully divine, and the only one who could accomplish this work.

The offer of salvation is open to all—"whoever." "Believes" means to trust, rely on, and surrender to Jesus, not just agree mentally. It highlights that salvation is received by faith, not by works or religious performance.

"Perish" refers not just to physical death but to eternal separation from God. "Eternal life" is both a future hope and a present reality—a restored relationship with God that begins now and lasts forever. This is the great promise of the gospel: rescue from death and the gift of life with God.

1 Corinthians 13

Verses 1–3 Paul lists spectacular spiritual gifts—tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, generosity, even martyrdom—and says they are meaningless without love. This is a sobering warning: we can do great religious things and still miss the heart of God. Love is not optional or secondary; it is essential.

Verses 4–7 Paul defines love not as a feeling but as a set of actions and attitudes:

What love is: Patient, kind.

What love is not: Envious, boastful, proud, rude, self-seeking, easily angered, resentful.

What love does: Rejoices in truth, always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.

These qualities reflect the character of Christ. Love is both tough and tender, enduring and sacrificial. This section is ideal for self-examination: "Is this how I treat others?"

Verses 8–12: "Love never fails..." Spiritual gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge) are temporary and will cease. But love will last forever, even into eternity. Paul uses the metaphor of growing up: just as we move from childhood to maturity, our spiritual understanding now is partial, but love remains central in the mature kingdom of God.

Verse 13: Faith, hope, and love are core virtues of Christian life. But love is the greatest because it is the most enduring and most reflective of God's nature (1 John 4:8). Love is not just a virtue—it is the atmosphere of eternity.

Romans 5:8

"But God demonstrates his own love for us..." "But" contrasts human love with divine love—God's love is not based on our worthiness. "Demonstrates" (Greek: *synistēmi*) means to prove, show clearly, or make known. This is not abstract or theoretical love; God's love is active and visible, proven by a real, historical event.

"...in this: While we were still sinners..." "Still sinners" means we were actively opposed to God, living outside His will. This highlights the undeserved nature of His love—He didn't wait for us to repent or be worthy. God's love is initiating and unconditional.

"...Christ died for us." The cross is the ultimate expression of God's love. Jesus didn't die for righteous people, but for those who were lost, rebellious, and spiritually dead. "For us" is deeply personal—this is substitutionary love, where Jesus takes our place to bear sin's penalty.

Romans 8:38-39

"For I am convinced..." Paul speaks with personal conviction and certainty. This is not a vague hope but a settled assurance rooted in the gospel. This statement reflects a deep, tested faith—formed through Paul's own experiences of persecution, danger, and hardship (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23–28).

"...that neither death nor life..." Death, often feared as the ultimate separation, cannot separate us from God's love. Life, with all its trials and temptations, likewise cannot undo God's commitment to us.

“...neither angels nor demons...” Paul includes spiritual beings, both good and evil. No spiritual force, even of great power, can override God’s love. This reflects a worldview where spiritual warfare is real—but God’s love remains sovereign.

“...neither the present nor the future...” Nothing happening now or anything that will come can break God’s bond with us. This speaks directly to anxieties about the unknown and fear of what lies ahead.

“...nor any powers...” Likely refers to spiritual, political, or cosmic powers—forces that seem beyond human control. Yet Paul insists: none of these powers can overpower God’s love.

“...neither height nor depth...” A poetic way of saying no matter where we go—physically, emotionally, or spiritually—we are never beyond the reach of God’s love.

“...nor anything else in all creation...” A sweeping conclusion: there are absolutely no exceptions. No created thing—not circumstances or failures—can separate us from God’s love.

“...will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This love is found in Christ Jesus, and therefore, it is secure, eternal, and unshakable. Because we are united with Christ by faith, we are held firmly in God’s love forever.

1 John 3:16-17

Verse 16: John anchors the definition of love in the cross of Christ. Love is not primarily a feeling—it is a deliberate, self-sacrificial action. Jesus voluntarily gave His life on behalf of unworthy sinners (Romans 5:8), which is the ultimate example of love.

“And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” - This is the moral implication: Christ’s love should shape how we treat others. “Lay down our lives” may mean literal martyrdom, but more often it calls us to daily self-denial: sacrificing time, comfort, resources, or pride to meet others’ needs. Love is costly, inconvenient, and other-centered.

Verse 17: The Test of Love- John shifts from the general principle to a practical example. “Material possessions” refers to the basic resources of daily life. “Sees a brother or sister in need” implies both awareness and relationship—this is not about ignoring strangers but ignoring someone in the family of God. “Has no pity” (literally, closes his heart) signals a hard-hearted refusal to help.

“...how can the love of God be in that person?” - This is a rhetorical and convicting question. If someone claims to know God and experience His love but is indifferent to a fellow believer’s need, John questions whether God’s love is truly present in their life.