

Well, it's always nice to stand up here and get to sing some songs that I love with some men that I love. Both Brad and Brian are incredible gifts to the body of Christ here at Sherwood Oaks. I appreciate the giftedness they bring, both in hands-on skill sets. Brian serves back there on the production team. Brad serves on our finance team.

He's got a mind like a steel trap. I mean, it's pretty rusty, but it's still, still a steel trap.

We're in a series called Built. If you're joining us for the first time, Built, and it's based around the idea of the church. So over the past couple of weeks, we've been looking at different aspects of the body of Christ, what God intended for it to be, how he designed it, how he created it, how it started, where we're heading, And today we're looking— we're in week 6, and we're going to be looking at this idea of how we are built up, and we are built up in love. Last week we looked at 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and how we're all empowered by God to serve each other and those around us with the gifts that God's entrusted to us, like an orchestra. And remember, we saw a beautiful orchestra performing Beethoven's 5th.

Each of us has some sort of instrument that we bring to the orchestra. Each part is important and each part needs the others around it. Today we're going to move just one chapter over in 1 Corinthians to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. How many of you guys remember way back— steel trap guy— how far back you can remember to your wedding? Did anyone have 1 Corinthians chapter 13 read at their wedding?

If you did, just nod your head or raise your hand. If you remember, Steve remembers, still trapped over there. You okay? Anyone over here? If you don't, if you don't remember, gentlemen, you might remember it when I begin reading it.

This is one of the most famous, famous poems or passages on love ever written, yet it's not really an ode to love. It's a lesson actually on what love looks like, on what love is. And through it, we are going to be reminded that the unity of believers, the body of Christ gathered together as one, belted, girded with love, is the key to proclaiming the gospel effectively. So I'm going to pray, and then we're going to jump right in. If you want to go ahead and turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, you can do that.

Heavenly Father, as we open your word this morning, We pray that we wouldn't just leave here with a good feeling. We would leave here with some action points about how to love each other, how to love the world around us effectively, and thus proclaim the gospel to those who are watching. By this, the world around us will know that you are God if we love one another. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Every family experiences tension. I mean, I know mine does. I suspect yours does as well. The church is no exception. The church experiences tension as well.

And when Paul writes a letter to the church at Corinth, the letter we would know as Corinthians, both the first one and the second one, he's writing to an amazing church. Don't let anyone ever tell you that the church in Corinth wasn't an amazing church. It was an incredible church, an incredible church, very gifted. It had wealth. It was strategically placed.

They were doing a great job of impacting their culture. And yet, like all families, like all churches, honestly, they experienced some tension. They're struggling with some internal relationships. And we talked about this a little bit last week. Remember the first violin who got upset because she didn't have the spotlight and the brass were sort of doing their own thing because they really preferred their own thing versus everyone else was doing.

And the little chime guy at the back was sort of feeling like insignificant because the timpani guy was getting all the attention of the big noise. Well, this is sort of what was happening here. People were vying for the spotlight. They were leaving others feeling very insignificant. Some were trumpeting their gifts and some were looking down on the less showy skill sets.

And Paul uses this moment to correct them and remind them that each person and each gift is given by the Spirit. No gift is unimportant. In fact, all gifts are necessary for the body to function the way it's supposed to. And he ends 1 Corinthians chapter 12 with this verse here: Now I will show you the more excellent way. You might remember that.

And then he unpacks the most excellent way in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Now, if this was shorter, I would ask you to read along with me, but it's pretty long, so I'm just going to ask you to follow along with me, and I'll read it. You just process it as we go along. And he writes this, 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 1: If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels but do not have love, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains but do not have love, I'm nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth.

It always protects, it always trusts, it always hopes, it always perseveres. Love never fails.

But where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, special knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

Now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these 3 remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love.

Corinth was a very gifted church, but its gifts, all of them given by the Spirit, were being weakened by personal pride, internal division, and a real sense of self-interest above everyone else's interest. As we talked about last week, each one was so focused on their little instrument, their little gift, their little moment in the score, their solo spot that they refused to play together. And what was intended to be this beautiful, beautiful piece of music, this beautiful symphony, becomes just a clanging noise where there's awkward empty spots in the score and less than an optimal experience for the audience. And remember last week, who is the audience? God is the audience, but also the world around us.

Watching. Remember, Jesus says this: A new command I give you: love one another as I have loved you. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Now, if Paul was surveying the congregation at Corinth and He would say, do you love one another?

They would say, yes, yes, of course, we're a very loving church, we're a very loving church. But their actions were saying something else, because love is more than just a feeling. It's more than me just having good feelings towards you. Love is a posture that we take when we are believers. When we take on the, the name of Christ, we take on a posture.

We're going to order a chicken costume for Halloween for Creed. He wants to be a chicken. So we're looking at different chicken costumes. Now, will Creed actually be a Christian— be a chicken when he puts on the costume? No, he'll be wearing a costume.

But when we take on the name of Christ, it's more than a costume. It becomes a position we stand in, becomes a name we claim. It's, it's who we are now. And so this ownership of who we are— we are believers,

we are Christians, we are little Christ— it becomes who we are. It changes the way we think.

It changes the way we behave, especially when it comes to relationships that are strained or relationships that are challenging. So Paul says love is more than just a feeling. He gives us 4 actual practices to demonstrate that we're really loving the way Jesus wants us to love. He says, first of all, love is forgiveness. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says, love keeps no record of wrongs.

I'll tell you, one of the most memorable sermons I ever preached here was on this idea of forgiveness. And there were people who had experienced some horrible things, horrible abuses that people had done to them. And when they heard the sermon on forgiveness, it was just triggering for all the past trauma that they had heard. And what they heard me say was, you just need to let it go. And that's not entirely what forgiveness means.

Forgiveness is very easily misunderstood, and forgiveness is also easily abused. So hear me out on this. When forgiveness is misunderstood, it can cause us to overlook unhealthy unholy behaviors. Unhealthy and unholy behaviors.

When it's abused, the command to forgive can be weaponized to manipulate someone to stay in a relationship, to stay in a place, to stay in a situation that is dangerous. And I go back to this— unhealthy and unholy. Forgiveness can be weaponized. This is twisting scripture to protect evil and wrongdoing. This is not what Paul is saying when he says to forgive.

He's not saying just stay where you're at and just trust God. No, he's saying unhealthy, unholy situations need to be remedied. Remove yourself from those places. But just as an abuser can use the command to forgive as a weapon to keep people and manipulate people into staying in places where it's not holy or healthy.

We can also use unforgiveness as a weapon, and we can— if we are the victim, we can hold on to unforgiveness and use it as a cudgel, as a constant reminder that you did this to me and I'll never let it go. And that becomes a weapon itself. And Paul says, be very careful. Don't, don't pick up your own weapon. Don't pick up your own weapon.

It's equally unhealthy and it's equally unholy to use unforgiveness to control other people. Jesus never commands us to deny that something bad happened, that a wound occurred, but he does command us not to use the wound as a weapon against the people that hurt us. Instead, remember Christ forgave us when we repented. Christ forgave us. When others repent, we forgive.

We don't have to move back into the unhealthy or the unholy, but we do

have to say, I'm going to decide to think about this situation differently. We can start to look for repentance, and when we see repentance, we forgive, and then we can start the process of restoration just as God has done for us. We can start the process, the process of restoration. This doesn't happen overnight. No one's expecting it to.

It's a process. We can establish wise boundaries. Wisdom— if any of you lack wisdom, pray for it, ask for it. God will give you wisdom about how to move through this relationship restoration. And we can do it all without nurturing revenge or holding a mistake over other people for forever.

That is weaponizing unforgiveness. And Paul says love forgives.

We've all had experiences where people have failed us. And if we're still rehearsing that failure, that offense in our heart, if we're still nurturing and feeding that hurt, then we are not obeying the command to forgive. Here's what— here's what people versed in trauma will tell you, you need to make a decision to forgive. It's called decisional forgiveness. Clearly name the hurt to God and clearly name the hurt to others if it's possible, and then choose not to retaliate.

This is the key: choose not to retaliate by your words or actions. Instead, do the next right thing by taking the next faithful step towards reconciliation where it is possible, where it is possible. Any questions on this? Because I know that this will come up. Feel free to talk to me after the service and we can keep praying through whatever your situation is.

I, I want us to be healthy and holy people, and that means if there's unhealthy and unholy situations, you are freed up by God to walk and step out of that. Amen. Amen. Okay. So love is forgiving.

Love is also humble. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 says this, that love does not boast, love is not proud, love is not self-seeking. Pride says, how am I being treated? Who's paying attention to me? Well, how are my needs being met?

But humility says, how can I honor Christ and serve others first? C.S. Lewis has this great quote. It's one of my favorites. Oh good, I'm glad we have it up there.

Here's— it's, it's this one. And just lock this into your memory because sometimes we think humility is something that it's not. Humility is not thinking less of ourselves. It's thinking of ourselves less.

You have immense worth to God. You have immense worth to others. That is not thinking too highly of yourself to think that God loves you.

That's not thinking too highly. This is what God says.

We believe truthfully and honestly. God loves us. We are worth something to him. Humility is not saying, I'm nothing much, don't look at me. That's not humility.

That's, that's almost weird pride. Humility is saying, here's who I am, here's what I bring, use it wherever it can be used. Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself a little bit less. Humility is seeing our own worth but refusing to make ourselves the center of every relationship. Have you been in a relationship with someone who thought they were the center of it, the most important part of it?

That's not humility. Instead, humility says, I am here to bless you in whatever way I can while keeping, keeping a sense of my own self-worth before God. Patient and kind, humble people listen, they learn, they apologize when they make a mistake, and then they move forward because they don't need to win every exchange. They're like, okay, I'll give you that. I'm moving on.

One of the marks of maturity that I love seeing in my boys is how increasingly able they are to own their own mistakes. We're not there perfectly yet, but the church isn't there perfectly either. But owning their own mistakes is such a mark of maturity. And it's— I love to forgive. I am abounding in forgiveness.

But what I love and what makes it so much easier is when you say, yeah, I did it. Yep, that was mine. I did it. I made that decision. It was a wrong one.

I own it.

I have trouble owning my own stuff. I get it. But Jesus wants us to be more committed to becoming like him than we are committed to being right all the time. So the next time you start a difficult conversation, be ready to own your own part in it. Be ready to humbly receive correction and maybe a little bit of advice, and then express appreciation for the one offering to give it to you, because it takes guts to speak truthfully to someone when they need to be spoken truthfully to.

So love is humble, and love, love speaks truth with grace. 1 Corinthians 13:5–6 says that love is not easily angered. Love rejoices with truth. Healthy communication requires that you speak truth, but you do it with grace and you do it with patience. Good communication doesn't add to chaos.

Have you ever been in that situation where you're like, I just gotta say it, I just gotta say it, and it only blows up? That's not good

communication. Good communication doesn't add to chaos. It does help defuse it very often. When it can't defuse anger, it stops and listens for a little bit.

Oh, this is hard. Oh, this is hard. But that's what love does. Love listens more than it talks. It doesn't dishonor others.

It, it works hard to build others up. It doesn't confuse issues with the people involved in the issues.

Love listens with the aim of understanding, not explaining. Love doesn't rush to assume you understand. You patiently work through it so you, you know what's really going on. A couple of weeks ago, early one Saturday morning or one Monday morning, Tuesday morning, I'm not sure which, I got a text from Ryan Drawley. Ryan's back there in the back, his favorite spot back there with a cup of coffee.

And he's probably playing Roblox right now. I don't know what he's doing, but he looked up when I called his name. So maybe he's paying attention now. Ryan, we're in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 this morning. I got a text from Ryan and we've been praying for his mom in our Saturday morning group.

His mom's had a lot of some heart issues. So we've been praying for her. It was some scary situation stuff, honestly. And I got this text from Ryan and I pulled up my phone and here's what I read. Dad just called and said Mom passed this morning.

Well, my first response is to— I immediately just called Ryan like, oh my word. So I said, Ryan, how are you doing? Good. Is there anything you need, buddy? No.

Are you, are you heading up to be with your dad? No, no, I'm, I'm going to work. I'm like, okay, well, I mean, I've met his mom. She seems like a nice person, but who knows the relationship between kids? I don't know.

Maybe, maybe, I don't know. I thought Ryan was pretty close to his mom, but who am I to judge how people grieve? I even prayed with Ryan on the phone. I mean, it was a good prayer, Ryan. It was a good one.

It was a peace, comfort for the family, for the surrounding presence of the Holy Spirit to lift them up in this time.

And then I got off the phone and I let my Saturday morning prayer group know, hey boys, guys, here's Ryan's mom just passed. He got a note from his dad.

And I left it at that. I'm thinking, okay, well, I guess we'll figure out more when we know more. Well, within 15 minutes, Derek Neff sends

me a text, hey, Ryan's mom's fine. She didn't die. I guess Derek called him.

I'm sorry about your mom. Ryan's like, my mom didn't die. She's, she's all right. Oh, so I look at the text. I read a little bit longer.

Okay.

Hey, here's what the text said. Hey, your mom passed out this morning. I took her to the hospital to get checked out. She's looking good. She's probably going to come home this afternoon.

Oh, I was so embarrassed. I was so embarrassed. They thankfully made little jokes about, hey, hey, Tim's prayer brought her back to life. That's not— that's not what happened. That's not what happened.

Love does not rush to assume you know what's going on. Love reads the entire text. Before you rush to judgment. Love reads the entire situation. Love asks lots of questions.

Love, again, just tries to communicate well. Listening is so important. Claudia Mitchell says that listening— people feeling listened to, being heard— is so close to feeling loved that most people don't know the difference. Listening to someone as they share their story, really listening and not listening with an eye to responding as quick as you can. Listening is so close to being loved that most people cannot tell the difference.

So listen, and when you do speak, let your words clarify. Let your love restore. Let your love build up rather than shame. Let your love Encourage rather than manipulate. Let your, let your words calm rather than inflame.

And as I tell the boys, only tell your story. Let other people tell their story. Only tell your story. You know what that's code for? Don't gossip about other people.

Only tell your story. Love. Finally, stay strong. 1 Corinthians 13:7–8 says, love always protects and always trusts and always hopes and always perseveres.

It never fails. Love never gives up on people. It's very easy when you've been disappointed by people, discouraged by their actions, perhaps even distanced by their decisions. Love doesn't give up. Love doesn't discard.

Love keeps going. The phrase one another in the New Testament appears over 100 times. Most of them are very specific commands about how we relate to each other in the church. Live in harmony with one another. Serve one another in love.

Bear one another's burdens. Offer hospitality to one another. Encourage one another and build one another up. Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another. But by far and away, the most used one another phrase in the New Testament is this: love one another.

This week at my uncle's funeral, I was so blessed to have someone share that this church was the most welcoming church they'd ever been part of, and they've been part of a few. So this church is so welcoming, and I love that. But to keep the title— we're already— we already want to be the best church for Bedford, but to be the best loving church for Bedford requires that we pay attention and we stay on point. We don't get distracted and we don't lose focus of the fact that love requires that we stay engaged with it. So the 4 commitments that we need to make as a church, if we're going to, if we're going to be considered one of the more loving churches in our community, is this: we got to forgive.

We can't weaponize old wounds. We can't hold things against each other. We need to be— if we're walking down the hallway, if we're having coffee back there, if we're in the front foyer, if we're sitting beside someone in the pew, we need to be able to look around and go, I have, I have a very good relationship with everyone in this room. We need to be able to maintain good communication, good relationship with each other. And that means we got to be quick to forgive.

We got to be humble. We got to be recognizing that, hey, listen, I'm going to do my part and I'm going to do the part God's laid on me, but I'm also going to be looking out for others and making sure that they're shining when they can shine. When I can help them shine, I'm going to help them shine. We're going to communicate healthily. We're going to speak truthfully.

We're going to listen, listen real carefully. We're not going to jump to assumptions. We're gonna, we're gonna listen and we're not gonna gossip. We're gonna tell our own story, not everyone else's story. And then we're gonna love faithfully, that we're not gonna give up.

We're gonna protect each other. We're gonna help carry each other's burdens. We're gonna keep going on even when, even when people disappoint us. We're just gonna keep going with them. We're not, we're not gonna let disappointment keep us from, from sticking with them.

We love because Christ first loved us. Jesus embodied 1 Corinthians 13. He was patient, he was kind, he humbled himself, he spoke truth with grace, he forgave his enemies, he loved his people to the very end. Listen, you guys are amazing, but you cannot manufacture the kind of love that is demanded by 1 Corinthians 13, that is demanded by the

decision to follow and embody Jesus, by to take the posture position of being a Christian on your own. This is the kind of love that we receive from Christ, from the Holy Spirit.

We are allowing the Holy Spirit to say, fill me with your love so that I am empowered to love others the way you want love to flow through me into the lives of the people around me. We're going to share in a time of communion, but I want to, I want to just focus on that last, that last verse as we get into this communion moment. Paul closes 1 Corinthians 13 with these words, and now these 3 remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. And communion is a great moment to remember why love is considered the greatest.

The bread reminds us that Jesus gave his body for us. The cup reminds us that he poured out his, his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The cross is not just a lesson about love, it's actually a demonstration of what love fully looks like. Jesus didn't wait for us to become worthy of his love. He humbled himself, he carried our sin, he forgave us, and he gave himself to bring us back to God.

So faith, hope, and love. Faith is looking back to what Christ has done and going, I've seen how God's love has been demonstrated through Christ, and now I have faith that Christ can carry me forward. Hope is looking into that forward, into that day when Jesus returns again for us to make all things new. But the love, the faith, hope, and love. But remember, love is the greatest.

Love is the life of Jesus in me, flowing in me yesterday, today, and forever. Forgiving, serving, speaking truth with grace, faithfully caring for each other. This is love. As we share this meal, remember that we are not only loved by Jesus, we're called to love like Jesus. So come to the table remembering faith, what God has done, looking forward with hope, but also settling in and remaining in his love.

The greatest of these is love. Let's pray. Jesus, as we take the bread and the cup this morning, we want to receive it as an expression of your love, as a witness, a testimony, and as tangible reminders that you loved us not just in word, but indeed you gave your life for us. Teach us to love like that. Teach us to love people in this congregation like that, our fellow brothers and sisters in other congregations like that, and the community around us.

Teach us to love them like that as well. In this moment, meet us. In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know you can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel?

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