

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: What is love not? It is not rash nor is it boastful! When God tells us that love does not boast, He means we are not to go around bragging about our accomplishments and abilities. When this love is working, we will have no desire to impress others. Thinking that we are important is foolish and distracting to our call and purpose in life. We are not to go around showing off our possessions. In so doing, we are patronizing to those who do not have such things. We are not to be so full of our accomplishments that we fail to see what others have accomplished. Because God loves us so much, we should have no need to impress another. We are not to condescend to our spouse, or anyone, for that matter, with pride, criticism, or contempt, nor are we to withdraw from them when we think they do not meet our approval. We must allow God to impress us with His greatness, because He is God and we are not. We can so relax and enjoy who we are in Christ, and that we are approved by Him, that we do not have to be in control or be the life of the party to feel secure. Nor, do we need the say-so of others since we have the approval of God, the Creator of the universe. Love is the security we have in Christ that needs nothing else for fulfillment.

Authentic love does not strut around!

Contexts and Background:

This passage continues the negative contrasts of love, because what love is not is as critical and significant as what love is. Love is more than a behavior and it affects more than our feelings; it affects others around us, so we have to get it right. We have to know what not to do so we can follow what we are supposed to be and do. Just like telling your child not to cross a street without an adult or touch a hot stove, the negative enhances and actuates the positive. It gives us parameters and instruction; it is a part of God's care package. Because love is a positive, it must not be acted upon as if it were a negative; it is not to be acted upon wickedly.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Love is/Charity.* Real love is found in our sentiments and thinking but it also greatly affects our behaviors. Our behavior as a Christian must not be wicked. Love is meant to be helpful so it does not become derogatory or resort to being patronizing towards others in order to make us feel better. If we have real love in our hearts and minds, then we will realize that our lives will be far better in His arms of love and care than with our whims and limited ideas (2 Cor. 5:16-17)! Love has wisdom and applies humbleness and gentleness, and is under control. If we are being boastful, we undertake an active attitude of deliberate self-acceptance over humility and we will ignore wisdom and become foolish and arrogant (Mark 12:28-31; John 3:16, Matt. 22:34-40; John 3:16; 13:1, 34-35; 14:1; 15:9; Rom. 1:31; 5:10; 12:10; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 2:4-7; Phil. 2:2; Col. 1:1-6; 3:12-14; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2:8; 3:6; 12; 4:9-10; 5:8; 13; 2 Tim. 3:3; Heb. 10:24; 1 John 4:7-12).
- *Does not boast/boastful/rash/vainglorious.* This means we are not to show off or act with deceptive means, or to be irritating. This word in the Greek is used to describe elections won by deceit and manipulations. It is like an elected official winning an election dishonestly and then bragging about it. True love in action is not selfish nor is it about one's ambition; rather, it is sacrificial and points to the one we love. Being boastful is claiming that our own will and power are supreme over the person we are supposed to love. Being conceited means one's self is the purpose, and that can only mean self-love and not true love. This rotten form of love places our trust in our accomplishments and plans, not in God's or the other person's best interests. By this, we ignore the fact that God is running the world! God tells us this is evil. As Christians, the only thing we can boast of is what Christ has done for us (Prov. 13:10; 16:18; Psalm 31:15; Daniel

4:30; 5:23; Matt. 7:5; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 12:25-25; 2 Cor. 11:20; 12:5-9; Col.1:17; Eph. 3:18-19; 1 John 1:6-7)!

- This negative aspect of love is a warning not to take God out of our plans. If we try to cut God out, either by deliberate action or unconscious inaction, the result is sin. We are replacing His authority with our own. True love advocates humility, seeking God and his true Truth, not self or the world or the devil. When we seek only our plans, it places us in the world's camp, the devil's camp that pushes us away from God! If we do not do what we ought to do, it is sin! Real love will be introspective with what we are doing. We are to allow God's spotlight to guide us so we see where we are headed and be willing to make the corrections and course changes to fit His will, and also so we treat people and our love ones with real respect. If not, all we will have is our own self-satisfied forgetfulness of God that basically leaves us in despair and without hope.
- God is saying to us that this bad form of love is actually evil because when we are being arrogant, we are ignoring God, His love, and His plan! True love follows, placing the other person first. Our love for Christ will place Him first, while being boastful means we are ignoring or diminishing Him and/or another person. In addition, we diminish and belittle what Christ has done in us and in the other person. A "boasting Christian" is an oxymoron; it is considered wicked, both for the Christian and the non-Christian (1 John 4:4)!
- Jealousy and pride are the prime motives of our sinful nature, but God calls us to forgive and be content. These negative aspects are our natural nature, how we tend to be and what God hates because they destroy. The call not to boast is a prime directive for us, to search our lives and make sure that what we think and the practice of love are real. The characteristics of love are as important as the description of what love is not (1 Tim. 4:15-16).
- We cannot see the value nor get a grasp of the promises of God until we surrender our pride and will to Him. Make the determination to be His and do not allow your self-will to be in His way! Allow Christ to take you beyond your hopes and dreams (John 3:5).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Real love will flow from us when we allow God to be the One to impress us with His greatness. When we realize that He is God and we are not, then we will have love coming in and flowing out. We can loosen up and not take ourselves so seriously because we will enjoy who we are in Christ. There is no need or call for pride; because we are approved by Christ, we do not have to be in control or be the life of the party to feel secure. Nor, do we need the approval of others since we have the approval of God, the Creator of the universe. By the same token, we do not need to manipulate others because God does not manipulate us. Real love is the security we have in Christ that needs nothing else for fulfillment (Prov. 13:10; 16:18; Matt. 7:5; 1 Cor. 12:25-25; Eph. 3:18-19; 1 John 1:6-7).

Why does God not want us to boast, especially with love? He does not mean for us to be impassionate, unengaged or lack conviction; rather, we are not to allow ourselves to be conceited toward another child of God. Perhaps the reason is that pride and conceit are at the root of every conflict and problem displayed in Scripture or can be observed in life, in the church, or in a relationship. God hates it because it destroys relationships; it creates hurt and distortion to his Word and yet we think it is OK. Being boastful or prideful is the least thing looked at or combated.

Another reason why God hates boasting is that it is a form of pride, and this is defined as the attitude that self is superior to others, even to the extent of the regarding of others with contempt as if they were unworthy of any relation or interaction with us. Boasting and pride show the basic thinking "I am better than you are!" Other biblical synonyms for pride are arrogance, insolence, boasting, stiff-necked, and haughty. These aspects of pride clog us up and away from our loving Savior as they

restrict the flow of His character in our lives and inhibit goodness from going to others through us. It is like not allowing Jesus Christ to be the ultimate plumber to unplug our spiritual drainpipes. So, all we can do is pour our waste all over the floor of life, and refuse to allow godly characteristics to flow in our relational pipes unto others around us.

Boasting, arrogance, and condescending attitudes and actions are heinous acts that are diametrically opposed to all that Christ taught and modeled. To be a Christian who is condescending is an *oxymoron*, with the emphases on the moron. It is stupid and a slap in the face of our Lord who saves and loves us! At the same time, real wisdom will not be compromised, as integrity and compassion do go together. The goals of love are to yield and to serve, to uplift with kindness, to be patient to show goodness, and to show Christ and point to His precepts so we can live a Christ-filled and directed life that is uplifting and contagious to others. The opposite is a heart full of rotten fruit, a Pandora's Box that when opened, will distribute its sin onto others. Our wisdom is arid and devoid of real authentic truth that is beneficial and edifying. It seeks only wastewater and not His Living water. Only Christ can bring us real wisdom; we must seek it by asking Him for it. Recognizing the difference between real truth and what is counterfeit is essential for our maturity (Psalm 37; Prov. 1:7; 3:5; Eph. 5:5-20).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Read these two passages again in different translations (1 Corinthians 13:1-8; 1 John 4: 7-12)

1. Discuss your thoughts on this aspect of love.
2. Give a positive example.
3. Give a negative example.
4. How is this type of love working in you?
5. Why is this love not working in you?
6. What blocks this love from being exhibited in you?
7. What would it take to get this love working in you?
8. What are you willing to do about it?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever seen yourself as vain? What about how others may see you?
2. How would you describe boasting? What is love “not” in your life? Why does real love not have a need to impress?
3. What is the mark you want to leave in the wake of your life? How can true love be a good motivator for you? How can a bad idea and practice of love harm you and the other person?
4. How can your show of love be a means to demonstrate your faith through godly living and real wisdom? How would this help you produce goodness?
5. How does being so full of our accomplishments cause us to fail to see what others have accomplished?
6. When have you patronized someone close to you? How did you feel? How did they? How does being boastful distract you from your real call and purpose in life?
7. What can your church do to encourage you to love and care for those around you?
8. Love can give us so much. As we give, we show our security in Christ that needs nothing else for fulfillment. So why be conceited? Why would someone think this could be helpful?
9. Do we get what the Christian life is about? If so, what are we doing about it?
10. What can you do to make sure that you do not usurp your own will and power over the person you are supposed to love? How would this help improve your relationships?