

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: What is love not? It is not arrogant or condescending! When God tells us that love is not proud, He means we are not to have inflated ideas about our significance. Being vainglorious is having a conceited mindset—the quintessential thing that God hates the most—so we must not be that way—period! Being in Christ means we must be willing to be in relationships with all kinds of people, especially those outside our perceived likeness of background and/or race. We must not let our fears hold us back from one of life's most precious gifts: friendship. Not being proud means that when we make a mistake, we can own up to it, and we can admit that we are wrong. We can go to our spouse with open hands and seek forgiveness. Pride will create contempt, arguments, misunderstandings, resentment, loss of community, and indifference. Because God loves us, He is on our side, and wants us to grow and mature in His love. We do not have to have an inflated ego about our perceived importance of ourselves. We need to seek others first and their well being, not our arrogance and egocentric mentality. Love lifts up God, not us.

Authentic Love does not puff up the giver or parade itself!

Contexts and Background:

This passage continues the distinctions and differences of love, and we are told in context that we can do this and do it well. This is about the proper building of relationships, which for a Christian, is always within the parameters of love with no strings attached, just as God Himself works through all of His characteristics in love. Paul states in context that life, relationships, and gifts are not important or even bearable if there is no real love behind them. By understanding love, we can also understand God, and who we are in Him, because God is the source of love and the example of what it is in Christ. This is the love that binds us together in Christ, both with one another and with the One to whom we commit our lives (1 John 4: 7-12).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Love is/Charity.* Real love is not prideful. Rather, it is humble and it points to the one we love. To Christians, it points to our Lord. Can we really love? Yes, because we are not alone in this journey. We have no need to be boastful because we have Christ Himself as example and lead. His being fully God was not boastful, so how can and why should we be? We are not only called to spiritual growth—that is, the formation of the investment of faith Christ gives us—but we are also to give back to Him in dividends. This is a deep conviction of our faith, a practiced submission that shows our obedience and a life of personal, spiritual, and relational maturity. We have to listen to God. If not, we will not learn and then we will not grow and then we will not have a life of transformation and growth. Instead, we will have a storm-tossed sea of life, wayward in every perspective because our eyes and ears are not upon our Lord (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).
- *Not proud/not puffed up/not arrogant/ not conceited.* The attitude of pride shows up when we consider ourselves superior to another person. It spills over to viewing others as inferior and thus leads us to treat people with contempt. God hates this because as Christians, we are all His children and when we are being proud we are treating other “children” as if they are not good enough for our positive connection or personal interaction. Other biblical synonyms for pride are arrogance, insolence, boasting, stiff-necked, and haughty. Love tempers our passions and

realigns our focus. When we allow pride to be in charge, we leave God outside of our hearts and minds (James 4: 7-10).

- Why else does God hate pride and command us to rid ourselves of it? Pride sets us up as a god when there is only One God. God wants our obedience, love, and trust. We cannot give it to Him when we are too full of ourselves. Pride unveils and lifts our self-interests and our self-sufficiencies, which seem necessary and good. But, when we are self-sufficient, we will not only fail to see our need for redemption but also fail to see our need for growth in spiritual matters. Therefore, “self” becomes the god, and any work of the One True God is muted and put aside.
- If we are **proud**, we are disrespecting Him and serving the devil. This blocks our growth and intimacy with Jesus Christ, destroys our other relationships, and most importantly, in the context of this passage, limits and confines the flow of His love, Fruit, and character in our lives, inhibiting real love, righteousness, and help from spreading to others through us. It is like not allowing God to be the Sovereign in our lives because we are so full of ourselves we have little room for Him or others (Prov. 3:34).
- The solution to pride is humbleness—allowing Christ to be the ultimate plumber to unplug our spiritual drainpipes of the sin of these false ideas of love-like pride. So, we can pour out our waste and not let it contaminate others. To do this, we need to submit to the sovereignty of God. The presence of pride in a person means he/she is not in submission to God nor following His precepts. We are to make His plan for our lives to go forward first and foremost (1 Pet. 5:5-9)!
- People that are prideful, including Christians, switch pride for confidence in Christ, becoming proud instead of being content in Christ. All this does is cause us to be the irrational, foolish fool in Proverbs who does not use wisdom, but chooses rather to seek folly and thus brings adversity upon himself and others around him (Prov. 1:24-33; 6:16; 8:13, Isa. 57:15; 66:2; Micah 6:8).
- When we are right with God, we will really love others and this negative aspect of love will be “out of work.” When we are right with God, we will have no desire to impress others, because God is impressed on us.
- Think boasting and pride are not a problem? Look at these Scriptural references, especially in Psalms and Proverbs. They give an extreme case for what God hates, and that is conceit and pride. Check out these passages, which are rarely preached on! (Job 41:34; 2 Chron. 26:16; 32:26; Psalm 10:4-5; 18:27; 31:18; 56:2; 59:12; 62:10; 73:6-12; 101:5; 131:1; 6:17; Prov. 8:13; 11:2; 13:10; 16:18; 21:4; 24; 29:23; 30:13; Isa. 2:11-21; 13:19; 16: 6; 23:9; Ezek. 28:2; Ob. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:6; 2 Cor. 5:12; 7:4; Gal. 6:4; and these are just a few!)

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Real love will lift the other person up—not put him/her down! This is what Christ does for us; He lifts us up, even to the point that He lifted Himself up to the cross to die for us! We have to see God’s love before we can adequately be a person who gives love. We need to know this: God loves you and accepts you more powerfully, passionately, purposefully, and deeply than you could ever fathom! You are secure. God “guarantees” you with a clear, powerful, loving, impacting, and lasting relationship with Him. When you are in Christ, God is pleased with you! You have no need to fear rejection or abandonment or condemnation; you are a person of real, deep value and worth before our Lord! You are forgiven because of Christ and His righteousness that covers you—not because of your deeds or performance. You are unique and complete in Him; and because of this, you are a special person whom God loves and will use to further impact His kingdom. Remember that so also is the other person you seek to put down (John 6:37, 44, 65; 13:1; 15:16; Rom. 5:1-8; Eph. 1:4-5; Phil. 1:6; Col. 1:21-22; 2:10; 3:12-14; 1 John 4:9-11)!

Do you see the evils of pride? Pride reveals our dark nature; it shows our sin and uses it as a weapon. Pride lifts our personal self-interests and self-sufficiencies to the detriment of self and others. Pride may seem necessary and good to us, but it is actually evil. When one is self-sufficient, the non-Christian will not see the need for redemption and the Christian will fail to see the need for spiritual growth. When we are engaged in pride, “self” becomes the “god”, and any work of the One True God is muted and put aside. Yes, God can break through like a hot knife through butter, but He usually does not. He lets us stew in our own self-created delusions until we are so beaten down we have nowhere else to go. We have the ability, through His Spirit, to look up and see His grace, and thus not experience the chastisement and loneliness of pride— if we choose. When we are boastful, we cannot love or engage in good positive relationships or do any Kingdom building!

When we take our focus off Christ, then pride will come in, causing us to hurt others and cutting us off from our essential and potentially vital relationships. Our spiritual growth will stagnate while we are crafting the self-defeating tools of anger, and the anger and bitterness will worsen over time. To combat our pride, we have to place Christ first and foremost in our lives, making sure we are grateful for who He is and what He has done for us so we do not produce ingratitude or reside in our hurts. We must be careful that our hurts do not consume us or that ingratitude does not take root. If we are not careful, we will compensate by hurting others to make ourselves feel good. All this does is hurt our Lord, our church, and us too!

We remove our pride by “clinging” to the cross, confessing our sins, and seeking forgiveness from God and others whom we have offended. Our discipline in the faith will help strengthen our walk as we continue to grow in Him.

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. How do you feel and respond when someone is arrogant or condescending toward you? How would you define pride?
2. What do you do when you make a mistake? Do you admit it? What can you do to be better at owning up to your mistakes? How would this honor our Lord?
3. Why is it that what love is not is as critical and significant as what love is?
4. Why do you suppose that God hates pride the most? What sins do we think are worse? Why?
5. Why does God say that there is no worse sin than pride? Then why are we prideful as His followers and servants?
6. How does humility point to and honor to the ones we love and as Christians, point to our Lord?
7. How do you know the difference whether someone is being prideful or being confident? How should a Christian show respect and confidence to another person?
8. Pride will create _____? How does the willingness and obedience to grow and mature in Christ's love remove our pride?
9. What can the church leadership and pastors do to curtail our pride that leads to bitterness and hostility flowing from us?
10. How does pride get in the way of our practicing love or leading a wholeheartedly mature Christian life? What do you need to do about it?