

# Youth Teaching Resources

January 30, 2022



## Season after Christmas

Psalm 147:1-20—"A Good Beginning"

## In Christ We Have ...

### Season of Epiphany

Acts 8:4-17 (RCL 8:14-17)—"Amazing Grace"

1 Corinthians 12:1-11—"Amazing Gifts"

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a—"Amazing Oneness"

**1 Corinthians 13:1-13—"Amazing Love"**

[www.nurturingfaith.net](http://www.nurturingfaith.net)

Subscribe to *Nurturing Faith* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.  
Find links and videos related to this lesson.

# “Amazing Love”

## 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

### YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Robert Tackett-Evans

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

#### Gathering

After everyone has gathered, take a moment to allow students to share about their experiences from last week's challenge.

#### Opening Exercise

Show the YouTube clip “100 Kids Describe Love.” The clip may be found at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T\\_ObrBLVqWg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_ObrBLVqWg).

“Love” is a word we use a lot today. We say we “love” this thing, that food, that person, etc. Yet, we watch this video, and it seems that as often as the word gets used, “love” is hard to define.

- What are some of the definitions you hear the kids giving for love?
- Why do you think love is so difficult to define?
- What is “love?” How would you define it?

#### Listening to the Scripture

As you turn to today's scripture, begin by reading 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 aloud. Invite students to share any initial thoughts, questions, or insights they have about the text by asking a question like the following:

- What details stand out to you in this reading? (*Students are invited to name details they find confusing, interesting, troubling etc.*) Why does this stand out to you?

You will want to consult Tony's commentary to address questions students might raise about the passage. After everyone has had the opportunity to share their initial insights or questions, continue the discussion. Our reading today is centered in the ongoing discussion Paul has been having about spiritual gifts. Keep in mind the conflict over which spiritual gifts were superior. Today, Paul takes that up in his discussion about love. Paul does not offer a dictionary definition of love but rather, names various qualities of love.

- Of all the characteristics of love that Paul names, which one(s) stand out to you most? Why?
- Based on what Paul says love “is” and “is not” in verses 4-7, if you had to choose one word of your own to describe love, what would it be? Why? (*At this point, it will be helpful to see Tony's commentary to help students think about what each of the characteristics are, and to have a discussion on “agape” love.*)

## Listening to the Scripture *continued*

- Paul says love never ends or fails. Do you agree with Paul here? Why or why not? Why do you think he says love never ends or fails?
- Over the last few weeks, we have heard Paul talk about a lot of different spiritual gifts, yet out of all of them, Paul says the greatest is love. Why do you think love is the greatest?
- If love is the greatest of these gifts, what might that tell us about God, from whom all these giftings come?
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in one of his letters the following words: “He who loves is a participant in the being of God.” What do you think he meant?

If the students would like to continue with this study, consider consulting Tony’s section titled *Digging Deeper*. You might consider asking questions like the following:

- Do you think that people can do good things for the wrong reasons? What might some of those “wrong” reasons be?
- What would it look like for people to do good things out of love, out of selfless motivation?
- Paul talks about growing from our childish understandings and growing to see and know ourselves more clearly. Think about your own life and the good things you do for others. What is your true motivation for doing those good things? (*love, a desire for attention, recognition, etc.*)

If the group feels up for a challenge, consider discussing what Tony poses as *The Hardest Question*.

- What did Paul mean by “love?”

## Application

This week, post on social media stories or pictures of places where you believe you have witnessed true love being exercised. Come next week prepared to share about some of the examples you have chosen.

Close with prayer.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Boasting, or burning?**—The translation of v. 3 appears differently in various translations, largely because of differing textual traditions. “If I give away all my possessions” is fairly clear, but “if I hand over my body so that I may boast” is more difficult. The NRSV translation chooses the textual variant *kauchēsōmai*, meaning “that I may boast.” The earliest and best attested manuscripts have this reading.

At some point, perhaps initially due to a scribal error, the word changed to *kauthēsōmai*, only two similar letters different in Greek, meaning “that I may be burned.” This is attested in the later textual traditions that became most popular. That tradition was at the root of the Latin Vulgate translation, and was also followed by translators of the familiar King James Version.

Plurality of texts is less important than the age of texts, so it seems most appropriate to go with the earlier reading, which makes perfect sense. The latter reading, “so that I may be burned,” has to be interpreted against the possibility of extreme persecution, or perhaps the branding of someone who sold themselves as a slave.

Few people today would even consider selling all of one’s possessions or committing all of one’s work to helping the poor. Even that, however, could be motivated by a desire for attention rather than love.

**Patience**—Raymond Bryan Brown described loving patience in this way: “Patience is gentle strength that has staying power. It is not insensitivity, but sensitivity to others that bears with them in the midst of difficulty. Patience is not weakness, but strength that emerges under stress. It is capacity to accept strain. Christians are able to be patient toward others because God exercises patience toward them and all mankind and because God grants them the gift of patience through the operation of His Spirit” (from “1 Corinthians” in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10 [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970], p. 372).

**Greed**—While Paul focused mainly on the behavior of churches and church members, it can be instructive to imagine how love could apply in other areas, such as business. Can you imagine what it would be like if large companies and financial institutions cared less about profits and more about service—or more about using profits to benefit others rather than to enrich themselves? Even for those who strive to be faithful, it’s hard to keep others in mind when the money is rolling in.

**Seeing clearly**—Paul and others who lived two millennia ago did not have mirrors as perfectly clear as ours, often relying on metal mirrors of polished brass or silver. The clearest image of themselves they could see would have been when reflected in clear water and good light.

## Digging Deeper *continued*

This reminds me of a visit I made to Fred Rogers' office many years ago. Fred had won many awards for his work as "Mr. Rogers" in children's television, but none of those were on display. I remember three pieces of wall art. One was a plaque with the Greek word for grace (*charis*), which is at the root of the kindness he lived and promoted.

The second was a Hebrew inscription from the Song of Songs 6:3: *ani ledodi vedodi li*. It means "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." It reminded me that Fred had a wife and a personal life beyond his professional life.

The largest item on the wall was a framed piece of Chinese calligraphy. When I asked for a translation, he told me it meant "If you want to see yourself clearly, don't look in muddy water."

Paul's poetic prediction reminds us that this world offers only a dim and muddy view of what is truly real, but one day we will see clearly.

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## What did Paul mean by “love”?

We all know that “love” can be interpreted in many ways, and not all of them laudable. “Love” can mean “like,” as in “I love ice cream,” or “I love New York.” The word can be cheapened to describe a sexual encounter as “making love” even if the participants are casually hooking up. It can be used to indicate warm affection, as in “I love my teammates,” or “there’s a lot of love in this room.” And, it can be used to describe a deep, genuine, and selfish commitment to another, the way husbands and wives should love each other, and parents their children.

Paul’s readers would have been familiar with several related concepts, all of which could be translated in English by “love.” They knew that the Greek word *eros* described a love of deep desire or passionate longing. Our word “erotic” is derived from it, though the word is not explicitly sexual, and certainly not inherently negative. Passionate longing is a good thing in the proper context—but even then, it is not Christian love.

The familiar word *philos* is often translated as “brotherly love,” as in Philadelphia, “The City of Brotherly Love.” It could, however, refer to a sense of strong affiliation in other contexts: “philosophy” is the “love of wisdom.”

The term *storgē* carries a similar connotation, a kind of “family” affection. Both of these are good and positive words—but also have a strong component of self-interest. They do not describe Christian love.

*Agapē* (*a-GAH-pay*), on the other hand, is a very specific word used to describe the kind of selfless love that Jesus demonstrated and expected of his followers. In Classical Greek, the word had a rather neutral meaning, but translators of the Septuagint (an ancient Greek version of the Hebrew Bible) chose to use *agapē* when translating references to God’s love. Over time, in the Hebrew and Christian communities, the word took on the specific meaning of “God’s kind of love”—self-giving love—love that doesn’t have to be earned. It is this kind of love that Paul has in mind throughout 1 Corinthians 13. *Agapē* love is not some kind of sentimental ooze, but something that is strong, intentional, and brave beyond words.