

Lasting Love on Mother's Day

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1–13, especially verse 1: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.”

Introduction: According to the Knoxville *News-Sentinel*, Police Chief Phil Keith was in the middle of a city council meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, when his pager beeped. Startled to see that the call was from his mother, he rushed to the press table and phoned her. “Phil Keith, are you chewing gum?” demanded his mom, who had been watching on cable TV. “Yes, ma’am.” “Well, it looks awful. Spit it out.” Keith dutifully removed the gum and went back to his meeting.

There's no one like mothers! The words “mother” and “love” go together like left and right hands, and on this Mother's Day of 2003, there's no better passage to study than the “Love Chapter” of the Bible which describes the *agape* love of God which is necessary for mothers, fathers, sons, daughters—and for all the rest of us.

- 1. The Place of Love** (vv. 1–3). Love is superior to eloquent words (v. 1). Love is the vital principle, and without it all other endowments, including excellence in communication, is vain. Love is superior to wisdom (v. 2). If a person could unlock the mysteries of the entire universe and call forth faith to remove mountains, he would be zero without love. Love is superior to work (v. 3). Albert Barnes notes, “If there is not true piety, there can be no benefit in this to my soul. It will not save me. If I have not true love to God, I must perish, after all. Love therefore, is more valuable and precious than all these endowments. Nothing can supply its place; naught can be connected with salvation without it.”
- 2. The Portrait of Love** (vv. 4–7). Love is patient (v. 4). It bears injustice without anger or despair. Love may be practiced (v. 4). It is mild under all provocations and ill usage. Love produces good manners and courtesy at all times. Love is pure (v. 4), not jealous or displeased when others are successful. Love never embarrasses the owner or recipient. Love is peaceful (v. 4). It is not rash. Love takes a back seat and is willing to work behind the scenes. Love does not brag or boast or sing its own praises. Love is polite (v. 5), doing nothing to cause shame. Love prefers others (v. 5). There is no selfishness in the true love. It seeks the good of others. Love is not easily provoked (v. 5). When love holds the reins of the soul, there is little danger of provocation to anger and spiteful action that leads to sin. Love is preclusive (v. 5). It does not condemn on suspicion or without evidence, nor is it malicious nor disposed to find fault. Love exhibits propriety (v. 6). It does not sympathize with evil, nor does it delight in anything that does not conform to the standard of right. Love takes pleasure in truth (v. 6). Love rejoices in the virtues of others, not their vices. Love is pleasant (v. 7). Love maintains a disposition that refuses to make public or to avenge the faults of others. Love is not suspicious. It trusts others. Love brightens all things, bears all things and braves all things.
- 3. The Permanence of Love** (vv. 8–13). Love's permanency is suggested by the phrase “love never fails” (v. 8). Love will always abide, may always be exercised, and can be adapted to all circumstances in which we may be placed. Love's pre-eminence is suggested by the phrase “but the greatest of these is love” (v. 13). Love is the greatest of all gifts, for love makes the rest of the gifts graceful. Love is the one needful thing—our priority. We lose our goods or even our good names, but if we truly retain love, we have exchanged the temporary for the eternal. For when the Bible has said all it will say about God, it is contained in the one statement: “God is love.”

Conclusion: F. E. Marsh tells of some young pastors who paid a visit to one of the great ministers of the past generation. They found him preparing to go to a meeting where a strong debate was expected. He was reading the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians and praying that its teaching might guide his conduct. The aged minister felt the need of the restraining hand of divine grace and the calming power of love, lest he should be rash in his speech. This is the kind of love that lasts. May God give us loving moms, loving dads, and may He give all of us loving hearts like that.