

Introduction:

- Have you ever watched someone who could not see clearly? What do they do? They squint! If they are driving and looking through a fog-they squint. If they are driving and it is a Florida down pour-they squint. If they need glasses and the picture is blurry-they squint! Most people if they do not understand something they squint!
- In 1 Cor 13:4-13 Paul lays out the definition of and the importance of love. It is such a new concept to the Corinthian church that Paul says, most people who look at this definition of love squint.
 - It is such a big picture that is so outside their box, that they squint to see it.
 - It is like peering through fog... I can see it but I cant see clearly.
 - The beauty of this passage is that Paul very eloquently lays out what love is.
- Let's ask ourselves this question without being all spiritual, "What is love?" It will be easier to find love if we know what we are looking for!

I. Love Is (These live now and forever)

- A. There are 8 things that love is in this passage.
- B. The first two are critical to understanding. For in them is found both the passive and active God of love.
 1. Love is patient. KJV- "suffereth long" is good translation. It is the passive side of God-He is patient with us not wanting any to perish. He holds back His wrath.
 2. Love is kind. His love is found in the multiplied expressions of His mercy. For Paul, in 1 Cor 13, his description begins with this two sided view of God. He is patient with us and He is actively showing us mercy.
- C. These two positive expression of love are followed by 6 other "Love is":
 1. Patient
 2. Kind
 3. Rejoicing in truth
 4. Bears all
 5. Believes all
 6. Hopes all
 7. Endures all
 8. Never fails!

II. Love Is Not (These live only for the now)

- A. There are 8 things that love is not in this passage.
- B. Love is not
 1. Envious - love does not allow fellow believers to be in rivalry or competition with each other or with other teachers...ie. Apollos, Paul, etc.
 2. Boastful - this rare word means literally to 'behave as a braggart'. It suggest self centered actions which are done specifically to call attention to oneself. Paul point-it is not possible to be boast and to love at the same time. The one action considers only self, the other is considering the community of believers.
 3. Proud - to be puffed up, or arrogant. They think way to highly of themselves in spite of their sinful, unloving, unholy ways.
 4. Rude - the word used here means to behave shamefully or disgracefully. Ie. 11:2-16 women are bring shame on themselves. Ie. Christians are misbehaving in over eating and drinking at communion. Christian love cares to much for the rest of the community to behave in such a way.
 - a) Luke 9:54 "*Do you want us to call down fire on them?*"

5. Self-seeking - we are not to be seeking our own good but the good of others. In many ways this is what Christian love is about. "Finding oneself is not the highest good. The highest good is seeking the best for your neighbor!
6. Easily angered - not easily provoked. In the passive as it is used here, it means that one is not easily angered by those around him. It is a further expression of love is patient...
7. Keeps no record of wrongs - it does not dwell on it. Because it does not keep record it cant be brought up in the future.
8. Does not rejoice in evil. The Christian by his love/agape, joins in the rejoicing of behavior that reflects the Gospel.

III. Love is Greatest

- A. All things! It is the character of love to 'put up' with everything'. Or as the NEB (New English Bible) says, there is nothing that love cannot face." **Rejoicing in truth**
 1. Bears all/endures all - Love has a tenacity in the present that flows into the future empowering it to live in every kind of circumstance continually in order to pour itself out for others. Ie. That is a picture of Paul's ministry.
 2. Believes all/hopes all
 - a) It does not mean that love always believes the best about everything and everyone.
 - b) The meaning is this: love never cease to believe nor does it ever cease to hope.
 - c) This is why love can endure. The life that has been touched by the love of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit can love others in the same way.
 3. Never fails! It is never defeated. It cannot be brought down! It can be said of this passage that you could put 'Jesus' in place of 'love'.
- B. Paul in vs 8-13 is redirecting the Corinthian church to the true nature of spirituality and in so doing show them a more excellent way which is the edification of the church with their gifts.
 1. The gifts will end one day.
 2. Love on the other hand is primary now and will endure through eternity.
- C. The squinting Corinthians.
 1. By now the Corinthians are squinting quite hard. This exhortation by Paul is bringing them back to reality...the reality of the Kingdom!
 2. Paul is all about seeing them grow up!
 3. And Paul is all about seeing them put away Childish behavior.

Conclusion:

- Love never fails. You can't go wrong with love.
- Love is a more excellent way because it belongs in the present as well as into eternity.