

“Home for All: The Way of Love”  
1 Corinthians 13

Being Loved is the 10<sup>th</sup> dimension identified by Dr. Erik Carter’s research on belonging. It is a key factor for our sense of belonging. We all have this innate need to feel loved as part of our experience of belonging. As we focus on love today, I invite you to think of the popular notions of love. Here are some of the unrealistic things about love:

- Perfection from Your Partner, Your Child, Your Friend, Your Colleague, or Your Neighbor:
- Mind Reading: Expecting the people we love to read our minds and know what we need and enjoy.
- The People we love will change for us.
- The people we love will fulfill every role perfectly.
- The people we love will prioritize us over everything else always.
- If you sacrifice your needs or truth, people will love you more.
- Love always feels good and comes naturally with little to no effort.
- You will always agree on everything with the people you love.
- Living a Conflict-Free Life with others, especially loved ones.
- Instant Conflict Resolution.

These expectations about love often leave us frustrated and isolated. They also hinder our ability to feel loved by others, especially when we are not perfect or when we make mistakes. Love in daily life is very hard and a major challenge for most of us. Not only that, but we also have the challenge of understanding what love is. We often reduce it to a feeling or a sense of weakness that anything goes if we are loving enough. In 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. said to a group that was opposing the Vietnam war, “When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life.” [Source: Beyond Vietnam, 1967, <http://www.hartfordhwp.com/archives/45a/058.html> ]

As followers of the way of Jesus, we have an incredible example in the life and teachings of Jesus of what true love is. Here is a video by Brené Brown about Jesus and what true love looks like: [The Work of The People | Film | Love Made Flesh](#).

Jesus’ life and ministry inspired his followers to do the hard work of love and to know that love is much more than a sentiment. They risked everything for the sake of this vision of love because they knew deep within their souls, that force of love. The Apostle Paul was one of those followers. He was converted to this way of love through a personal mystical experience of love on his way to Damascus. Prior to that experience, Paul thought of love as something reserved to those who followed the rules and fit into the laws of his religion. But on the way to Damascus, he experienced firsthand the force of divine love. It changed everything for him. His false expectations about what was important in life and faith were all transformed, so much so that Paul became one of the most important followers of Jesus in his ability to share the message of Jesus and to

establish churches. Paul preached and taught in many places, but his lasting legacy for us is through the letters that he wrote to several churches. He distilled the wisdom of faith through these letters, and we get to learn from them ourselves. One of these letters contains an amazing chapter on love. It is one of the most famous chapters in the whole Bible because it gets read at most Christian weddings. It is often referred to as the chapter of love.

It is an amazing description of love, and the context is that of conflict. The church was divided and had several conflicts. Last week, we looked at the image of the one body which Paul used to help the church in Corinth with their issues around competition with one another about who has better gifts and contributions. This was followed by this incredible chapter which highlights the centrality of love for our human experience. One of the most common ways we read this chapter is to think of our human love for one another. But today I invite you to listen to it as a description of God's love for us. Let's listen to 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant<sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup> For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup> but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup> And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

I invite you to consider these qualities of love as they are often missing from our lives. When we have that deep experience of God's love and know deep within our bones that we are loved, all the other pieces of love in our lives fall into place. When our lives are soaked in divine love, that love becomes a spring of life that helps us to do the hard work of love where we deal with conflict, disappointment, betrayals, loss, attachment, control, and all the other traps in our human experience. When love is our anchor, no matter how far we may stray, we are never too far.

What does this mean for us today? It means that we are invited to remember to anchor our lives daily in experiences of divine love. It also means that we invite others to

experience the same grace and love. If you are having trouble with love, any kind of trouble: Loving your neighbors, feeling loved, loving your family, loving your “enemies,” or loving those who are deemed unworthy, take time to allow God to love you. Let love as a force go through you. This is not about following a set of rules to make your way into love. It is about allowing the force of divine love to resonate within you each and every day.

Here is a spiritual practice that is described on the website of the Upper Room devotional ministries:

### [The Upper Room](#)

#### Soaking Prayer

A soaking prayer invites you to simply rest in God’s love. Soaking prayer is not a time for intensive intercessory prayer or Bible study. Lay aside all of that for another day. It is a time of prayerful rest and relaxation, so find a comfortable chair, a hammock, a bed, or place a blanket on the ground. Play peaceful worship music to help quieten your soul and bring your heart closer to God. Soaking prayer can last as long as you need, from fifteen minutes to an hour or more. If you feel exhausted, let this be your only form of prayer for a while.

#### Try It Out

- Be aware of the warmth of God’s love surrounding you. Imagine yourself in a refreshing pool of water or lying on the beach with ocean waves washing over you.
- Visualize a tree gently swaying in the breeze. Allow yourself to slowly rock from side to side as if you are being cradled.
- Lie still and let God’s light seep gently into every part of your body, just as water soaks into a sponge. Recognize that God’s presence fills your entire being. Experiencing God’s presence helps us love the Lord with all our heart, mind, and soul.

And now listen to a description of God’s love from Steve Thomason’s translation of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8:

**Love puts up with us even when we blow it, it is the most excellent way of goodness and kindness that gives us a chance, because it has a low boiling point.**

**It doesn’t toot its own horn or puff itself up. It doesn’t force itself on others, it doesn’t seek after its own desires. It is other-oriented.**

**It doesn’t get all riled up over silly things or keep a list of offenses to use against you. It doesn’t get excited about the wrongs we’ve done, instead gets very excited when we dwell in the truth.**

**In all things love protects us, believes in us, has hope that we will make it to the end, and always waits up for us, no matter how long it takes us to get there.**

**In the end, love will never let us down or give up on us. Amen.**