

This beautiful treatise on love appears directly in the middle of Paul's discussion on the use or mis-use of spiritual gifts. It very much addresses how we are to live with one another. It raises our character high above both our abilities and our accomplishments (*cf.* 13:1-3).

As Christians we should know that "love" has a higher and more significant meaning than that which we often hear around us or even use ourselves. Our understanding of "love" must rise to fulfill those two great commandments: to love God and to love our neighbor. In this passage Paul presents fourteen qualities of love that should challenge each of us to re-evaluate our actions and attitudes concerning love.

1. **Love is patient***. "Patient" (or "longsuffering") is an ability to continue over an extended time without giving in to failed expectancy or without responding inappropriately to evil or personal injury. E.g., parents love their children by not giving up in training them in correct behavior and attitudes even when there are failures and sinful, hurtful responses.
2. **Love is kind**. "Kind", which is actually a verb, has the sense of providing something beneficial or showing oneself to be kind. (*Cf.* Gal. 6:10.) The opposite is to be harsh, hard, sharp or bitter. E.g., the kind parent accurately judges what the child can do and does not require more than that. To be a kind neighbor we speak gentle words that sooth and are pleasant.
3. **Love does not envy**. To "envy" (or "be jealous") is to eagerly seek something in a wrong way. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him because he got special attention from their father (Genesis 37:3,4,11). James warns that jealousy leads to fights and quarrels (James 4:2). E.g., we will not be jealous of a co-worker who is promoted or rewarded, if we choose to love our neighbor.
4. **Love does not boast**. "Boasting" (or "behaving as a braggart or a windbag") addresses action, particularly speech, that arises from pride, the next word. It refers to the one who is always talking about themselves or presenting themselves as something special. (*Cf.* Proverbs 27:2.) E.g., the loving person will not monopolize a conversation nor always be sharing their experiences or knowledge.
5. **Love is not proud**. The word translated "proud" actually means to inflate (hence, "puffed up" or "arrogant"). When a person has an inflated view of themselves, they may try to control other people and become very bossy. This is sometimes seen in couples where one attempts to control the relationship, an attitude and action which does not come from love but from pride.
6. **Love is not rude**. To be rude is to defy moral or social standard. E.g., a man is not loving his wife when he acts in a way that embarrasses her publically.
7. **Love is not self-seeking**. This has also been translated, "does not seek its own" and "does not demand its own way." Sometimes an effort to compromise out of a sense of justice is an excuse to get our own way at least half the time, i.e., to be half-loving. *Cf.* 1 Cor. 6:1-8. If I love someone, I will not demand my "rights."
8. **Love is not easily angered**. "Easily angered" is a broad concept including being provoked, irritated or easily upset. To love someone is not to let their habits or mannerisms provoke me. I choose not to let that cause a negative response in me, whether it be talking too much or saying too little, laughing too loud or speaking too softly.
9. **Love keeps no record of wrongs**. This probably includes remembering how a person has wronged us, responding to them based upon those past wrongs, and blaming them for things without proof. E.g, the husband who blames his wife for something today, based upon things she did last week, is not loving her because he is keeping record of wrongs and is blaming her for a wrong without any proof.
10. **Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth**. The one who loves does not rejoice in wrongdoing or injustice. Instead they are particularly happy when the truth is clear. E.g., it is not love to rejoice when injustice is done even to a bad person, and the truth is hidden.
11. **Love always protects**. This is usually translated with some sense of enduring, though the idea of covering or hiding is contained in the word. It is most probably enduring without murmuring and complaining. The term translated as "always" (NIV) does not have a temporal sense, but rather "in all ways" or "wholly". Love will be able to bear whatever comes upon it.
12. **Love always trusts**. "Believes all things" (KJV) wrongly implies a gullibility which "love never loses faith" (NLT) avoids. To love is to believe in all ways, in all situations, not in the person, but in God. (*Cf.* John 2:24.) Never losing faith is trusting God in all situations concerning that person whom I love.
13. **Love always hopes**. Hope looks to a positive future. The one who loves may see the sin in a person, but anticipates the victory in Christ.
14. **Love always perseveres**. This looks at continuing in time whereas protect/endure concerning bearing up under certain circumstances. Love keeps on going through difficulties and when nothing is happening. E.g., if you can fall out of "love", it was certainly not love.

Love is a decided action which I take for the benefit of another. It accepts whatever cost I must put out. It puts the other person first and myself last. And it keeps on going. But this type of love is not possible without God. Love is the first listed among the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The works our own sinful nature are contrary to it. But God in His love has made it possible in Jesus Christ to love Him and to love others.

* qualities are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible