

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The second series of 6 Bible studies is about 6 important relationships: Christian love, Christian friendship, the Christian men-woman relationship, the Christian marriage relationship, the Christian parent-child relationship and unequal yoke-relationships. Today's Bible study is: A DISCIPLE LOVES WITH CHRIST'S LOVE. The fundamental question is "WHAT CHARACTERISES CHRISTIAN LOVE?"

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Please read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Love is contrasted to seven things that are very highly regarded by all people in the world. But if I can do all these things and have not love, then I am nothing! I can accomplish nothing of eternal value! If I can speak eloquently and move the minds and hearts of people with speech, but have no love, my words sound hollow and will persuade no one. If I give all my possessions to the poor, but have no love, then I am just buying relief from a guilty conscience or from the sympathetic feelings aroused by their misery. If I become a missionary, make great sacrifices and even lose my life because of difficult circumstances or persecution, but have no love, then I gain nothing! It is not worthwhile to make all these sacrifices if I have no love!

(T) An important truth for me is in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. Love is defended to be the greatest possession. The reason why love is the greatest possession is because it lasts forever. Verse 8 says, "Love never fails", meaning it never ceases. The other things, which people all over the world regard as the most important possessions, are going to cease. When prophecies go into fulfilment, they will cease. Because they have completed their task, they have nothing more to say. Tongues of men and angels will cease. Today the language in which 1 Corinthians 13 was originally written in, the common Greek, is no more spoken anywhere. Knowledge is so highly regarded, that people spend years in schools and universities to acquire it and spend hours everyday reading newspapers and watching TV to gain knowledge. Yet all knowledge ceases. The newspapers of yesterday are burned and the science books of ten years ago are outdated and sold as scrap paper. All knowledge is soon outdated and ceases to function. The apostle Paul could have taken more examples. He did not mention money or success or power or fame. All these things will cease. Paul does not say that all these things are wrong in themselves. He only says that they are very temporary. The immortal soul must give itself to things that are immortal. Only three things are immortal and will last: faith, hope and love. Love is the greatest, because "God is love"!

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1<sup>st</sup> Question from verse 4. What is the meaning of "love is patient"?

(T) Patience is the love that can wait. Patience is listed as the first part of love, because this is usually where love begins. Love does not enforce kindness, but can wait to show kindness. Love does not rush in to act, but can wait for God's prompting to show love. Thus patience is the reins that God uses to control the expression of love. Patience waits for God to work things out in our lives and our circumstances. While patience waits, it expresses itself in the beautiful ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Patience endures difficulties, like provocation, pain and people's weaknesses, without getting irritated, discouraged or angry.

2<sup>nd</sup> Question from verse 4. What is the meaning of "love is kind"?

(S) Kindness is the love that acts. Kindness looks for a way to be helpful and do good works. The Bible tells us how Jesus went around doing good (Acts 10:38). He healed the sick, he set demon-possessed people free and he preached the good news to the poor (Matthew 11:4-5). Kindness is friendly and gentle instead of critical and repulsive. You cannot be a friend to everyone, but you can show friendliness, gentleness or kindness to everyone (Philippians 4:5). Kindness does not let a chance go by to please others. Someone wrote, "I shall pass

through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

3<sup>rd</sup> Question from verse 4. What is the meaning of “love is not jealous”?

(T) Love that is not jealous is generous. Generosity is the love in competition with others. Whenever you attempt some good work, you will discover that there are other people who can do the same thing better than you. Do not envy them. Envy is a feeling of ill-will to those who are in the same line of business as you. Envy is a spirit of grabbing what belongs to another. Envy robs the other person from the credit or honour that he deserves. Generosity is content and thankful with what it is, has and can do. Generosity does not resent, but rather appreciates what others are, have and can do.

4<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 4. What is the meaning of “love does not boast”?

(S) Love that does not boast is modest. Modesty is the love after you have acted. It is the love needed after you have shown patience, kindness and generosity. Modesty puts a seal on its lips and forgets what it has done. Modesty has a moderate estimate of its own merits and accomplishments. Modesty does not exaggerate. It does not give excessive knowledge to others. Modesty does not deliberately try to impress others, brag or show off. Modesty deliberately draws no attention to itself.

5<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 4. What is the meaning of “love is not proud”?

(T) Love that is not proud is humble. Humility is the love before you act. Humility does not advertise its own strengths nor does it hide its own weaknesses. Humility is realistic about what it can do. Humility is not puffed up with its own importance, possessions, abilities or accomplishments. Humility does not arrogantly assert itself. Humility does not domineer or belittle others.

6<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 5. What is the meaning of “love never behaves rudely”?

(S) Love that never behaves rudely is courteous. Courtesy is the love in social interaction. Courtesy is love in little things. Courtesy has good manners and tact in every situation. Courtesy is polite, kind, considerate and sympathetic in manner or approach. Courtesy is sensitive to other people’s habits, culture and values. It is thoughtful about other people’s needs and feelings. Courtesy is the passport that allows you to mingle with any society.

7<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 5. What is the meaning of “love is not self-seeking”?

(T) Love that is not self-seeking is unselfish. Unselfishness is the love in the exercise of rights. Unselfishness does not seek its own rights. Unselfishness does not seek great things for itself. There is no greatness in things. The only greatness is the unselfish God. Unselfishness seeks to advance God’s cause and God’s kingdom in other people. Unselfishness does not pursue selfish ambitions, like position, status, power, fame, possessions and pleasures. Unselfishness does not seek its own advantage. Unselfishness never misuses another person for whatever reason. The people of the world pursue “happiness” and think that happiness consists of having and getting and being served. There is no happiness in having and getting, but only in giving and serving. Jesus said, “Whosoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:26).

8<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 5. What is the meaning of “love is not easily angered”?

(S) Love that is not easily angered is meek. Meekness is the love in one’s temperament, in one’s inner nature. Nothing is so destructive in the human nature than an evil temper. An evil temper breaks up relationships, families and even communities. It withers marriages, friendships and neighbourliness. It is the greatest misery-producing power within the human being. An evil temper consists of touchiness, anger, cruelty; pride, self-righteousness, obstinacy; resentment, unforgiving spirit and melancholy. An evil temper is a symptom of a deeper problem. It betrays some rottenness underneath and usually flashes out in an unguarded moment. It reveals an unchanged or unyielded heart. Only by yielding all the rooms of your heart to be occupied by Christ, will Christ change your temperament. Love will flow into your inner nature. Meekness tamely submits to the injury and hurts caused by others or by circumstances. Meekness is not easily provoked to react negatively. Meekness does not quickly take things that others say and do as personal attacks.

9<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 5. What is the meaning of “love does not keep a record of wrongs”?

(T) Love that does not keep a record of wrongs is forgiving. Forgiving love is the love in broken relationships. Some people keep a long list of all the wrongs another person has done to them. They will vent their resentment without ceasing, defend their self-righteousness vehemently and try to enlist you again and again to take their side against the offender. Such people are *bitter* people. Hebrews 12:15 warns that bitter people cause trouble and defile many other people. Bitter people sow suspicion against any person, cause the break-up of relationships and pollute the atmosphere with gossip, false rumours and slander. Only God’s love can bring healing to such a sick situation. Only when a person realises that God forgives his sins and remembers his sins no more, then he too can forgive and forget. Forgiving love is quick to forgive and to forget an offence. Forgiving love is not bitter or resentful. It is not revengeful and it does not recall old wrongs.

10<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 6. What is the meaning of “love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth”?

(S) Love that does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices with the truth is sincerity. Sincerity is the love amidst weaknesses and failings. Sincerity acknowledges that everybody has weaknesses and everybody fails sometimes.

Sincerity never gloats or looks with triumphant satisfaction over other person's wrongs or failures. Instead, sincerity rejoices when the other person makes progress in truth and in righteousness.

11<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 7. What is the meaning of "love always protects"?

(T) Protective love is the love for careless people. Protective love keeps every form of threat away from others. It throws a cloak of silence over whatever is displeasing in others. It protects the reputation ("face") of other people. It never puts them to shame in front of other people. And it never gossips about other people.

12<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 7. What is the meaning of "love always trusts"?

(S) Trustful love is the love for suspicious people. The people who influence you are the people who believe in you. But in an atmosphere of suspicion you shrivel up. Without really knowing the facts, some people sometimes think that the other person's motives or intentions are evil. But trustful love thinks high and positively about him. Trustful love is not suspicious or distrustful of another person's intentions or actions without any good reason. Trustful love also makes itself vulnerable by entrusting its innermost thoughts and feelings, its personal problems and weaknesses to the other person. The other person could misuse what he knows about you. But because you love him, you trust him.

13<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 7. What is the meaning of "love always hopes"?

(T) Hopeful love is the love for self-righteous people. The self-righteous person thinks that he is always right and the other person is always wrong. Very easily everybody else is wrong and can never be right. The self-righteous person does not expect other people to change. And worse: he does not want them to change, so that he can always think that he is right. However, hopeful love does not give another person up as incorrigible. Instead, hopeful love expects God to work in that person and change him. Hopeful love also does not give situations up as hopeless, but instead expects God to accomplish *his* best plan through every difficult situation.

14<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 7. What is the meaning of "love always perseveres"?

(S) Persevering love is the love measured in time. Persevering love persistently continues to do what is right in God's eyes. It does not give up to do good, to bear fruit and to run the race of faith, no matter what trial or temptation it faces. Persevering love simply has no "time-out". Love is not a whim of the moment, but the essential power of the Christian for every day of his life.

15<sup>th</sup> Question from verse 8. What is the meaning of "love never fails"?

(T) This is again the summary of love. Love always lasts. Love is always available for others. Love continues to greatly influence everyone. Love completely satisfies all who possess it. Love never passes away, because God is love!

(S) **STEP 4. APPLY**

Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of *possible applications* from 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

(T) Be kind and helpful to unfriendly people.

(S) Forgive everyone that has wronged you in the passed.

(T) Protect everybody's reputation by never gossiping about anyone.

(S) Expect that God can change a person that you think is incorrigible.

(T) Let us consider which possible application does God want us to turn into a *personal application*.

(S) I want to practise to be more patient and kind with my children, because I get irritated when they don't immediately do what I ask them to do.

(T) I have noticed that sometimes I am suspicious about another person's motives. Because love is trustful, I want to practise to think positively of him and regard his words and deeds as done with good intentions.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Dear Father in heaven, I confess that I have to learn so much more about love. Please give me grace to practise to be more patient and kind to my children. Help me to wait for you to work in their lives and change their attitudes and character, instead of me trying to change them.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, I know that I cannot love others, if I do not first receive your love. Please pour your love in my heart through the Holy Spirit. Help me to meditate how you, the living God, are patient with me, kind to me, trustful and hopeful about me! Give me your grace to become more and more like you.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Prepare next week's Bible Study. The Bible Study topic is "A disciple is a real friend". And the Bible passage is John 15:13-15.

Second. Prepare next week's Bible study from John 15:13-15. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".