

Last week we started our series on Sharing God's Love using Paul's teaching from 1 Corinthians 13. We began as Paul began with knowing that first and foremost, love is patient and kind. Today we explore that love is not many things. In fact Paul spent considerable more time on the ways in which certain actions were not love.

We know that we are skilled at saying one thing and doing another. Even if we don't want to be, it seems to be part of the human condition. We can certainly see the way it plays out, we find technicalities and yet that is not how we are called to act. I know that as I was young, and now watching my own children grow, they way we craft careful statements and actions so that we not actually breaking the text of the rule even if we are violating the spirit of the rule. This seems to be part of the reason that the Apostle Paul spends more time addressing all the ways in which actions are not love.

Love is not envious.

Love is not boastful.

Love is not arrogant.

Love is not rude.

Love does not insist on its own way.

Love is not irritable.

Love is not resentful.

Love is not envious. By definition envy is the desire to have what another has (I am envious of their '65 Mustang) or I wish they did not have

any snow. Now we know both of these are silly but envy is generally experienced as a strong emotion of unhappiness when someone has something that you do not. It sometimes stems from our own insecurities but not always. Envy does make relationships with those who have what we want difficult. We see this played out in Genesis because Cain is envious of Abel. We can look to the novel, *Little Women*, when Amy Marsh, the youngest of the 4 sisters, has to stay home instead of going to the theatre as the oldest 2 get to go. While she is home, in a jealous rage, burns her sister's manuscript. Amy destroyed the work of her sister because she was left behind.

Love is not boastful. We see this on any playground we visit. There is always that 1 person who can out perform everyone else. We also see it in the stands of professional sports. The spectators boasting to the players that they could've made that catch. Boasting can push us right into arrogance. How many of us really think we could handle catching a football, on the sidelines, with both feet inbounds, when another person who is bigger than we are is doing everything they can to keep that from happening. We can also see boasting in one upping each other, your fish was 20 lbs? Mine was 25 lbs. If you both caught fish does it really matter whose is biggest?

Many years ago, there was a catch phrase by the youngest of 3 sisters on a TV show, you may remember it, "how rude!" We can all think of times what we have experienced someone being rude to us, perhaps even thinking in our head, how rude. There are many ways we can be rude to each other, disrupting or interrupting others; belching at the table; ignoring someone when they enter; and using inappropriate language are just a few examples.

Love does not insist on its own way. This one hurts. If I had a quarter every time I got frustrated because someone was doing something in way other than I would do it – I'd be a poor woman. It's easy to think that we are always right and know how things should be done. But if we really love then it does not matter how things are done. When love is at the heart of who we are and what we do, we can make space for others experiences and ideas that may be significantly different than our own. The mentality of it's my way or the high way ultimately does nothing for our relationships or communities where we live. When we do not get our way, when we are irritable in doing the task we share our displeasure with everyone. Have you ever asked for help only to have the help mutter under their breath? It's sometimes easier to struggle at the task than spend time with someone who is irritably doing the work. Or perhaps you've experienced someone going into clean the kitchen after a meal and hear the pots and pans being banged as they resentfully clean up?

How we act affects not just how others feel but it effects the quality of the work. We have all heard of experiences people have had with "Christians" and "Churches" that make them doubt that God is love. What we say and do matter. God does not expect us to be perfect but God does expect us to put in the effort to grow. The behavior we tolerate from babies & toddlers is not what we allow for adults. We trust that we have learned and grown. Therefore, even if it is hard, we can practice love by not doing those things that Paul addresses, rightfully, as unloving actions.

Jesus was asked by the Pharisees what the greatest commandment was out of the 613 in the Old Testament. Jesus answered, loving God with all of your heart, your mind, your soul and your strength and the second is

likewise, love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said that all 613 commandments can be fulfilled by loving God first and neighbor more than ourselves. Paul picks up and begins to layout, especially for the body of Christ the ways in which we do and do not act in love with one another.

As we continue to grow in the knowledge and love of God, may we know that while there is nothing we can say or do that will keep God from loving us, that we are called to continue to grow in our expression of love for God and our neighbor. May our love not be experienced by others as arrogant or rude, envious or boastful, selfish, irritable or resentful, rather that our love is patient and kind. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.