

Text: I Corinthians 13:5 (Pew Bible, pg.1137)

Title: “The Biggest Loser”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles with me to I Corinthians 13. As you're turning let me remind you about our Kids Hope Luncheon today after the 11:00 service. This is a great opportunity to invest in the life of a boy or girl at Clarke Elementary. Read I Corinthians 13:4-5a.

Now we're not only studying these verses this summer, but we're also trying to memorize them together. I'll give you a second to review it with your Bible open. Now let's say it together.

The teaching in Scripture about love (in fact all biblical teaching, for that matter) is built on three things:

- **Directive** – what we have here in I Corinthians 13 is not just a philosophy or a suggestion. This is a directive ... instruction ... teaching about how to live our lives in love for God and for others.
- **Doctrine** – If we are just told to do something without knowing why it's important, we will be more likely to neglect it. In the case of biblical directives, they are all built upon doctrine, specifically about who God is. All these qualities of love are rooted in the Gospel and in the character of God. The Bible says that God is love. And our aim in life is holiness revealed to us by the character of God. We need to know this because there are times that we don't feel like obeying; we don't feel like loving. We may be weak, or the person before us is not particularly lovely. In times like that, when everything is confusing, we need the solid doctrine of God's word.

ILLUSTRATION – Serious pilots have what is called an “instrument rating.” That means they can fly in weather where they can't see the ground. When they are socked in by clouds, they can fly by the instruments. Biblical doctrines are like the instruments on the control panel. When everything else seems upside down, the doctrines of Scripture show us the right way.

- **Dynamic** – These are not just fine, admirable qualities that, if we work really hard, we can accomplish them. No demands made upon us in the Gospel can be met in human strength or righteousness. The dynamic is the power of the Risen Christ, living in us by His Holy Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love...” If all I have is the directive, but I don't have the dynamic, the power of Christ in me, I will fail miserably.

1 Corinthians 13:5 – (Love) is not rude, it is not self-seeking...

ILLUSTRATION – There's a popular TV program called *The Biggest Loser*. Participants come to the program overweight, some of them 100s of pounds overweight. And throughout the course of the series they see who can lose the most weight. But they're doing more than dieting. What the participants are doing is that they are simultaneously dieting to shed fat and they are exercising to build muscle. Well our goal as Christ-followers is to shed the fat of selfishness and to build the muscle of love in our lives. And that's what the first part of v.5 is about. The first thing is that...

1. LOVE IS NOT ILL-MANNERED (v.5a)

1 Corinthians 13:5a - “Love ... is not rude...”

Love doesn't treat others improperly. It doesn't have bad manners. On the other hand, rudeness disrespects other people. It basically says to other people, you don't matter to me.

Now the church in Corinth was filled with men behaving badly and women behaving badly. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that the church had a regular gathering called their agape feast where they would have a pot-luck meal, then often share together in the Lord's Supper, like we're going to do this morning. But some of them were rude in that they went first, then ate and drank so much there was not enough for others who came later. That's rude. And in their worship services everyone talked over each other, thinking that what they had to say was more important than listening to what others had to say. That's rude.

Let me show you three things about rudeness. Rudeness means:

- **Thoughtless**

Rudeness is a thoughtless disregard for the feelings and value of others. We are rude when we simply don't take the time to think through our actions or our words will affect other, whether they're in our family, or in our church or where we work.

Love thinks!

ILLUSTRATION – Some of this should come with maturity. Children have a way of saying things honestly and innocently, without really thinking how it makes others feel. They may look at you and say, “Your nose is big.” We laugh it off thinking that's just childlike honesty. Hopefully they learn as they grow up that that kind of comment is inappropriate.

In marriage, when we first start dating and building our relationship, thoughtfulness comes easy and almost effortless. We are constantly looking for ways to anticipate what they need. Part of this is because we're still trying to win our guy or girl. But when we “win” them, the game is over. After a while something creeps into our thinking ... thoughtlessness. We stop thinking about the needs of our mate. We need to be good detectives ... constantly alert and thoughtful of the unspoken needs and desires of our mates.

You know, this is the reason that we as men are so clueless, and why wives will often get mad at their husbands without telling them why they are upset. You see, the wife is thinking, “I shouldn't have to explain to him why this hurts me.”

1 Peter 3:7 - Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

- **Careless**

Sometimes, we act toward others rudely because we are simply careless. Rudeness says, “I know this will hurt, but I don’t care. I’m going to do this (or say this) anyway.”

So often we shoot words like bullets ... ready, shoot, aim. Rather we should be careful in the choice of words. It should be “ready, aim, shoot.”

Matthew 12:35-36 - The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

- **Graceless**

William Barclay translates this passage, “Love does not behave gracelessly.”

Jesus even treated sinners with respect. All human beings, no matter who they are or what they have done are created in the image of God and are loved and valued by Him. We should treat them with respect.

We can show this grace in our marriages.

ILLUSTRATION – I read a story about the marriage of Dr. Paul Rees and his wife Edith. Dr. Rees was a well-known British preacher of the 20th century. When the Rees's were in their 90s, someone asked them if they still fought after more than 60 years of marriage.

"O, sure we do," Dr. Rees responded. "Yesterday morning was a case in point. Edith and I were in our car, and she was driving. She failed to stop at a stop sign, and it scared me half to death."

"So what did you do?" the interviewer asked.

"Well, I've loved Edith for all these years, and I have learned how to say hard things to her. But I must be careful because when Edith was a little girl, her father always spoke to her harshly. And today when she hears a manly voice speak in anger—even my voice—she is deeply, deeply hurt."

"But, Paul," the interviewer responded, "Edith is 90-years-old. Are you telling me that she remembers a harsh voice that many years ago?"

"She remembers that voice more than ever," Rees said.

"So how do you handle that driving situation from the other day?"

"Ah," he said, "I simply said, 'Edith, darling, after we've had our nap this afternoon, I want to discuss a thought I have for you. And when the nap was over I did. I was calm; she was ready to listen, and we solved our little problem.'"

The Bible says...

Ephesians 4:29 - Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Love is not ill-mannered.

2. LOVE IS NOT SELF-SEEKING (v.5a).

1 Corinthians 13:5a – “Love ... is not self-seeking,

Love does not insist on its own rights or having its own way.

The Corinthians were self-seeking in many ways. They sued one another in pagan courts to get their own way. And they selfishly disregarded the consciences of other brothers and sisters when it came to the controversial matter of eating meat sold in the marketplace that had been previously offered as worship to idols. Here's how Paul taught them:

**1 Corinthians 10:23 - “Everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial.
“Everything is permissible”—but not everything is constructive.**

1 Corinthians 10:24 - Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

Remember, love is not self-seeking. Love doesn't have to have its own way. Love is not consumed with its own wants and needs. It is consumed with the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4 - Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Now like all the other qualities of love described here in I Corinthians 13, this is a spiritual matter. It's all about our relationship to Christ and our obedience to Him. Listen to what Jesus said about this...

Matthew 16:24 - “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

It occurred to me as I studied this week that much of the denying of self and taking up our cross happens in the course of relationships. We die to self when we serve others. We die to self when we show grace when we'd rather punch someone. We die to self when we don't always insist on having our own way.

You see, a self-seeking attitude will do this:

- It will cause you to live in your home as if no one else matters.
- It will cause you to constantly pout about others not meeting your needs.
- It will keep you from serving. Why? Because you are all about protecting your time, your energy, your money rather than looking at the needs of others.
- It will keep you from making a commitment to a church. Why? You are only concerned about things that interest you and benefit you. Forget what might benefit the entire church.

ILLUSTRATION – Recently I was talking with a friend who is a good man. Over the past few years he’s been a member of two really fine churches. But he moves on. And he said to me, “I’m thinking about coming to your church. The church I’m in now just doesn’t excite me.” People who are not self-seeking really don’t have a lot of time to think about what excites them. They’re absorbed in serving others in a local church, and the rest just isn’t that important. You are responsible for the level of your own spiritual enthusiasm. And it comes, not from being entertained and being served but from serving others.

- It will cause you to be miserable. Self-seeking is soul-shrinking.

That’s what Jesus meant when He said...

Matthew 16:25 - For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

So the “biggest loser” is really the “biggest winner.” We spend most of our lives trying to save our lives, rather than looking for ways to lose it for the love of God and others.

Jesus talked to His disciples about people in the world who seek their own agenda and their own greatness:

Matthew 20:26 - Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Matthew 20:27 - and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—

Matthew 20:28 - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

You see, this was the whole life of Jesus, and as followers of Jesus, it has to be our life.