

Do Everything In Love

*A Special Message from Man in the Mirror
Vice President Brett Clemmer*

Unedited Transcript

1 Corinthians 16:14

The Love Gut Check

Good morning! It is great to be with you! The topic this morning is the love gut check, and this morning I had a little love gut check of my own. I woke up this morning and remembered that my wife had said to me yesterday, "Can I use your truck tomorrow?" and I said absolutely. She needed to bring a piece of furniture somewhere. So I thought it was pretty good at six o'clock in the morning that I actually remembered to switch vehicles with my wife. What I did not remember was to get the handouts for this morning out of the front seat of my truck, so it's my fault that you're sharing, I apologize. We're very grateful to the Winter Park Civic Center for letting us use every piece of copy paper they had in the office so that we could get as many as we can. And a big thank you to Jim Angelakos for being the man who talked them into doing it. If you need something done, you get with Jim Angelakos, he'll talk anybody into anything for you! I'd like to say I planned all this to help you work on your own love gut check, but I didn't, I just messed up.

It's great to be with you this morning, and before we jump into what we're going to talk about, why don't we go to the Lord in prayer? Father, this is the best place to be on Friday morning, and we're so grateful that you would pull us all together, Lord. I'm so thankful for these men who are faithful, who have decided to spend an hour this morning in fellowship with you and each other, looking into your word, Lord, and hearing what you would have to say to us this morning. Lord, I pray that you would speak into our minds, into our hearts; that you would help us to see your word not as an ancient text, but as the living word, something that has truth for us every day that we can apply, Lord, so that we can make our lives better, but for the purpose of bringing you glory. So we lift this morning up to you in Jesus' name, amen!

We're talking about 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. This is part of a series we're doing called Rock Solid Men. I know David was here last week doing Becoming a Man of Courage, so I'm going to skip forward a couple phrases in this passage this morning and we're going to talk about what Paul says to the Corinthians about doing everything in love. When I look at the passage Paul is talking in, it makes me personally sort of do a gut check. So I'm going to give you an outline here and this is the last time you're going to see this so you might want to write it down on the sheet that you're sharing. But we're going to talk about the admonition that Paul gives: do everything in love. What does that really look like. We're going to talk about the fact that love often requires sacrifice, and then finally we're going to talk about why do we love. I love because why? Why do I love?

So we're starting here with 1 Corinthians 16:13, and we see sort of a compact, robust version of manhood here don't we? Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be men of courage, be strong. I look around and I see this sort of warrior archetype, you see it all around us lately. A lot of Christian stuff for men is written with this idea of this sort of robust manhood. There's a lot of books published that talk

about it, there's a lot of men's events that use knights and kings and swords. It's cool, right? I like it, it's very appealing to me. But Paul continues his admonition to the church in Corinth, and he adds this phrase: do everything in love. It's very interesting because if you look at the passage here, what you see is that this is really the last thing that Paul gives as a directive in the entire book. From here forward in the book, all we're seeing is a sort of... Stephanas says hi, and this guy says hi, give my greetings to this guy; sort of from here forward it's the personal part of the letter. So this is the last thing that Paul says to them, the last directive that he gives to them in the book, in the letter. Do everything in love. Isn't that interesting that that would be his focus there?

Why? Why does he do that? I think for us, as men, it's easy to focus on the battle language, on the warrior mentality, on fighting the good fight. Paul uses a lot of that sort of metaphor in the Bible to help us remember what we're in. I think he also wants to remind us, to charge us with the fact that we're here to serve each other and to love each other in the midst of being these robust, rock solid, Biblical men, that part of that means serving and loving each other. He says do everything in love, be vigilant in love, stand firm in the faith in love, be men of courage in love, be strong in love. Why would Paul say that? If you've read the book of 1 Corinthians, and there's chapter after chapter of Paul sort of bringing up things going on in the Corinthian church that are not particularly loving. They're suing each other. That's always great when that happens in your church, right? Church members suing each other. There's a lot of sexual immorality going on. He talks about incest, and you've got to love that one going on in your church! There's class warfare going on... I mean, seriously, your church doesn't sound so bad now, does it? After what Paul is calling the Corinthians on, all the stuff that's going on. So he knows that as much as anything, he needs to remind them to do everything in love. It's not a cute adage, it's not a little Aesop's fable, it's a rebuke. But it's also an exhortation.

So when you look at the church today, do you see the church doing everything in love? We send missionaries in love, we serve food at the local homeless shelter in love, we teach children in Sunday School in love, we take care of babies in the nursery in love. But we're engaged in unloving actions at church, too. We gossip, we hold back gifts and offerings to the church when we don't think they're going in the direction that we want them to go, we criticize the worship style, the preaching, the choice of small groups, the leadership; anything we can think of. We speak self-righteously about sinners in our society, the very people that Jesus himself was criticized for spending time with by the Pharisees in Matthew 9. You may remember, they said why does your teacher eat with sinners, and tax collectors? So this is an issue for us, for religious people, the people it should be the least issue for, it's a huge issue for us as religious people to do everything in love. This is why I think Paul ends the directive part of his letter, the admonition part of this letter, with this phrase: do everything in love.

He was certainly reminding the Corinthians of a passage earlier in the letter where he talked extensively about what it looks like to live and love each other well. You remember the passage in 1 Corinthians 13, I'm going to put part of it up here. I'll start with the first verse:

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

This passage is read at weddings, it was read at my wedding! Maybe it was read at some of your weddings. It's really not meant to be a romantic sonnet, though. It's really meant to be a gut check. 1 Corinthians 13 gives us an opportunity to check out our own motifs, to look into our own hearts, and ask tough questions. Look at this passage with me and think of these questions: Am I patient and kind? Do I envy or boast? Am I arrogant or rude? Do I insist on my own way? Am I irritable or resentful? Do I rejoice at wrong doing or the truth? Do I love enough to bear all things? Do I believe all things? Do I have hope in all things? Endure all things? As we look at the way that love is described in this chapter, it's easy to see that I don't measure up. I look at a passage like this and wonder if I could ever measure up! I may do better in some areas than others, but I have blind spots. We all have blind spots! Maybe even not so blind spots, right? Where we withhold our love in certain ways.

Here's what I want to do. I want to get a little personal here. Turn your sheets over and on the back there's a little gut check. What we're going to do is look at these questions on the back. Take a look at these general concepts and let's apply them right into our lives today with our family members, with our church members, with our coworkers. So am I patient when my kids frustrate me? Am I kind when someone makes a mistake? Do I envy those who have things I think I deserve? Do I dishonor others with my words? Do I make sure that I always get the credit I deserve? Do I lose my temper easily? Do I keep track of wrongs others have done to me? Do I take pleasure in righteousness? Do I rejoice when the truth comes out, even when it's painful? Do I protect? Do I trust? Do I hope? Do I persevere? Is there a question in here that makes you cringe a little bit? Maybe there's a blind spot, or not so blind spot? Here's mine: do I keep track of wrongs that others have done to me? In other translations, it says love keeps no record of wrongs. Oh I'm good at this! Especially in my marriage! If I'm honest, I have to say that I love to keep a record of wrongs. Then when I do something wrong, I can justify it. I know I didn't fold that load of laundry on the bed, but my wife left dishes in the sink last night. I know that I spoke something harshly to her, got a little frustrated and spoke unkindly, but you know she did it to me three times last week. So for me, I have to recognize that if I'm going to love in this particular relationship, if I'm going to love my wife well for instance, I have to not keep a record of wrongs. And that's hard! Because I want to keep track of them! Because it makes me feel better when I fail. It makes me feel better when I sin. It makes me feel better when I don't love.

The other thing I think you'll notice about these behaviors is that they're not just behaviors. When you look at your blind spots, it forces you to look at your heart. Paul's not urging us to act lovingly, that's faking it. We can all fake it, we're all good at that. What he's really encouraging the Corinthians to do is to look inside their hearts and look at the motivations, look at the attitudes of their hearts. Why do you act the way you act? As you look at this list, what's your blind spot? What does this show you about your own heart? If we go back and look at the passage again, I think the other thing that we'll begin to realize and something that might make you uncomfortable is that love often requires sacrifice. And the sacrifice often goes beyond the physical to the heart. You can't love like this without giving something up, some expectation or desire, a heart level sacrifice. Maybe you can think of an example. For instance, if I'm

patient, I must sacrifice my desire to safeguard my time. I will have to sacrifice time in order to be patient. If I'm kind to someone who isn't kind to me, then I have to sacrifice my desire to get even or to give someone what they have coming to them, right? So here's what we're going to do, we're going to take a few minutes at the table right now, and we're going to do the first question on the sheet. It's right up here. If I'm going to love like this, if I'm going to love the way this passage calls me to love, what might I have to sacrifice? At your table, just go ahead and answer this: If I love like this, and pick a phrase in the passage, if I'm going to bear all things, what might I have to sacrifice? Go ahead and take about three minutes at your tables, and we're actually going to come around with the mic and ask a few tables to share. Go ahead.

Okay! If I love like this, I must be willing to sacrifice. If I am going to be patient, I might have to give up my desire to safeguard my time. So who came up with something they realize they may have to sacrifice if they're going to love? Jim's going to come up with the mic so we can get them on the camera.

When the truth comes out and my wife is caught, because the truth proves her wrong, I point it out. So I need to sacrifice that in that moment and realize she gets it. She knows the truth and get on her side because she probably feels pretty bad about it.

So you have to sacrifice rubbing it in a little bit. You have to sacrifice enjoying the fact that we're right. I don't know about you, but I love being right! Do you love being right? Yeah! Sometimes we have to sacrifice that to love well. Who else has one? I see one guy pointing to another guy over here, so he must want to share!

At the end of the day, it really comes down to sacrificing yourself. If you sacrifice yourself for that other person, you realize through love that they are more important than you are.

Very good! We see this throughout the scriptures. In Ephesians 5, Paul talks to the Ephesians and he says husbands love your wives like Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In another place, Jesus is talking to the disciples and he says greater love has no man than this than he who lays down his life for his brother. So this is love, sacrificial love. You don't see this really anywhere else in any other religion the way you see this in Christianity. So all the stuff you see even in the Shakespeare sonnets or love poems, it's really a Biblical view of love that's being expounded and talked about poetically.

Why would I love somebody if this is what it would cost me? Especially today, it seems kind of counter-cultural, maybe even radical, in today's culture to advocate not getting something that's coming to you because you love somebody more than you love yourself. Not insisting on getting credit for your work, not advancing your own cause no matter the cost. That's what our culture tells us to do. Don't let anyone take advantage of you, pull yourself up by your own bootstraps... these are the kinds of things that would make us question why we would want to love sacrificially. So why would we? Simple. Because God did it first. 1 John 4 9-11 says in this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. Then listen to verse 10, and this is love, not that we have loved God but that God loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. So this is our vocabulary word for the day, propitiation. Sent his son to be the substitution-al sacrifice, to pay our debt on our behalf. The penalty, Paul says in Romans 6, for sin is what? Death! Separation from God! So God sent his own son to do that for us. When he sent Jesus to die for us, Jesus became the propitiation for our sins.

When someone does something for you that you don't deserve, like gives you a gift or doesn't give you something that you do deserve like punishment, what do we call that? We call that grace. So grace comes then not from some behavior or performance orientation, but from our heart orientation towards love. That's what grace is all about. Jesus is the perfect example of this point that grace equals sacrificial love. Without sacrificial love, there can be no grace. Jesus explains it to Nicodemus in John 3, God's love was so great that he sent his own son and sacrificed him. Paul says it in Philippians 2, Jesus' love for us caused him to give up his status in heaven and instead be willing to take on the status of a servant, walking among us. God put on flesh and subjected himself to cold viruses and mean people and cold and heat and put himself in an occupied country under the boot of the Roman Empire. It's amazing what God was willing to do for us, the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf. So if you've been loved like that, of course you want to love other people.

This brings us to our Big Idea for this session. I'm going to pull a fast one on you. Here's our Big Idea: **Grace means we are loved even when we don't deserve it.** But watch this! **Grace also means we can love even when others don't deserve it.** This is what Paul is saying, do everything in love. I'm going to give you a hint, let you off the hook a little bit. You can't really ever live up to 1 Corinthians 13. We just can't do it! The truth behind doing everything in love is not that we're supposed to try harder, but that we are supposed to embrace and accept the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Why do you love your mom so much? Ever heard that phrase, don't talk about my momma! Anyone here like others to talk trash about your mom? No! Why? Because you know how much your mom loves you! At the end of the day, the reason nobody wants anybody to say anything about their mom, the reason they get on TV and the football players say hi mom, is because a mom is a great example of sacrificial love in our lives. We know at the core of our being, most of us, that our moms would do anything for us, they would die for us. So what's our response to that? To love our mom as much as humanly possible. Unfortunately, too few men today experience the love of a father in the same way. For those that do, I do, I've got an 81 year old father who sometimes I think loves me a little too much. Dad stop! He always wants to give me things, he wants to take care of me, he wants to make sure I'm okay, he wants to tell people I do things that are awesome that I didn't even do! Just because he loves me so much! I'm like dad I didn't do that! Oh you didn't? I guess he told a story and no one minded, but that's how much my dad loves me! So what's my response to that? I love him back!

God loves us way more than that, way more than your mom loves you. Way more than your dad loves you. So what's our response to that? Our response is to do everything in love. When we can embrace the sacrifice that Christ made for us, our hearts change, our attitudes and our desires shift, from selfishness and wanting what's the best for us, to wanting what's the best for others, so that they can understand grace through us, and God can be glorified. That's what Paul means when he says do everything in love. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Lord we don't measure up. We know that there are blind spots in our life that we need to do a gut check on the way that we love others. Lord, I pray that we would not get caught up in some cycle of trying to act lovingly, trying to do the right things, trying to look the right way so that people would say we're good guys, or that we love well. But instead, Lord, that we would focus our hearts and minds on the sacrifice that Jesus made, on the gift that you gave us Lord when you came down and walked among us, and accepted the penalty for our sins. Even death on a cross! That you defeated death and sin and rose again from the dead! And because of that, we can enjoy eternal life with you, if only we would accept that gift that you give us. Father, I pray that you would make that real to us today in a new way, in a way

that it hasn't been real to us in a while. Lord, if there are men in the room who've never understood that, who've never made that decision to accept the sacrifice that you made, I pray that you would send your spirit into this room today and call them to yourself so that they can start experiencing your love in a more real way, so that it would overflow out of them and spill onto those around them. Lord, thank you for loving us. Help us to love others well, help us to do everything in love, in Jesus' name, amen!