

The  
15  
Descriptions  
of Love

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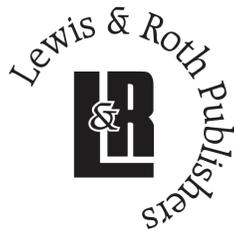
**15** Descriptions of  
**THE LOVE**

Applied to All Christian  
Leaders & Teachers

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1 Corinthians 13



*The 15 Descriptions of Love:  
Applied to All Christian Leaders & Teachers*

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# Connecting Love and Leadership

*Set the believers an example. . . in love.*

1 Timothy 4:12

Much good material has been written describing the leadership qualities of courage, resourcefulness, charisma, conviction, perseverance, visionary thinking, self-discipline and decisiveness. Yet few books on church leadership include anything about love. This is a tragic oversight since *the New Testament is perfectly clear that love is indispensable to the gifts of leading and teaching.*

Indeed, the New Testament mandates that spiritual gifts be exercised in love. As Paul puts it, any attempt at leading and teaching apart from love is like “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). To have all of the above leadership qualities but not love spells failure for a Christian leader (1 Cor. 13:1–3).

Furthermore, leaders and teachers set the spiritual tone for the church. They have the power to create a more loving atmosphere within the local church. If they are lovers of God and lovers of people, their followers will more likely be lovers of God and people. If, however, leaders are self-centered, critical, proud, angry, and impersonal, the people will adopt these same ugly dispositions.

Also, in the church family people must work closely together as brothers and sisters in Christ in making decisions and accomplishing tasks. At times this is difficult. Much work within the local church (and among local churches) is done in group settings: elders’ and deacons’ meetings, staff meetings, board meetings, committee meetings, and all-church meetings.

The longer we work together, the more we get to know one another's faults and annoying personality traits, which can make life together frustrating. Understanding the New Testament principles of love will significantly enhance healthy group leadership, group meetings, and congregational life as a whole. Without love, it is impossible to live and work together in Christian harmony.

I believe that understanding what the Bible says about love would significantly improve the relational skills of our church leaders and teachers and greatly enhance their effectiveness in ministry. It would diminish senseless conflict and division, promote evangelism, and produce spiritually healthy churches. Most important, it would please the Lord.

This book, therefore, is written to leaders and teachers at every level of leadership within the local church. If you lead or teach people—as a Sunday school teacher, youth worker, women's or men's ministry leader, Bible study leader, administrator, music director, elder, deacon, pastor, evangelist, or missionary—love is indispensable to you and your ministry.

As Michael Green so beautifully reminds us, "Love is the most attractive quality in the world. And it lies at the heart of Christianity."\* For that reason, God requires that you and I lead and teach with Christlike love and continually grow in our love for him and for all people.

This booklet is an excerpt from the book  
*A Christian Leader's Guide to Leading With Love.*  
This shorter version was produced in order to make the  
material on 1 Corinthians 13:1–7 more accessible to people  
who do not wish to read the full book.

A study guide is available online at [Lewisandroth.com](http://Lewisandroth.com).

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\*Michael Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 97.

## Chapter 1

# Five Minus One Equals Zero

*I will show you a still more excellent way.*

1 Corinthians 12:31

Dwight L. Moody, the Billy Graham of the 19th century, tells of his life-changing encounter with the doctrine of love. It began when Henry Moorhouse, a twenty-seven-year-old British evangelist, preached at Moody's church for a week. To everyone's surprise, Moorhouse preached seven sermons in a row on John 3:16. To prove that "God so loved the world" he preached on the love of God from Genesis to Revelation. Moody's son records his father's description of the impact of Moorhouse's preaching:

For six nights he had preached on this one text. The seventh night came, and he went into the pulpit. Every eye was upon him. He said, "Beloved friends, I have been hunting all day for a new text, but I cannot find anything so good as the old one; so we will go back to the third chapter of John and the sixteenth verse," and he preached the seventh sermon from those wonderful words, "God so loved the world." I remember the end of that sermon: "My friends," he said, "for a whole week I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you, but I cannot do it with this poor stammering tongue. If I could borrow Jacob's ladder and climb up into heaven and ask Gabriel, who stands in the presence of the Almighty, to tell me how much love the Father has for the world, all he could say would be: 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"<sup>1</sup>

Unable to hold back the tears as Moorhouse preached on the love of God in sending his only Son to die for sinners, Moody confessed:

I never knew up to that time that God loved us so much. This heart of mine began to thaw out; I could not keep back the tears. It was like news from a far country: I just drank it in. So did the crowded congregation. I tell you there is one thing that draws above everything else in the world, and that is love.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of Moorhouse's influence, Moody began to study the doctrine of love. This changed his life and his preaching. He later said:

I took up that word "Love," and I do not know how many weeks I spent in studying the passages in which it occurs, till at last I could not help loving people! I had been feeding on Love so long that I was anxious to do everybody good I came in contact with.

I got full of it. It ran out my fingers. You take up the subject of love in the Bible! You will get so full of it that all you have got to do is to open your lips, and a flood of the Love of God flows out upon the meeting. There is no use trying to do church work without love. A doctor, a lawyer, may do good work without love, but God's work cannot be done without love.<sup>3</sup>

D. L. Moody could not have been more biblically correct when he said, "God's work cannot be done without love." That is the message of the most famous love chapter in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13.

## The More Excellent Way

It is universally agreed that Paul is the greatest pioneer missionary, scholar, teacher, evangelist, and hero of the faith. Yet he knew that all his brilliance, multi-giftedness, and sacrificial dedication meant nothing if it were not bathed fully in love. *No other New Testament writer spoke more about love or provided more practical leadership examples of love than Paul. Through the lifetime ministry and letters of Paul, God gave his church, and all its leaders and teachers, a model of loving leadership.* In all of Scripture nowhere is it

more clearly and forcefully stated that love is indispensable to leading and teaching than in 1 Corinthians 13.

Paul wrote this passage in response to disruptions that arose in the church of Corinth regarding spiritual gifts. To correct the church's misguided views of spiritual gifts and its overall self-destructive way of behaving, Paul promised to show the Corinthians a "more excellent way" to live (1 Cor. 12:31). He wanted them to know there is something far more important than supernatural gifts, something that transcends the most excellent gifts and performances, something that if absent will render all gifts worthless. That something is love.

The love Paul speaks of is primarily love for fellow believers. This love was defined by Jesus Christ when he gave a new commandment to all his disciples to love one another "just as" he had loved them (John 13:34–35). This love gives itself in total self-sacrifice for the good of others. Jesus exemplified this new pattern of love by humbly washing the disciples' feet (John 13:4–17) and selflessly sacrificing his life on the cross for others. John puts it this way, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers [and sisters]" (1 John 3:16).

**"There is no use trying to do church work without love. A doctor, a lawyer, may do good work without love, but God's work cannot be done without love."**

**—D. L. Moody**

To silence any doubt that love is the "more excellent way" and to jolt the Corinthians' wrong thinking about spiritual gifts, Paul uses all his rhetorical skills to communicate with eloquence and force that love is the "more excellent way." He writes:

And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Cor. 12:31–13:3)

Let's take a close look at this passage to gain a clearer understanding of what it says.

## Without Love Even Heavenly Language Sounds Annoying

The purpose of spiritual gifts was to build up and unite the body. Yet the Corinthians' enthusiasm over the supernatural gift of tongues caused pride and disorder in the church body. The independent-minded Corinthians used their gifts for personal ego gratification, which caused division within the body.

To correct this distortion, Paul captures their attention by hypothetically picturing himself as “the world’s most gifted tongues-speaker,”<sup>4</sup> being able to speak eloquently in “the tongues of men and of angels.” Such a gift would have greatly impressed the Corinthians. But Paul declares that even if he had such an exalted experience because of heavenly giftedness, he would be “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”—that is, an annoying, loud, empty noise—if he did not act in love, as described in verses 4 through 7. The beauty of his miraculous speech would be distorted without the grace of love.

Paul isn't merely saying that his speech would be a clamorous noise, but that he himself would be a hollow, annoying sound. He would not be what he should be; he would be seriously deficient in his Christian life and not living according to the “more excellent way.” The reason Paul would be an empty noise is that he would be a loveless tongue-speaker. He would be using the gift of tongues to glorify and serve himself rather than to serve or build up the church, which is the goal of love (1 Cor. 8:1).

When I teach on this passage, I often use a visual illustration. I pull out from behind the pulpit a steel pot and a hammer and begin to beat on the pot as I talk about spiritual gifts and the need for love. At first, people laugh.

**Knowledge without love inflates the ego  
and deceives the mind.**

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They think it is a marvelous illustration. But I keep it up. While I am banging on the pot, I keep talking about spiritual

gifts. Soon people aren't laughing or smiling anymore. They have had enough; they're annoyed and getting more agitated by the moment, but I keep banging. When it seems they can't stand it any longer, I stop and ask, “Are you annoyed? Are you enjoying this? Does it please you? Do you find it edifying? Would you like me to continue beating the pot for the remainder of the message?”

No one wants me to continue beating the pot. At this point I remind them that this is what they are like to others and to God when they use their gifts apart from love. They are nothing more than “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

## **Without Love Knowing It All Helps No One**

Paul next speaks of himself hypothetically as possessing the gift of prophecy in such full measure that he would know “all” mysteries and “all” knowledge. He would thus have the theological answers to all the mysteries of God that people crave to understand. He would be a walking, talking encyclopedia of knowledge.

Some people love to display their intellect and theological superiority. They are proud of their learning and speaking ability. Such pride had become a serious problem at Corinth. Some people were arrogant because of their knowledge and puffed up with self-importance. They wanted recognition for their prophetic insights and superior wisdom, and they looked down on others with lesser knowledge and giftedness. As a result of their arrogant misuse of knowledge, they harmed the church body (1 Cor. 8).

Knowledge without love inflates the ego and deceives the mind. It can lead to intellectual snobbery, an attitude of mockery and making fun of others’ views, a spirit of contempt for those with lesser knowledge, and a demeaning way of dealing with people who disagree. I know of a pastor who had a phenomenal knowledge of the Bible but who hurt many people with his doctrinal scrutiny and divided his own congregation repeatedly until there was no one left but himself. He had a big head but a little heart. His theology was as clear as ice and twice as cold. Such is the path of one who has knowledge without love.

So Paul states that even if he had all-encompassing knowledge, apart from love he would be “nothing”—a spiritual zero. He insists that a loveless prophet, a loveless scholar, or a loveless teacher is worthless to the discipling of God’s people. History confirms this, as John Short observes:

Loveless faith and loveless prophecy account for some of the more tragic pages in the Christian story through the ages. It has burned

so-called heretics; it has stultified the sincere quest for truth; it has often been contentious and embittered; and it has often issued in the denial of Christian brotherhood to fellow believers.<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein, George Sweeting, former president of Moody Bible Institute, makes this observation: “I have been keenly disappointed to find people more concerned about hidden mysteries than about needy people.... Too often Christians are concerned about hidden truth, but indifferent about loving difficult people.”<sup>6</sup>

Only with love can knowledge be used according to the “more excellent way” to protect and build up the church (Eph. 4:11–16).

### **Without Love Risk-Taking Faith Is Worthless**

The third spiritual gift Paul presents is faith (1 Cor. 12:9). He imagines himself possessing the most excellent gift of faith imaginable, “so as to remove mountains.” Like Abraham, he would believe God for the impossible and actively trust him to do miraculous works. He would be a powerhouse of prayer, a spiritual risk taker, a virtual George Müller,<sup>7</sup> greatly admired and sought by all. He would be a courageous David racing out in battle to kill the Philistine giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17:32). But even with such a powerful spiritual gift, if love is not present, the gift becomes a means of glorifying oneself rather than serving others.

Some “miracle” workers on television may claim to do the impossible by faith, but they talk more about money, success, and themselves than about

**“Too often Christians are concerned about hidden truth, but indifferent about loving difficult people.”**

**—George Sweeting**

the people they supposedly help. Like the self-flaunting Pharisees, they want to “be seen by others” (Matt. 6:5). They love the praise of man and want to be revered as spiritual giants who do great things for God. They use

their wonderful gifts to promote themselves, not the body of Christ.

I recall a radio preacher who spoke often of the marvelous things God was doing through his broadcasts and how God miraculously provided funds without his begging for money (which can be a subtle way of begging

for money). But those who knew the man personally and worked for him saw things differently. They saw a man who was obsessed with money and public image. They saw his gift of faith being used to guarantee his own financial security. They saw a man who didn't care much at all for people but who cared a lot about himself.

No wonder Paul declares so emphatically that such a powerful gift without love is worth "nothing." Paul means what he says. Without love he knew he would be spiritually fruitless rather than a spiritual powerhouse.

Without love, the Christian leader is on the wrong path of the Christian life. But when faith is combined with love, the body of Christ is built up and advances forward on the royal road, the "more excellent way" of love.

### **Without Love Giving All One's Money to the Poor Is Unprofitable**

Paul next considers giving away all his worldly possessions—his home, property, furniture, savings, and all the things he cherishes most—to feed the poor. He gives it all and reduces himself to abject poverty. Surely this is the ultimate, altruistic action. Wouldn't such giving be, by definition, *love*? Not necessarily. Paul makes it clear that the most extraordinary, self-sacrificing action can be done without love.

Self-sacrifice can be done for self-interest as illustrated by Ananias and Sapphira in the book of Acts. This couple sold their property and gave money to the apostles to distribute to the poor (Acts 5:1–11). However, they gave without love. They weren't really concerned about the needs of the poor, but about themselves. They didn't love God or their neighbor. Like the trumpet-blowing Pharisees whom Jesus condemned in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:1–5), Ananias and Sapphira gave in order to enhance their personal prestige in the sight of the church. They gave to receive the praise of people. Their love was hypocritical love (Rom. 12:9). They gave to the poor, but without the true, inner motivating power of love, so their giving profited them nothing. Although they gave money to the poor, they were spiritually bankrupt, and God rejected their gift.

Paul says, therefore, that if he gave all he owned to the poor but did so apart from love, it would be unproductive, useless, worthless, and of no

eternal value. Even after such sacrifice he would be a spiritually bankrupt man. He would not be humbly serving others, but would be serving himself.

In contrast, when one is moved by love to meet the needs of the poor, giving all of one's possessions profits everyone. Such is the love that motivated the Lord Jesus Christ to give up the riches of heaven and become poor for us. For that reason, "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). Jesus gave according to the "more excellent way."

### **Without Love the Ultimate Sacrifice of One's Life Is Pointless**

Finally, Paul envisions himself as the ultimate hero of the faith. In an act of supreme sacrifice, he surrenders his body to the painful flames of martyrdom for Christ. Such a sacrifice would certainly inspire other believers to faithfulness, greater dedication, and courage. It would provide a powerful witness of the gospel to nonbelievers. But Paul warns us that even suffering and martyrdom for Christ can be done for the wrong reasons.

Some people take great pride in suffering for their faith. For others, it is worth dying in order to be remembered as a hero of the faith. In the early years of Christianity, becoming a martyr became at times a means of achieving great fame. One historian comments, "It soon was clear to all Christians that extraordinary fame and honor attached to martyrdom."<sup>8</sup> Some martyrs, like Ignatius, were showered with adulations before their martyrdom. Not that Ignatius sought martyrdom for personal praise, but he illustrates that it could be a temptation to some to seek to be immortalized in the annals of church history as a martyr for Christ. It was said of Polycarp, who was burned alive, that his bones were "more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold" and his grave became a sacred place to gather.<sup>9</sup> Recognizing the potential for such adulation, Paul finds it necessary to say that offering up one's life apart from love is a worthless sacrifice, an empty religious show, a hollow performance.

When it is motivated by the welfare of others and the glory of Christ, however, martyrdom becomes the ultimate sacrifice of love. Jonathan

Edwards, in his book *Charity and Its Fruits*, summarizes God's perspective on love and self-sacrifice this way:

[God] delights in little things when they spring from sincere love to himself. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in sincere love is worth more in God's sight than all one's goods given to feed the poor, yea, than the wealth of a kingdom given away, or a body offered up in the flames, without love.<sup>10</sup>

Only when martyrdom is the result of love for God and others is it the "more excellent way."

## Divine Mathematics

Imagine for a moment what the Corinthians must have thought when they first heard Paul's words read publicly in the congregational meeting. They probably couldn't believe their ears! Paul's message was contrary to their entire way of thinking and behaving. They were deficient in love and they didn't even realize it! Their pride of knowledge and miraculous gifts had deceived them.

D. A. Carson, Bible commentator and professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, describes Paul's reasoning in this passage in terms of "divine mathematics." According to divine mathematics, "five minus one equals zero."<sup>11</sup> Or, as George Sweeting remarks, "gifts, minus love, equals zero."<sup>12</sup>

Author Jerry Bridges, giving a vivid illustration of divine mathematics, asks his readers to do this:

Write down, either in your imagination or on a sheet of paper, a row of zeros. Keep adding zeros until you have filled a whole line on the page. What do they add up to? Exactly nothing! Even if you were to write a thousand of them, they would still be nothing. But put a positive number in front of them and immediately they have value. This is the way it is with our gifts and faith and zeal. They are the zeros on the page. Without love, they count for nothing. But put love in front of

them and immediately they have value. And just as the number two gives more value to a row of zeros than the number one does, so more and more love can add exponentially greater value to our gifts.<sup>13</sup>

Without love, our most extraordinary gifts and highest achievements are ultimately fruitless to the church and before God. In Paul's way of thinking, nothing has lasting spiritual value unless it springs from love.

### **A Modern Paraphrase**

*Picturing himself as the most extraordinary teacher or leader to ever live, Paul would say:*

**If I were the most gifted communicator to ever preach, so that millions of people were moved by my oratory, but didn't have love, I would be an annoying, empty wind-bag before God and people.**

**If I had the most charismatic personality, so that everyone was drawn to me like a powerful magnet, but didn't have Christlike love, I would be a phony, a dud.**

**If I were the greatest visionary leader the church has ever heard, but didn't have love, I would be misguided and lost.**

**If I were the bestselling author on theology and church growth, but didn't have love, I would be an empty-headed failure.**

**If I sacrificially gave all my waking hours to discipling future leaders, but did it without love, I would be a false guide and model.**

## Chapter 2

# Patient and Kind

*Love is patient and kind.*

1 Corinthians 13:4

Imagine more than four hundred Christians from sixty different nations and various denominational backgrounds living together twenty-four hours a day. Imagine them working together in extremely tight quarters, most of them for two years, some for even longer. Imagine them doing all of this as unpaid volunteers! Such is life aboard the ship *Logos Hope*.

For nearly fifty years, Operation Mobilization's ships, including *Logos Hope*, have sailed around the world stopping at ports in more than 150 countries. Serving as a Christian bookfair and conference center, the ships have welcomed more than forty-seven million people on board. The ships are the result of the vision of George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilization (known as OM). OM was one of the first short-term mission organizations and has trained thousands of people in missions.

The volunteers who serve on the ships are ordinary people. They have the same weaknesses and character flaws as other human beings. They experience the same difficulties people experience ashore. The only difference is that on the ships there is no running away from conflict. How can they live and work together under such extreme conditions without destroying one another? The answer: love.

From the very start of OM, George Verwer preached that without a "revolution of love"<sup>1</sup> the vision for the ships and for the thousands of short-term literature teams would be an impossible dream. The kind of love necessary for working together on these ships is not a sentimental, fluffy love. It is Calvary's selfless, self-sacrificing love. It is the kind of love described

in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7: love that is patient and kind, love that does not envy or boast, is not arrogant or rude, does not insist on its own way, and is not irritable or resentful. It is Christlike love.

## Instructions, Not Poetry

First Corinthians 13 is not a theoretical discourse on love or a flowery hymn glorifying the feelings of love. Paul was not a romantic poet. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ—a global missionary, church planter, pastor, and teacher. These words are a critical part of his instruction and correction to the church at Corinth, which was being torn apart by loveless behavior.

In order to help the Corinthians understand their own deficiencies and the “more excellent way,” Paul lists fifteen positive and negative descriptions of love. In the Greek text, all of these descriptions are verbs describing what love does and doesn’t do. In English, these descriptions are often translated as adjectives.

Love is

1. patient (= longsuffering, forbearing)
  2. kind
- 

Love is *not*

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 3. envious           | Love delights in the successes of others |
| 4. boastful          | Love promotes and praises others         |
| 5. arrogant          | Love is humble and modest                |
| 6. rude              | Love promotes proper decorum             |
| 7. selfish           | Love is self-sacrificing                 |
| 8. easily angered    | Love is calm and slow to anger           |
| 9. resentful         | Love forgives                            |
| 10. joyful over evil | 11. Love rejoices with the truth         |
- 

Love

12. bears all things
13. believes all things
14. hopes all things
15. endures all things

These fifteen qualities beautifully portray the character and behavior of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to pattern our love and leadership after him (1 John 2:6). With Christ living and working within us through the Holy Spirit, the same behaviors should be true of us—whether we are elders, pastors, deacons, youth workers, Sunday school teachers, music directors, missionaries, evangelists, Bible study leaders, or church administrators.

In our ministry with people, these qualities should be uppermost in our mind. One of the most important chapters in the Bible for life in the local church and for Christian leadership is 1 Corinthians 13. It defines how we should behave in marriage, friendship, church, and society. It describes what our character should be like—and *in Christian ministry, character is everything*.

Paul didn't just write pretty words about love, he lived them, and the Corinthians saw the truth of these words in his life.

## Love Is Patient

If we were to ask our Lord, “What is a loving Christian leader like?” he would first answer, “Patient and kind.” So Paul begins and ends his love catalog with the patient, enduring nature of love (1 Cor. 13:4, 7). In an imperfect world, a leader must be characterized by patience.

The Greek verb for patience denotes “longsuffering” or “forbearance,” particularly in respect to personal injuries or wrongs suffered. The Christian spirit of love does not seek to retaliate. It is not quick to anger.

God himself is the supreme example of longsuffering.<sup>2</sup> When we are tempted to be impatient with others, we should stop and think about the gracious longsuffering of God with us and our many wrongs against him. In light of his patience toward us, who are we to think that we cannot patiently bear with the weaknesses and failures of others—or the wrongs they may have done to us?

**God himself is the supreme example of longsuffering.**

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Lack of patience is a serious deficiency in a Christian leader. Our work with people is primarily a spiritual work, so it must be done God's way, with great patience and care. An impatient leader is as destructive to people as an impatient father is to his children or as an impatient shepherd is to his sheep.

Patience is needed because life is full of frustrations, hurts, and injustices. In fact, it is impossible to lead people without eventually being attacked. People will assail their leaders' character, criticize their decisions, speak evil behind their backs, and take advantage of their love.

In response to such attacks, love suffers long. So Paul instructs the Lord's servant to be patient when wronged:

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24–26)

Also, patience is needed when dealing with people's many weaknesses and failures. We must have patience to bear with those who are slow to

**Lack of patience is a serious deficiency in a Christian leader. An impatient leader is as destructive to people as an impatient father is to his children or as an impatient shepherd is to his sheep.**

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learn, resistant to change, weak in faith, quick to complain, forgetful of their responsibilities, emotionally unstable, fearful, or wayward. Paul teaches that we are to “admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, *be patient with them all*” (1 Thess. 5:14; italics added). Also, Paul

instructs Timothy: “preach the word ... reprove, rebuke, and exhort, *with complete patience*” (2 Tim. 4:2; italics added).

### ***Patient Leaders in Action***

Being patient doesn't imply passivity or a refusal to confront people's sins or problems. Without his patient pastoral leadership, Paul and the Corinthians would have gone their separate ways. Instead, his firm yet patient handling of the problems preserved the relationship. When the Corinthians unjustly criticized him, Paul didn't give up on them, cut them off, become vindictive, return evil for evil, or express anger in a sinful way. Instead, he answered their criticisms, confronted their sins, and warned of discipline. What is even more remarkable is that he did so with true patience and heartfelt love.

Paul, therefore, could say to the Corinthians that his leadership was marked by patience, kindness, and love:

We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way ... [by] patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love. (2 Cor. 6:3–4, 6)

Patience is just as important in church leadership today as it was in Paul's day. The life of Robert C. Chapman provides us with one of the most inspiring and challenging examples of Spirit-filled patience in the face of church struggles and contentious people. You can read about this remarkable man in the booklet *Agape Leadership: Lessons in Spiritual Leadership from the Life of R. C. Chapman*.<sup>3</sup>

### ***The Amazing Life of Robert C. Chapman***

Robert Chapman was well known for his love. And like all loving leaders, he showed extraordinary patience with difficult people and their problems. Apart from the Bible, no one has influenced my thinking about love and leadership more than Robert Chapman.

In his day, some called Chapman an “apostle of love,” and Charles Haddon Spurgeon referred to him as “the saintliest man I ever knew.” He was the spiritual mentor to George Müller, the founder and director of the world-famous Ashley Down Orphanage in Bristol, England. Chapman was also a close friend to Hudson Taylor, and one of the first trustees of Taylor's China Inland Mission.

Robert Chapman left his profession as a lawyer in London to become pastor of a small Particular Baptist church in Barnstaple, England. This contentious little congregation had gone through three different pastors in the eighteen months prior to Chapman's arrival. He was sure to become the fourth pastor to be dismissed.

The story of how Chapman completely turned around this fighting church by his Spirit-filled forbearance, love, and Bible teaching ministry is an inspiring account of Christlike leadership. The church eventually became a large, harmonious church. It was known throughout England for its

amazing love, missionary outreach, and compassionate ministries to the poor.

By the end of his life, at age ninety-nine, Chapman had become so well known for his loving disposition and wisdom that a letter from abroad addressed simply to “R. C. Chapman, University of Love, England,” was correctly delivered to his home. Chapman demonstrated the “more excellent way” of patient, loving leadership.

## Love Is Kind

Paul’s first two descriptions of love are paired together and balance each other perfectly: Love suffers long (the passive quality) and love shows kindness (the active quality). Patience and kindness are two sides of the same coin of love. “You can no more have love without kindness than you can have springtime without flowers,” writes W. Graham Scroggie.<sup>4</sup>

Kindness is a readiness to do good, to help, to relieve burdens, to be useful, to serve, to be tender, and to be sympathetic to others. It has been said, “Kindness is love in work clothes.”

God is kind to all,<sup>5</sup> and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth demonstrated abundant and compassionate kindness. The gospels are replete

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with stories of his kindness to needy men and women: Jesus touched a man, whom Luke the physician described as “full of leprosy” (Luke 5:12–13). William Lane accurately describes this as “an

unheard-of act of compassion.”<sup>6</sup> When Jesus encountered a deformed woman bent over by disease and a demonic agent, “he laid his hands on her” (Luke 13:13). He touched the eyes of the blind and fed the multitudes. He made time to stop and bless little children. Jesus ate and talked with the most hated people of his day, the tax collectors. A notoriously immoral woman found kindness and mercy at his feet (Luke 7:37–50). Acts 10:38 sums up the work of Jesus this way: “He went about doing good.”

## **The Power of Kindness**

Scripture insists that all those who lead and teach the Lord's people are servants who must be kind to everyone (2 Tim. 2:24). "As servants of God," Paul writes, "we commend ourselves in every way" by patience and kindness (2 Cor. 6:4, 6).

Augustine, in his book *Confessions*, describes how even during his unconverted days, the renowned preacher and bishop, Ambrose, moved him more by kindness than even by excellent preaching:

That "man of God" received me like a father and expressed pleasure at my coming with a kindness most fitting in a bishop. I began to like him, at first indeed not as a teacher of the truth, for I had absolutely no confidence in your Church, but as a human being who was kind to me.<sup>7</sup>

Loving leaders are kind, even to people who criticize, antagonize, or oppose them. It was said of Thomas Cranmer, an archbishop of the Church of England: "To do him any wrong was to beget a kindness from him."<sup>8</sup>

Leadership without kindness is a disaster. The Old Testament account of King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, for example, illustrates how unkindness ruined a king. Before Rehoboam was coronated, the people of Israel came to him and demanded to know the spirit in which he would rule them because his father's rule ended in harsh oppression. Before answering the people, he rightly consulted with the elders—experienced men who had served his father and knew good and bad leadership principles. They counseled Rehoboam to lead with a kindly disposition. They said, "If you will be good [kind] to this people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever" (2 Chron. 10:7).

Disregarding the wisdom and experience of these older men, Rehoboam rejected their counsel. He foolishly chose the counsel of his young, inexperienced friends to treat the people with a harsh, heavy hand (2 Chron. 10:10–11). As a result, the nation divided in civil war. The people wanted a kind king, not a harsh one. And people are no different today. Kindness is a key to leading people effectively.

If we want to reach and influence people for Jesus Christ, we must cultivate a kindly disposition. Acts of kindness impact people in big ways and capture their attention: a card sent to one who is sick, a concerned phone call, an invitation to dinner, a readiness to help relieve a burden, a caring voice, a gentle touch, a thoughtful gesture, a simple expression of interest in another's concerns, a visit. The way of kindness is the "more excellent way."