

## **A More Excellent Way**

### **1. Three Threads of Concern for Others**

A. 1 Cor 8:1, 11-13 – Arrogance caused knowledgeable brethren to “offend” weak.

1. Callousness caused weak brother to “perish” though Christ died to save him.
2. Such amounted to sin against Christ, Himself (v 12).
3. Concern for brother’s spiritual welfare caused Paul to forego liberties, rights.

B. 1 Cor 9:19-22 – Paul servant to all *“that I might win the more.”*

1. This meant conforming to customs, scruples to establish common ground.
2. Paul strove to be *“all things to all men”* (9:22). This is not hypocrisy or deceit but appreciating, respecting others in spite of differences.
3. Paul’s goal: *“that I might by all means save some.”*

C. 1 Cor 10:23-24, 31-33 – Selflessness must prevail.

1. Acting merely upon basis of what is “lawful” is insufficient. Must also consider what is helpful, edifying.
2. We are to seek *“the others’ well-being”* (10:24).
3. Doing all to the glory of God involves giving no offense to any (10:32).

### **2. The Consummate Description of Love – 1 Cor 13:1-7**

A. 13:1-3 – Principle: Love is essential in all service offered to the Lord; otherwise, the server becomes of no consequence (though his actions might still benefit others – Ph 1:15-18).

B. 13:4-7 – Consider love’s qualities in relation to what was happening in Corinth:

1. Factionalism – Name-dropping, partyism is self-glorifying. But true love *“does not seek its own”* (13:5); *“does not parade itself, is not puffed up”* (13:4).
2. Incest, idolatrous harlotry – *“Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth”* (13:6).

3. Lawsuits – “*Love suffers long*” (13:4); “*thinks no evil*” (an account or ledger of wrongs suffered leading to resentment or bitterness - 13:5).
  4. The envious, less-gifted members – “*Love does not envy*” (13:4).
  5. Divorce/meats/covering/corruption of Lord’s supper – All contain elements of rude, self-seeking, unkind and arrogant behavior, things foreign to love.
- C. In 1 Cor 13 Paul is summarizing the solution for all the problems among the brethren in Corinth (or Belview, or Hueytown, or ...).
1. The secret of true spirituality was not raw knowledge for they had that.
  2. The secret is not the fullness, variety of spiritual gifts – they had those, too.
  3. The “secret” of true spirituality and the overall health of the body is for each member **first** to love God (8:3) and **then** to love those who are God’s.

### 3. Application

- A. Were the Corinthians so different from us?
1. How many church splits could have been avoided by practicing this passage?
  2. How many arguments have been blamed on “personality problems”?
  3. How much energy has been (and is) wasted by squabbling at the expense of the lost?
- B. When we talk about “restoring New Testament Christianity” we usually mean church organization and work. But have we missed something of vital importance? What about New Testament **attitudes**?
- C. 1 Cor 13 is not difficult to *understand*, but it is a challenge to *practice*.