

Why are Christians so ...

(Insights from Romans 13:8-10)

Pastor Bob Johnson, Grace Point Church, April 22nd, 2018

Paul encourages us to ...

(Matthew 5:16)

A rabbit worth chasing: (Romans 13:8)

- **Financial strain ...**
(Proverbs 12:25)
- **It is foolish to borrow money to ...**
(Proverbs 21:20, Proverbs 13:7, Proverbs 22:7)
- **It is not foolish to borrow money to ...**
(Proverbs 21:5, Proverbs 13:11, Matthew 25:14-30)

A habit worth pursuing: (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

1) Love's absence nullifies ...

(1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

2) Love's presence amplifies ...

1. How do I respond to ...

(1 Corinthians 13:4a - patient, kind)

2. How do I respond to ...

(1 Corinthians 13:4b-5 - not envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, not insist on its own way)

3. How do I respond to ...

(1 Corinthians 13:5b - not irritable, resentful)

4. How do I respond to ...

(1 Corinthians 13:6 - not rejoice in wrong doing, but for truth)

5. How do I respond to ...

(1 Corinthians 13:7 - bears, believes, hopes, endures)

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This Week's Discussion Guide:

Welcome to "Week 2" of our small group season!

This small group season for GPC will last for 11 weeks with the week of June 24 being our last meeting before our July-August break. May God use our times together to help us encourage and support one another and help deepen our spiritual maturity as we discuss and apply His Word.

Looking Back:

Each week we'll look back and have an opportunity to share with our group how the week went and also share a few things to help us get to know each other better. What is something encouraging that happened since our last meeting you can be thankful for?

Last Sunday, Bob shared about results from bing.com's auto fill feature. The most common fill-ins (what most are asking about) regarding 'Why are Christians so ...' include: disliked, intolerant, pushy, unhappy, cruel, and strict. If those were the results from people regarding your kids, how would that make you feel? How do you think these results make God feel regarding His kids?

The negative responses are due partly to what media publicizes and the fact that Christians do believe in sin, but it is sad that 'Why are Christians so loving?' didn't make the auto-fill list ... at all. Ugh!

Without compromising God's character and the integrity of Scripture, how can we be more a part of reversing this trend instead of adding to it?

Love is a fuzzy term today. Bob mentioned a few ways love is misunderstood: Loving someone doesn't mean feeling warm and fuzzy toward them or after loving them they always feel warm and fuzzy toward you. Based on these two, what are some times you loved someone even when the warm and fuzzy feelings weren't present in you and/or in the other person?

Bob shared a little about how finances were not the context of what Paul said in Romans 13:8. Speaking of finances and just for fun, when you are a kid, what was something you saved up your allowance for or maybe when you first starting making money ... what was something you bought... for fun ... for yourself?

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching on Romans 13:8-10 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, was there anything you heard that especially caught your attention or raised a question for you, encouraged you or challenged you?

Looking Up: (DIGGING DEEPER)

1. On Sunday we heard from Romans 13:9 where Paul sums up what love looks like by saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Here Paul is quoting another passage in the Old Testament that greatly expands what this concept means. Read through Leviticus 19:9-18 and write down or reflect on some principles of loving your neighbor that could still apply to us today.

2. From Romans 13 and 1 Corinthians 13 and other passages, we learn that love is an action, not an emotion. This is especially important for us to remember given how many divorces occur when people 'fall out of love' when the strong feelings for one another aren't there as before. Fortunately for us, we don't have to guess on what love in action looks like because the Bible gives us many examples.

Read through the following 'love is an action' verses and write down or reflect how you might put them into practice today,

Romans 12:10

Colossians 3:12-17

Philippians 2:3-4

Can you think of any specific ways you are already putting these verses into practice?

3. Self-reflection is an important part of growth and change. If we are able to see deficiencies or areas of needed growth, we are more likely to pursue them. Unfortunately, many of us struggle to see where we specifically need to grow, or maybe avoid the topic altogether. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, which we heard from last Sunday, we have a great opportunity to self-reflect.

As you go through the 15 things listed, take some time to rank yourself on each from 1-5, with 1 being 'needs work' to 5 being 'doing great'.

4. Before sharing with your group about a few 'scores' you came up with, reflect on the following verses from Philippians to remind us that God says we are all a work in progress and He is not finished with us yet.

Philippians 1:6

Philippians 2:12-13

Philippians 3:9-14

Philippians 3:20-21

Philippians 4:1

When we become aware of our weaknesses and areas that need improvement, let's choose to be more motivated to depend on God for the change we want to see rather than discouraged that we haven't been able to change ourselves.

Looking Forward:

This last section is based on passages like the one below.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. 23 For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 25 But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

James 1:22-25 (NLT)

Finally ... what are one or two of the 15 topics Paul listed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 that you would like to see God strengthen in your life? What might be some specific next steps for you this week? Let's pray for each other that God's light of true love will shine brighter through us!

Before we wrap up, let's share some prayer requests and pray for each other.