

The New Normal | New Attitudes | Discussion Guide - 1 Corinthians 13

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1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT *Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.*

The Beginning of a (Long) Journey. There is a lot to learn about being a follower of Jesus Christ. We need to know how to study the Bible, and how to pray. We need to learn about community, giving, ministry, missions, baptism, communion and so much more. But Paul tells us there are three things, three *attitudes* if you will, that last.

The dictionary defines attitude as “*a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior*”. John Maxwell writes in his book *The Difference Maker* that attitudes are “*inward feelings expressed in our outward behaviors*”. The attitudes Paul mentions are placed in believers by God with the intent that they be expressed.

Faith instead of Doubt

Hebrews 11:1 NLT *Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.*

We have those Gnawing Doubts. Is there really a God? Did God create the Universe? Is He actually in control? Should the Bible be trusted? Is there a Heaven? Will I see my loved one's again? Why do such horrible things happen in the world? Why do bad things happen to me? All these questions and many more are mere shadows of the real question. **Is God Good?**

Our experiences tell a different story than the Bible. The Bible presents a world of darkness, war, oppression, and persecution. BUT, in that world where God's people suffer, God Shows up.

But in my life... what about my problems? I don't need giants to fall. I need to be a decent parent, to pay the bills, and hold my marriage together. Can this God be trusted? Is He Good? Or, is God going to let me down. Atheism, whether practical or theological, is simply a way we have devised to take control of our own lives so that we never need to trust anyone. But, we must admit that it is a difficult way to live... and a worse way to die. We all have to decide at some point, will I trust *God's Word* or *my Experience*?

2 Peter 1:3 NIV *His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

Our experience in life cannot be the lens by which we understand God's Word. Rather, God's Word MUST be the lens by which you comprehend our experiences.

Hope instead of Despair

Hebrews 6:19 NLT *This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.*

Despair is not New. The Bible is filled with stories of despair. Josiah despaired over the sins of his nation (2 Chron 34). Hezekiah despaired over the threats of an Assyrian Warlord (Isaiah 36). David

knew much of despair. *Psalms 130:1 "From the depths of despair, O Lord, I call for your help"*. Even the richest man ever, Solomon, knew despair. *Ecclesiastes 2:20 "So I gave up in despair"*. The answers these people sought (forgiveness, deliverance, encouragement, and purpose) are not new desires. But...

Hope is NEW! *Isaiah 9:1-2* describes the the dawn of hope. *"The people in darkness have seen a great LIGHT!"* We have real hope! It is sure and strong and leads into God's peace. So whatever our current trials, we may rest assured that no trial can last indefinitely. Hope will come. An attitude of hope KNOWS that God wins and even this will be for His glory and my glory (*Col 3:3*).

Love instead of Fear

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NLT *If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love...*

Speak Love - If I could speak - What if Love were the gatekeeper of our lips rather than Fear?

Learn Love - if I understood - Do we wish to know God? Do we want His Gifts? (We should, Paul said seek them! *1 Cor 14:1*) Love is the lens by which they are perceived. Love is the foundation for all of it!

Believe Love (John 21) - if I had such faith- Jesus once asked Peter, "*Peter do you love me.*" He had already declared to Peter, "*No greater love does a man have than this, than that a man lay down his life for his friends, and you are my friends*" (*John 15:13-14*) So Jesus was effectively saying to Peter, "I love you. Do you love me?" Maybe He declares to us all, "LET me love you, then you will love me." It certainly does pose a serious question. Do we believe that we are loved?

John 13:35 NLT *Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*

Serve Love - If I gave everything - There is a love that doesn't have a limit. It is a love so rich, so profound that merely to give it is overwhelming. And the experience of such a love, either as giver or receiver, is life altering. No device of man or culture, no ideology, nor any political system will ever ultimately resist such a love.

Here's to some New Attitudes!

Discussion:

- Review **1 Corinthians 13**. Discuss your favorite parts of the chapter. Discuss the definition of Attitude. How do Faith, Hope, and Love fit this definition?
- What comes out when life "squeezes" us? Faith, Hope, and Love or something else?
- Discuss some "gnawing" doubts. Do you think God is ALWAYS Good? Why or why not?
- Review **Jude 1:20**. How do you "build up" your faith? Any new ideas?
- Read **Matthew 5:8** from the Message Bible. How do we "see" God?
- When do you have a difficult time believing God loves you? Discuss with your group.
- Did anything stand out in your reading today that you could share with someone else?