



The Way of Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-4

Speaker: Sergio Chavez

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Lord God, thank You so much for loving us, Lord. For any of us here who are struggling with knowing that we are loved, may today, You open our hearts, open our minds by the power of Your Holy Spirit to let us know that we are loved in this community. In Your beautiful and Your glorious name, and together we all said, "Amen." Well, let's jump into scripture real quick. 1 Corinthians 13:1-4 says, "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains but do not, have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardships that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." Then, Paul goes into this very famous passage scripture you've heard at every wedding, "Love is patient." Well, for those of you who don't know me, my name is Sergio Chavez, and maybe not know, so I'm going to speak a little bit about my father today. And my father's an immigrant from Mexico, as I am as well, and my father had a lot of childhood traumas, him and his siblings that were abandoned by his parents. And so that childhood trauma led to destructive behavior as he grew up, which also led to alcoholism.

And as I was a young child, my father started working on his sobriety, so I didn't experience as much of it as my siblings did of his alcoholism. And as a child, my father took me everywhere, because he didn't have a choice, because I was like a feral child, and my mom was like, "Get this kid out of this house. He's going to burn it to the ground. Take him with you." And my father worked on autobody.

He worked on cars, so he'd take me everywhere, take me to junkyards, he'd take me to auto parts stores, and paint shops. I'd go everywhere with him, and he had to be very patient with me in my wild manners, because here's this feral kid now, let loose in a

junkyard. And my father is a man of few words. It's not his love language of words of affirmations, but it is his love language is gifts. So everywhere we would go, he'd let me buy a candy bar or give me me quarters to go get candy out of those little machines and stuff.

Even one time, I remember like we were at the junkyard, he's like, "You know what? Go get something from the junkyard. You can have it." I'm like, "All right." So I came home with like a handle from a door or something.

I don't know, whatever cost, 50 cents. I was like, "Sweet, whatever." That was my dad. He spoke with gifts. My father had a lot of faults. And when I would view fathers on sitcoms, or movies, or my friends, my father didn't line up with any of that.

My father was very different. He had a lot of faults, but one thing I can say is I never questioned if my father loved me. There was never a void in my life. I knew my father loved me. Even though he didn't say it, he showed it.

His actions showed it to me. And I know that we've been in the sermon series called Marked by Love, because one of the marks of a disciple is that we are marked by the love of Jesus Christ. And see, when you are loved by somebody, when you know that you're loved, that gives you confidence, that gives you this perspective and outview on life that you can do things. And if you haven't watched the past five sermons or you miss some of the past five sermons that we talked about in the Bible of how we know we're marked by love, I highly encourage you to go and watch them or listen to them, because that is the foundation of our actions. Because I knew I was loved by my father, all my actions post that is with that in my heart.

I knew I was loved, and therefore, I move forward in that respect, and that is what we're talking about. And so we've gone from talking about how we're marked by God's love to know, "Okay, now, it's time for us to take action. Because of that, how do we do that?" But we can't give away something we don't have or understand. Now, I understand that maybe some of you didn't have the same love from a father or mother, or maybe a family member, but from somewhere, hopefully you got it from somewhere, from a friend, from an aunt, a tio, a tia from somewhere, a spouse maybe, and if not, then let this family love you.

And so when we read into Corinthians, when Paul's talking about here in Corinthians, we're going from a personal feeling of being loved to now a collective of being loved, because we need to look at the context of 1 Corinthians and what he's talking about. Well, Corinth was a colony of Rome, because, well, Rome were colonizers. That's what they did. They were an empire. That's why we know Jerusalem was under the empire of Rome.

And so you had indigenous people there who were in the area, you had expats from Rome who were in the area, you had Greeks who were coming from everywhere that was in the area, and then you had this new diaspora of Jews, who were now coming to the area. So you had this city that was full of a bunch of different people from a bunch of different backgrounds, and Corinth was on a trade route, so it was a lot of other people coming through there. So there's money coming through there, so social classes were developing, different religions were coming through there, political differences were coming through there, different alliances were coming through there. It was quite the multicultural city. Does that sound familiar?

Well, this is who Paul was dealing with. He is the person God sent, a person who spoke two languages, and most likely understood Latin as well, someone who went from being very impatient with Christians and persecuting them to now having to be patient and teaching this new young Church in Corinth to come together in Christ, because Paul did whatever was necessary in order for the gospel to be preached and the gospel to be known. He even famously says in 1 Corinthians 9:22, it says, "To the weak, I became weak ..." This is the end of this whole thing, "To win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means, I might save some."

"I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessing." And now, Paul's trying to teach this group of people, "Look, I understand you come from all different backgrounds. I understand you have all these divisions, but you need to move forward in Christ. Let me do everything I can to help you." And so he goes on this very poetic rant in the beginning that, "Although I can speak all languages, the languages of angels," and he could.

"What great is that if I don't do it in love? I'm just an interpreter at that point." He talks about prophetic word and fathom all knowledge. "I can explain to you all the things of scripture. I can explain to you and say all the things of God, but what good is it if I don't love?" just like Jesus did.

So he kind of pushes on religious hierarchy, spiritual gifts. What good is the knowledge of the gospel if we don't love like Jesus? Because in John, it says how Jesus was. It says, in John says, "Having loved His own," this is Jesus, "Who were in the world, He loved them to the end," talking about His disciples. Jesus, without the love of Jesus, He would've just been a really amazing prophet, really knowledgeable prophet, but that is not what we revere Jesus as.

We revere Jesus as the exemplification of God's love to humankind. So without it, it's missing. Paul talks about faith. "I can move mountains, but what good is it without love?" He talks about giving all possession to the poor and sacrifice.

"But what will I gain if it is without love?" If we do those things without love, it can be seen as possibly manipulative. "Look, I gave all my money to the poor. I sacrificed my body. I deserve a place in heaven."

God would be like, "Well, that's great, but you missed showing My love to everybody around you." My wife and I, we didn't take a vacation this summer, and so we just went to a wedding in San Francisco, and we took a couple extra days to kind of lump in vacation, and birthday, and celebrating our 18 anniversary, and so we hung out in the mountains of California, and we went down to Half Moon Bay and to these tide pools. And so we're there, and we come up to this big rock that had these birds on there. Now, I'm not a bird watcher. I don't know fancy birds.

I'm pretty sure they were some fancy birds around this rock. Pretty sure one of them was a seagull. There was also this other white seal that was there when I got close. He took off, so clearly, he needs to check his biases, and I don't know, that's a whole other sermon altogether. But all of a sudden, out of to the right, this majestic heron comes, huge bird. Again, I'm not a bird person, so I think like a seven-foot wingspan or something like that. And this big crane comes in, and I'm like, "Amor mija, look." And this crane comes in, all this beautiful crane comes in, and then lands on this rock with all these other birds, and then does one of these things, one of these jobs, and kicks off all the other birds. There was plenty of room on that rock for all of them, but biscuits was a jerk. So I couldn't help when I saw this to think of this sermon.

I was like, "This is what Paul's saying. What good is all this majestic if we don't show love?" And hopefully, the only thing you don't go home with is that, "Man, cranes are jerks." Maybe he was having a bad day, or she was having a bad day. I don't know.

And so then, Paul goes on to this very famous scripture that you hear in so many weddings, "Love is patient," and it moves on to, "Love is kind," and all these things. And although that it can be used for personal, can be used for romantic, the context in which he's talking to, he's talking to a group of people. He's talking to this Church in Corinth. So this is a relational patience, not just patience for you like, "Oh, I'm waiting for my coffee, and they're not done yet," and, "Oh, Lord, give me patience," or in traffic, although that is also needed, and if you need help with that, we got prayer ministers afterwards to help you out with that scenario, it's just coffee. Tone it down.

But this is relational patience with each other. Now, I'm not sure why Paul started with this, but when I hear of that God's love is patient, I think of how Jesus worked with His disciples. There's so many times that Jesus repeated Himself with the disciples. I swear if the Bible was a picture book, there'd be tons of it with Jesus' face, palming like, "I just said that." But He took compassion on them, and I think of myself.

And I don't know about y'all, but I'm a habitual sinner. Maybe some of you all have figured that out and you don't sin anymore, but not me. And I think about how much I'm a failure, and how God is so patient with me. There have been many nights that I've gone to bed with tears in my eyes because the people that I have failed are the ones that I love the most, my kids and my wife, and God is so patient with me because I didn't show them the love of Christ. For whatever was going on with me that day, they didn't experience God's love, but God is so patient with me, that He gives me another day to try again.

He gives me another day to express His love on me so that I can express it onto them. He's so patient with me. Patience is needed in a multicultural community. I can personally tell you, being an immigrant, growing up in a Spanish-speaking home, living in U.S. America, requires patience. [foreign language 00:12:26]. Right?

That's right.

Yes.

It requires patience. I also grew up in a Spanish-speaking Church that was held in a English-speaking Church as well, and if it wasn't for those leaders that exemplified this patient love that God is talking about, being a Church to come together in sisters and brothers in Christ, our Churches would've separated long before, but because of their patience, because of their love for bringing the gospel to all people, the gifts that they gave me was my best friend that I've known since I was four years old, because although the Spanish-speaking Church was in one room and the English-speaking Church was in another room, the kids were together, and I gained a friend from that. That's what these leaders gave me. God's patient love is required to grow together as sisters and brothers in Christ in multicultural settings. Now, if you want to see God's patient on display, highly advise you and go watch Teacher Lisa at work with these preschool kids.

All my daughters know and love Teacher Lisa. That woman is so patient with our kids. Here at BelPres, we've been working with New Hope, who's predominantly from Central and Eastern Africa, from Congo and Rwanda. And in their culture, children have a different place in the church family, different from the U.S. customs, and so we've had challenges with them, with our kids being together with just challenges. And I have to commend Pastor Colin and Pastor Alexis as they show this patient to make sure that these kids belong here, so that these kids will never grow up and say, "I didn't realize I wasn't loved. I didn't belong."

Whenever they ask, "Do I belong here?," the answer will always be yes, because we have to be patient with each other. My job here at work is to work between cultures that we have here at BelPres, and I am much reminded how much patience is needed, patience that Paul is talking about, patience that I don't have, but patience that God can

give us. If we align with God's way of love towards each other, we get to show the world the true power of community. We have enough division. I'm all filled up with division.

I don't know if y'all watch the news, or have social media, or read the paper. Do they even give out papers anymore? I don't know if that's even a thing. We got enough division. But if we come together in this type of love that Paul is talking about, then we get to be a Church family that shows the world that people can come from different parts of the world, come from different or speak different languages, have different backgrounds, be part of different social classes, look different, have different customs, and come together with God at the center and love one another.

We can have different opinions. We can vote differently and still be together, and love one another, because that's what God does. We can show the world what the world is not showing us. When I stepped into this church back in 2003, it looked very different. And I'm very proud of you guys today, because BelPres every day, more and more is becoming a Church where the community can come in without any hesitation, but it requires action.

Now, my father was ... It took my father roughly about 40 years, a couple heart attacks, diabetes, almost dying, and a good number of counseling, that somewhere around I was 40, my father came to me once, came to me and said, "Mijo, I love you." Mijo is son. I was like, "Whoa, look how ..." My dad doesn't talk about his feelings.

I was like, "All right. Go ahead, pops." And I was just like, "All right, pops. Yeah, I know." And then, he kind of quickly changed the subject, and we talked about something else, but I was really proud of him. The thing is, I didn't need to hear it.

Now, I'm not words of affirmation, and maybe that's why me and my father connect so much. I'm one who's ... My love language is works of service, but I didn't need to hear it. I liked it, because he showed me with his actions. Hopefully a memory that I have, I will take to my grave, when I was younger, maybe, I don't know, five or six or seven or something like that, we were poor, so we shopped at secondhand stores.

So one time, we're at Goodwill, and my mom said, [foreign language 00:18:08]. "Go get your dad. It's time to go." And so I go look for him, and he was talking with somebody, and I was like, [foreign language 00:18:15]. "It's time to go."

And my father, in his hands, was carrying this toy. For those of you who are old enough or cool enough, I guess, remember Return of the Jedi, where Jabba the Hutt has that thing where the trap doors go, and biscuits falls down, and he's got to fight a monster. Okay, my dad had that toy in his hand, except it was from Goodwill, so it was like broken,

didn't have half the pieces or something like that. I was like, [foreign language 00:18:38]. And he was like, he went, "Oh."

And he hid it behind his back. This small gesture to me showed that it was his father who didn't have a lot of money, who was just trying to make a Christmas special for a boy. So I'm glad he told me he loved me, but I already knew. That is the type of love Paul is talking about. Can we be a Church family to show that to others?

It doesn't need to be large sometimes. Sometimes it's just small, small actions. So the only ... This may sound cheesy, for those of you who struggle to know that you're loved by God, that probably needs some counseling, and I can't answer that, and I know this may sound cheesy, but for those of you who've maybe lost loved ones, like an older sister of mine who died two weeks after she was born, or myself who almost died, you understand the beauty and the gift every day of life is. If you're struggling to know that God loves you every day you wake up, every sunset you see, every sunrise you see, every meal you eat, every breath that you have in your lungs is a sign that God loves you.

You get to experience His mercy and His grace. No matter what you've done, you can come to God.

And He says, "I love you, my daughter, my son, and I forgive you." This is the kind of love we are need to share with each other. So the only action I have of you, if you struggle with being part of the Church family, then serve one another. Start small. Serve coffee, shake hands, come be a prayer minister.

And if you struggle with being with diverse cultures, then I highly recommend you go and serve with the kids and students. They are the most diverse group on this campus. We need to be in relationship, because relationship is where love lives. That is what Paul is talking about. Bow your heads with me.

Father in heaven, thank You so much for this day, Lord. Thank You so much for loving us. Thank You so much for being a pursuant, God, Lord. I just ask that we open our hearts, we open our minds, give us eyes to see ears to hear, where we are being impatient with each other, and help us through that, Lord. Help us feel loved by this community.

Take steps to build relationships so that we know we are a Church family. In Your beautiful and Your glorious name, and together we all said, "Amen."

Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, what are some of the things that Paul says are less important than love?
- Although the language in 13:1-3 is poetic in nature, given that Paul was speaking to a community, why do you believe he made such a strong emphasis on "love."
- What purpose do you believe that love has in this letter that Paul has written? I.e. For romance, for families, to be a better person, etc.

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Pastor Sergio shared how he learned what it was to be loved from his own dad. Who are the people in your life who have helped you know what it is to be loved? How did you learn this (in your family, in your community)?
- "Love is patient." Pastor Sergio talked about relational patience and called us to be patient with one another as we grow as Christians in a multi-cultural setting. Where is this hard for you? Where do you see fruit already?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.