

English Standard Version.
Reading I Corinthians 13

The Lord Jesus Christ said: -

'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-3).

Paul writes, 'If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. When I was a boy and would start chattering, my grandmother would say to me: "An empty vessel makes the most sound."

A gong is an empty vessel and, in many cases, particularly in Asia, are decorated to look attractive. But they are just empty vessels and need a hammer or mallet to make a sound.

An empty vessel can only make noise.

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful".

Love accepts others just as they are, the good and the not so good.

Love accepts others just as they are, the good, and warts and all!

I was standing at a check out at a local supermarket and was behind this lady. The conveyor belt was full of her purchases. She just stood there with her shoulder bag over her shoulder as the goods went through the scanner. My thoughts were: - Why is she just standing there? Why doesn't she get her purse out of her bag and be ready to pay? I became impatient with her. Then when all her goods had gone through and the total relayed to her, she then decided to fiddle around in her bag to find her purse. My impatience was building and my thoughts of her were not very nice.

Then she fiddled around in her purse and got out her cash in notes and then looked again in the purse and said that she may have the correct change and fiddle again through the coins. How dare this woman have the audacity to hold me up. Me! She must have held me up for at least 45 seconds, perhaps for a whole minute.

I became so impatient, my thoughts of her were obnoxious. I was irritable and resentful.

I became just an empty vessel. A noise. Of course, the woman was completely oblivious to my feelings towards her as she pushed her trolley away.

I did not know the woman.

I did not know if she was a Christian.

There is one thing I do know; God loves that women so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross for her. "

I had to repent of my lack of patience, lack of kindness, my irritability and my resentment. My petty self-centredness.

“Love is patient and kind; it is not arrogant or rude. it does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful”.

I failed to love. I did not accept that woman just as she was. I had failed to love my neighbour as myself.

“Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”.

Several decades ago, a woman, with two young children, came to our Church in Sydney. After a short time, we learned of her story. She and her husband were members of another Church in our area for a number of years. Her husband had become the Church's treasurer.

It was discovered that the husband had been embezzling the Church funds for some time. He was arrested and received a custodial sentence.

This woman and her children's lives were now in turmoil.

Her life was in tatters as her marriage was falling apart. She needed the support from her friends in that Church.

Gossip began about her.

Insinuations, assumptions and innuendo.

Rumours started saying that she must have been in on her husband's treachery and if not, she must have known what he was doing. She proclaimed innocence. She was not believed.

She felt alone and rejected.

Many in her church just turned their backs on her. She was isolated in her church, and she was made to feel that she was no longer a trusted member.

This woman and her children received the love and support they needed in our church.

We accepted her word that she was innocent. She became an active member of our congregation.

We gave her the love and support that she did not get from the congregation of her former church.

But, before our halos become too shiny - we need to remember that her husband hadn't embezzled funds from our church.

“Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”.

- Love does not gossip because gossip without proof can destroy people and reputations. .
- Love accepts one's word as truth unless it can be proven otherwise.
- Love always has trust in others unless it shown to be otherwise.
- Love perseveres in the hope of repentance and reconciliation.

1 John 4:16 " We have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him".

1 John 4:19 “We love because he first loved us”.

God is love and so we are assured that love never ends.

We know that when we die can't take any of our possessions with us, but we can take love into eternity!

Amen