

What is this thing called LOVE?

While Cole Porter may be best known for witty lyrics as frothy as champagne, in his most thoughtful songs he seems to stand in awe, both confounded and captivated, by an emotion that defies understanding:



*What is this thing called love
This funny thing called love
Just who can solve its mystery
Why should it make a fool of me?*

1 Corinthians 13 takes on the question - "What is Love?" - and the apostle Paul goes on to paint a beautiful picture of the love he desires in us all.

1 Corinthians 13

¹ Even if I can speak in all the tongues of earth – and those of angels too – but do not have love, I am just a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy such that I comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge, or if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away everything that I own to feed those poorer than I, even hand over my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is not jealous. It does not sing its own praises. It is not arrogant. ⁵ It is never rude nor self-seeking; it is not prone to anger, nor does it brood over injuries. ⁶ Love does not rejoice when injustice is done, but celebrates the truth. ⁷ Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping, never gives up.

⁸ Love never comes to an end. Prophecies will cease; tongues will be silent; knowledge will pass away. ⁹ Our knowledge is imperfect and our ability to speak what God has revealed is incomplete. ¹⁰ But when what is perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I no longer used childish ways. ¹² Now we see a blurred image in a mirror. Then we will see very clearly. Now my knowledge is incomplete. Then I will have complete knowledge as God has complete knowledge of me. ¹³ So these three things remain faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Verses 1-3 speak of the importance of love; verses 4-8a, the definition of love, and verses 8b to 13, the permanence of love. Who are the people in your life who have taught you by word and example each of these categories? What factors enabled those people to demonstrate such love for you? How do you teach love to others?
2. If love is patient and kind, what makes us so intent to remove the splinter from another's eye when there is a log lodged in our own? (Luke 6:42)
3. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" – 1 John 4:18. In your experience, how are love and fear related?
4. Based on verse 11 and your own experience, what role does maturity play in one's ability to love? How is mature love different from childish love?
5. What are some things you "see in a mirror dimly" that you hope to see more clearly?
6. How would you rank faith, hope and love? At this time in your life, what is greatest for you?



PRAYER

Jesus Christ, the world's true sun, ever rising, never setting, whose life-giving warmth engenders, preserves, nourishes, and gladdens all things in heaven and on earth:

Shine in my soul, I pray, scatter the night of sin, and the clouds of error.

Blaze within me, that I may go my way without stumbling, taking no part in the shameful

deeds, of those who wander in the dark, but all my life long walking as one native to the light. Amen

Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536)