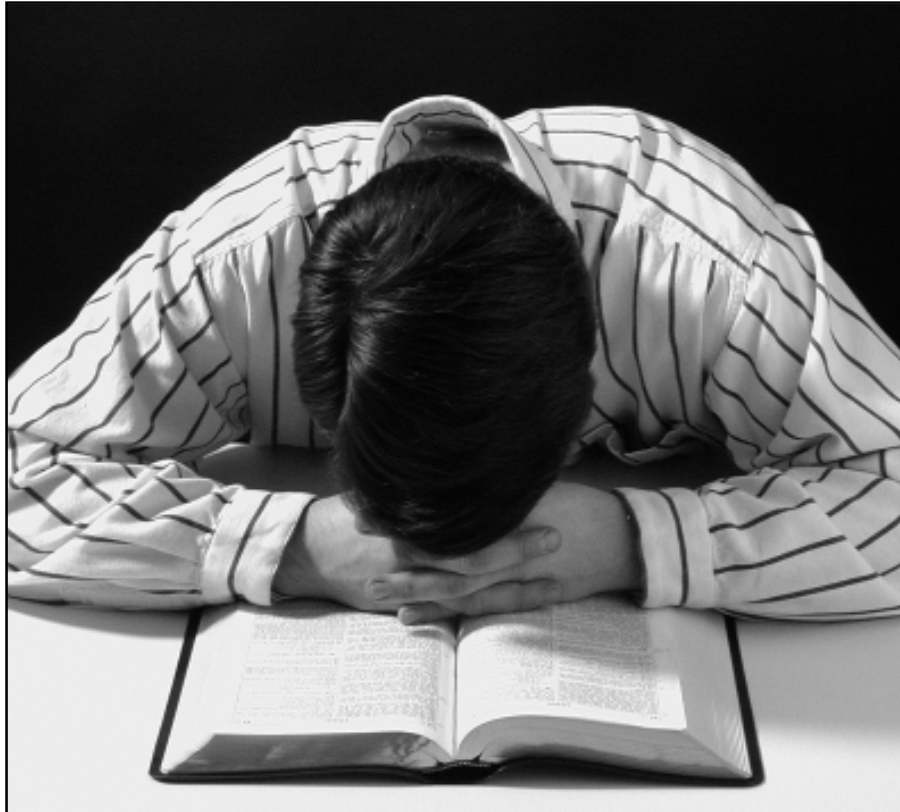


Of all the Christian attributes we need, love is

# The Greatest of These



**TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

Dear Son,  
Tonight as we spoke together, you asked, "Father, what do I need? What's important?" They were questions not lightly asked.

I have seen you grow spiritually. In many ways we have grown closer in the past weeks than ever before. A real bond was established between us that night when you repented and placed your life into the hands of your Maker.

Of course, I loved you long before then. You were special even before you were born. How well I remember the glow on your mother's face when they placed you in her arms for the first time. As I looked down on you, a tiny bundle of humanity, what potential was there! Even then, I looked ahead to this day, my son, and saw you standing on the brink of adulthood.

You have taken many steps since then. Oh yes,

I saw the first physical steps. How your eyes sparkled when you first tottered into Daddy's open arms! But far more important have been the spiritual steps forward, the developing of those attributes which have helped you grow strong as a Christian.

Humility was one of the first. Without humility you could never have been saved because repentance only comes when you see how undeserving you are of forgiveness.

Forgiveness itself was another step. Just as you looked to Calvary for forgiveness, you had to learn to offer that same release to others. That has been difficult on occasions, hasn't it? Remember the time you spent on your knees when your classmates began teasing you about Sunday school? You took it! How happy I was as I saw you come through that trial.

Learning unquestioning obedience was another move forward. Your mother started working on that when you were about six months old. But the desire to have your own way was not easily overcome. When you were finally saved, you wanted to obey.

We talked about faith and some of the items on your “faith shelf,” like when your grandmother, at the point of death, was healed through prayer. The time when you prayed, and your dog Awesome came home after having been gone for two weeks. The night your cousin Carl was saved. You learned from experience that faith is essential.

Through some of the hard places along the road you’ve found courage to stand when your friends didn’t understand you, when you haven’t understood what to do yourself. Through virtue you have kept yourself unspotted from the world.

We agreed knowledge was important, the right kind of knowledge! Not straight A’s on your report card, necessarily, but wisdom from Above—spiritual discernment.

Self-control, was hard for you to master. To exercise moderation in all things is not easy. There were months when you struggled with mood swings. A period of time when it seemed hard not to talk more than you should. That inward struggle you had over balancing school activities and church responsibilities. These were not easy, but through them temperance emerged.

Hand-in-hand with temperance came patience. To keep on keeping on plays an important part in the development of Christian character.

Godliness, we agreed, is a continuing step that rejects anything that detracts from your spiritual testimony. You strengthened that testimony when you refused to cheat on the history exam last

week, though the answers were circulated around the class. You strengthened it when you kept your promise to mow Mrs. Kilpatrick’s lawn though your friends went off to shoot baskets.

That thought led us on to consider brotherly kindness. It takes in a multitude of actions, large and small. From little common courtesies to the more obvious good deeds. It was showing brotherly kindness the day you and two friends chopped and hauled wood for Ron Barnett when he hurt his leg and couldn’t do it himself. Then one day I saw you pick up Mrs. Olson’s paper from the grass and take it to her door so it wouldn’t get wet; that was showing brotherly kindness too.

So we talked of many things. But now I must answer your questions: “Father, what do I need? What’s most important?”

The answers are simple. Turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 13. Read it carefully. Many great virtues and gifts are mentioned there. But look especially at the last verse of that chapter: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

Charity, Son. Love. Oh, it is simple when you see that love encompasses them all. Without love, all these virtues and gifts are nothing. But with love, they add up to everything. A full and blessed life, and an eternal home in Heaven!

Son, I speak to you of a love that many years ago led to a cross! I love you more than you can ever know or comprehend.

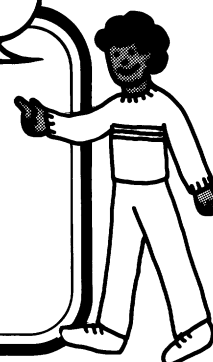
I say with Paul of old, “Follow after charity.” Seek it, strive for it with all your heart.

Someday, My child, with your hand in Mine, we will walk together through the portals of Glory.

Your Loving Heavenly Father

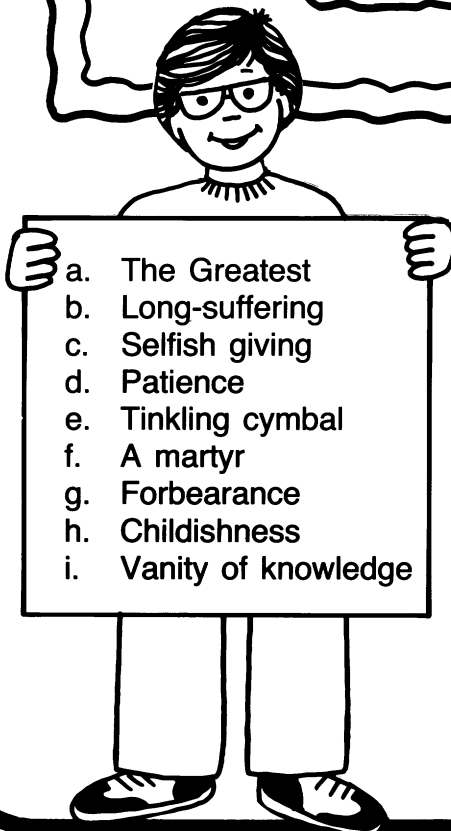
LOVE is the greatest.

**Key Verse:** And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.  
— 1 Corinthians 13:13



# What Is Love?

The greatest thing in a Christian's life is real love. Read 1 Corinthians 13, and match the words below with the definitions given. Put a star next to the ones that show love.



\_\_\_\_\_ Your talk is a hollow sound with no sincerity, just noise.

\_\_\_\_\_ Give your goods to the poor so you can have a tax write-off.

\_\_\_\_\_ Be a Know-It-All with a high IQ but no love.

\_\_\_\_\_ Be willing to die for the cause of Jesus.

\_\_\_\_\_ Endure troubles for a long time.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tolerate the faults of others.

\_\_\_\_\_ Think and act as a child.

\_\_\_\_\_ Have charity.

\_\_\_\_\_ Be able to wait without complaining.