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Flourishing 2023

But now faith, hope, and love remain; these three virtues must characterize our lives. The greatest of these is love. *1 Corinthians 13 (The Voice)*

“Cultivate a Culture of Connection: The informal practices of everyday life (the norms and culture of how we engage one another) significantly influence the relationships we have in our lives. We cannot be successful in the other pillars without a culture of connection.”

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

Perhaps we who are in Christian communities and churches should take a re-look at our roles and relationships through the textual lens of 1 Corinthians 13. I am of the conviction that if my behavior toward another person causes them hurt or harm, then I am in violation of the spirit and letter of the biblical teaching of “love one another” (and “love your neighbor”).

It seems like rationalizing if I lean on the admonition to always tell the truth and never affirm deviance or walk with sinners, etc. (pick your virtue text)—like the addiction recovery mantra that our community informs our behavior. All of which holds some truth and valuable teaching— but could lead to self-justification for abusive/excluding/harming behaviors.

Is it unrealistic to expect that believers who share the same faith community should go out of their way to care for each other? It is too superficial to just say that we are friendly and love everyone— or to maybe just presume that these admonitions in 1 Corinthians to make other-directed love our normal are just aspirational...?

Sometimes questions lead us to insights that answers fail to do. What if we should allow the attributes of this “agape (other-directed)” love passage in 1 Corinthians 13 to be an inventory for measuring our relationships with others, especially those we share church with.

Like: on a scale of 0 to 5 how strong is the level of our “love one another” factors?

- Love is patient (0__5)
- love is kind
- does not envy
- does not boast
- is not proud
- does not dishonor others
- is not self-seeking
- is not easily angered
- keeps no record of wrongs
- does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth
- always protects
- always trusts
- always hopes
- always perseveres

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