

TODAY'S BIBLE READING  
1 CORINTHIANS 13:1–13

RECOMMENDED READING  
DEUTERONOMY 10:12–11:32; MATTHEW 22:34–40; GALATIANS 5

## IT NEVER FAILS

Odd, the things that make us feel like a failure! Earning 30 grand instead of 60. Becoming ill. Getting an answer wrong. Missing a grounder. Even odder, the things that make us feel like a success! Earning 60 grand. Staying healthy. Getting an answer right. Throwing out the guy at first.

Paul's well-known explanation of love shows just how mixed up our ideas of failure and success can be. No matter what grand things we might accomplish, no matter what fine vision we might believe, no matter what deep and difficult truths we might learn, if we leave out love, it all means nothing. All of our imperfect accomplishments will fail.

One thing, however, will never fail. Of the realities that remain when all else is gone, only one is supreme: love.

There it is. Without love, we fail. With it, we can't help but succeed.

Does that sound too easy? Well, people who've never tried it might think so. But this love is different from the natural love we've experienced. This kind of love combines virtues such as patience, honesty, forgiveness, trust and good manners. Further, it rules out self-interested motives.

This kind of love isn't easy at all. In fact, only one man has ever completely accomplished it. He knows and stands ready to forgive every rotten act you've ever committed. He always tells you the truth, and while the words might hurt, he desires only to heal. He sets an impossible pace but comes to your aid as you stumble along behind him. Despite the fact that you don't deserve such a sacrifice, he even gave his life for you.

This kind of love doesn't represent an out-of-the-way tangent or minor application of our faith. It stands as the central characteristic of faith. Jesus takes it a step further when he commands, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34–35).

Jesus doesn't say that people will recognize us by our knowledge of Scripture or by our ability to spout memorized Bible verses or even by stands we take against the evils of our culture. While those actions have their place, Jesus simply says that others will recognize us by our love as belonging to Jesus.

There it is. Without love, we fail. With it, we can't do anything but succeed.

### TO TAKE AWAY

:: HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOUR OWN WORDS? CAN YOU FIND SCRIPTURE TO SUPPORT YOUR DEFINITION?

:: TRUE LOVE IS NOT NATURAL; IT COMES FROM GOD. WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO BECOME A MORE LOVING PERSON?

:: WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU HAVE TO EXPRESS GOD'S LOVE TO THOSE AROUND YOU TODAY?