

Moravian Church in South Africa  
New Year (2024) Meditations  
**Overall Theme: Do everything in love.**

**Texts:** 1 Corinthians 16:14, 1Corinthians 13:1—13

**Introduction**

Dear brothers and sisters, dear reader, the New Year (2024) has arrived. With the New Year come new possibilities, new opportunities, new challenges, and new blessings. May this New Year be filled with joy and happiness, and may we feel the love of God surrounding us. Happy New Year! We are also blessed with a New Year text that reads as follows: 'Do everything in love' (1 Corinthians 16:14). When the apostle Paul wrote to the church of Corinth, he instructed them to: "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love." 1 Corinthians 16:13–14.

Our text for this year calls and challenges us to action, to practical love. Something that is very rare these days. We live in a world where war, poverty, corruption, hate, conflict, famine, discrimination, gender base violence is the order of the day. A world that longs for sincere, true love, identified in terms of actions and attitudes The Bible verse that immediately comes to my mind is 1 John 3:18 Beloved, let us not only say that we love one another, but let us prove it in deeds. God expects us to love one another as Christ loves us, so that the world will know that we are his disciples. (John 13:34&35).

If we look at Paul's definition of love according to 1 Corinthians 13, it is a list of attitudes and actions. This description of love helps make sense of Paul's instruction to "do everything in love." To do everything in love means to be patient, to be kind, and to not envy or boast. It means that we do not dishonour others, brag, or become easily angered. To do everything in love means to rejoice in the truth of God, reject evil, and trust and hope in Him. It means to let love guide our thoughts, actions, and words. To do everything in love means walking the path of becoming more like Jesus, who loved humanity unconditionally even unto death on the cross.

Paul's charge to the church of Corinth to do everything in love remains relevant to us today. Our highest calling is to love others as Christ has loved us. We are to love, not just in words or speech, but in genuine acts that address the needs of other people. If we're not demonstrating this kind of love, the Bible says we have nothing. May these meditations be a blessing for our church and for everyone who will read them. Enjoy.

***Let us pray:*** *Loving God, help us to put love into action. Guide us as we reflect this week on how we are called to put love into action. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

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## DAY ONE (Monday): LOVE IS PATIENT AND KIND

*“Love is patient and kind.” (1 Corinthians 13:4)*

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul unlocks the noble qualities and the wonder of Godly love, which is the character of God. He loved us so much that He gave his only Son (John 3; 16). God was first in action. For us to act in love, it has to start with living in a loving relationship with the God of love.

The word used here is also translated as long-tempered, having a ‘long fuse’ – being able to endure even through provocation and suffering. We, as people, are often so quick to get angry with others and let bitterness take root in our hearts, especially when we are in a hurry and the driver in the car in front of us is driving too slowly. We hit back with frustration and anger at others for the wrongs done to us. Think back to the COVID-19 lockdown and how our patience was tested – businesses, churches, and recreation facilities were closed down. No get-togethers or visiting friends. Sadly, we have lost many family members, dear friends, and colleagues. But thanks be to God, He gave us the courage to prayerfully wait on Him.

Countless people recall incidents in their lives that caused them to feel aggrieved and embittered. Nobody could suffer more injustice than Jesus. He calls us to act with grace and forgiveness toward those who have wronged us. (Mt 5: 40–43). What he asks is difficult, but not impossible. Paul is saying to another congregation, **“Encourage the timid, help the weak, and be patient with everyone.”** (1 Thes. 5:14)

Are you holding bitterness in your heart because you disagree with what others do or neglect their work? **“Let your speech be gracious.”** (Col. 4:6) Always behave...

**Love is also kind.** Kindness is noted as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) and reveals the close connection between love and kindness. Living a life of love marked by kindness is one aspect of living in a way that pleases God. So much of Jesus’ ministry on earth is Himself showing kindness freely; He did good to the woman at the well, offering her eternal life. He did good to the woman caught in adultery, offering her forgiveness. He did good to Peter by restoring him after he denied him three times. He is still graciously granting us, sinners, forgiveness when, in prayer, we ask Him. **“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.”** (Eph.4: 32) Kindness is demonstrated through our actions toward others, prompted by our own experience of God’s redemptive love.

We live in a cruel and violent world. The past year, we witnessed violence and abuse in our communities: senseless killings, people spreading hurtful gossip on social media, and friends who turned their backs on us. Every day there is someone near you who suffers and is in need of compassion: a colleague at work who lost his/her job; or a family lost everything in the recent floods. Friendly handshakes and a willing ear to listen and share a food parcel are some ways to say, We really care! Give the lonely person a friendly call or make time to help clean the yard of the struggling elderly couple next door. These are earnest times calling for compassion toward others in our communities and churches. **“Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”** (Gal. 6:9–10).

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help us to reflect your love in this world through giving love to benefit others, especially those who are in dire need of it. AMEN.

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## DAY TWO (TUESDAY): LOVE IS NOT ENVIOUS OR BOASTFUL

**Text:** *“Love is not envious or Boastful.” (1 Corinthians 13:4)*

For this meditation we have as subtheme **Love is not envious or boastful**, and reflect how a love which is not envious or boastful is practically lived out.

When the Bible describes love, it almost always speaks of a command! For instance, all people are commanded to love their neighbours. Jesus spoke of love as something that people should do. In this text, the Apostle Paul speaks of love not being envious or boastful. Another way of saying this is that love delights in the successes of others, or that it praises others for their achievements. But, all of us are aware that these commands are not easy to adhere to. Love, in other words, is not something natural. It doesn't just happen. It requires work, hard work. It requires deliberate decisions and actions. It requires commitment. **Love is an action!**

We all love to be made much of. We like to be admired. We like it when people notice our successes and miss our failures. We like it when we hear people say nice things about us. But we don't like it when people make fun of us or criticize us or laugh at us or humiliate us. So we have developed strategies for minimizing our failures and maximizing our successes. We tend to draw attention to the one and cover over the other. There are simple ways of doing this like blatant bragging and boasting.

But there are also more subtle, refined, acceptable ways of expressing our pride—like bringing the conversation back again and again to ourselves and what we've done, or even more subtly by constantly talking about our hurts or our sadness, and about how badly things have gone for us. Paul says, *“Love does not brag and is not arrogant.”* That is, it does not speak much about itself and is not puffed up with its achievements or too concerned about its hurts. Love is other-directed, not self-consumed.

These words want to take us beyond the view of love as easy and natural. Indeed they tell us that love causes pain, and we by nature back away from pain. Love requires us to sacrifice something, and by nature we do not like to sacrifice. Love calls us to unconditional commitment and devotion. Paul is telling us that it is not enough to only talk about Love – because love is something that is lived – it reverberates in my relationship with spouse, parents, children, fellow believers, friends and colleagues.

**PRAYER:** *Lord, please forgive me for being envious and boastful in my relationship with others. Free me from the desire for always seeking affection and attention, and teach me to put aside my desire to always call attention to my own successes. Make me willing to live a life of love, at home, at my workplace, among friends, and in the body of believers. AMEN.*

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## DAY THREE (Wednesday): LOVE IS NOT SELF SEEKING OR SELFISH

**Texts:** 1 Corinthians 13:5, Acts 4:36–37

Dear brothers and sisters, young people, the topic for today is: Love is not self-seeking or selfish. You know some people advance or go forward in their lives with no regard for others, no regard for how their actions affect others, and no feelings at all for how their

behaviours hurt others. Their only concern is that they get what they want and can do what they want to do.

The Corinthian church had a serious problem with selfishness. In chapter 6, we read that they were dragging each other into court so that they could get what they thought they deserved. In chapter 10, we see them eating meat offered to idols with absolutely no regard for how that might affect a weaker brother. In chapter 11, they ate their so-called “love feast” with every man for himself. In chapter 12, we read how they used their spiritual gifts as an opportunity to make themselves more important rather than working together for the common good. Selfishness, or self-interest, was their problem. But that’s really not surprising, because the Corinthians were letting the world influence the way they were acting toward one another, and selfishness has always been the way of this world and it is still a problem today. We have become the “me” generation. Looking at our society as a whole, we see an entire culture that puts “me” first. The focus is all on me, me, me. But God has called us who are Christians to choose a different way – a better way – the way of love.

Our text is very clear and not difficult to understand at all. ***Love is not selfish or self-serving.*** Selfishness is directly opposed to love, which means that we can’t be selfish and loving at the same time. When we focus on “me” and “I,” we tell those around us that we are more important than they are. Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 2:2-4. *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others.”*

You know, selfishness can have destructive and painful effects on our daily lives, and it always has a victim. Someone else always has to pay for and bear the weight of our self-seeking. Just look around, and you will see the effects everywhere. (Are there any examples that come to mind?)

As true followers of Jesus Christ, we can break the pattern of selfishness in our lives. Jesus shows us a new pattern. In our relationships with one another, we have to have the same mind-set as Christ Jesus. Jesus gives us a new self-less pattern. We look to Jesus as our model, who not only gives us a new pattern but also gives us power. Following him and committing ourselves to his lordship unlocks a new power to love as He has loved us. Paul says in Romans 5:5: *‘God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.’* We cannot self-generate this kind of selfless love; it must be poured into us. We can only give that which we possess, and we can only possess that which we have received from God.

Dear brothers and sisters, Christian love is not about us but about others. Putting love into practice involves following the example of Jesus, considering the needs and interests of others, and denying our personal desires in order to serve those in need. Is there a pattern of selfishness so that others have to orbit around our lives? Are we creating victims in our lives? Let us examine our hearts and ask our Lord Jesus Christ to help us live a life that orbits around him and not around ourselves. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour the love of God into our hearts so that we can become less selfish and more selfless.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me unconditionally. Holy Spirit, convict my heart when I begin to think more highly of myself than I should and empower me to put others above myself. Give me the strength to become unselfish so you can work through me. In Jesus’ Name! Amen.*

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## **DAY FOUR (Thursday): LOVE HAS NO GRUDGES AND KEEPS NO RECORD OF THE WRONGS**

**Texts:** Love has no grudges and keeps no record of the wrongs (Love forgives) 1 Cor. 13:5, Mat. 6:14-15, Mat. 18:21-22, Luke 17:3-4, Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60, 2 Cor. 2:6-8, 11 Eph. 4:32, Col. 3:13 Mat. 6: 14&15

Dear Sisters & Brothers, Young People: If one considers the rather unpleasant and quarrelsome situation that was prevalent in the Corinthian Church as described in Chapter 3 of this same letter, under the heading: **On Divisions in the Church** then here Paul is describing what is so deeply lacking in the Corinthian church: **true, Christ-like love**. In simple terms, the in-fighting among members of the congregation was a visible symptom of the inward absence of the Christ-like love. This missing ingredient, so to speak, was at the heart of nearly every problem the church in Corinth was facing. In all likelihood, the dispute among them was born out of their resentfulness and grudges they had against each other. This verse on forgiveness, it would seem, is then addressing that problem.

In terms of the bigger context of this famous Chapter, the Apostle Paul describes love as a series of actions verbs, seven positive and seven negative, to be precise. These define the character of godly, self-sacrificing love, from the Greek term agape. Our verse of focus here: Love has no grudges and keeps no record of the wrongs is one such negative action verb.

In other translations, the 'Love has no grudges' part is couched differently as follows: **Love is not resentful** and yes it does not keep a record of wrongs. Natural human instinct is to keep score, to get even, to hold on to hurt feelings against those who have mistreated us. Christ-like love follows the pattern of Ephesians.4:32, recognizing the great sin God has forgiven in us through Christ and turning to do the same for those who sin against us. The theme of forgiveness towards those who wrong us then clearly comes to the fore in this verse.

Dear Reader, I am of the firm conviction that the world would be better place if we, as human beings, had mastered the art of forgiveness towards those who wronged us. The many quarrels and sometimes senseless squabbles among us as families, churches, etc. would be a thing of the past, as most of them are born out of bitterness by one side to a dispute towards another for the hurt deemed to have been caused by the other side. Yes, if only we could fully internalise the truth of life about us human beings that: to err is human we would readily forgive others and then peace and harmony will prevail among us in eternity.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we thank you for the precious gift of forgiveness of our sins you extended to us in Jesus, your son. We pray that we may always strive to emulate his example of forgiving enemies. Dear God purge us of all resentfulness and grudges against those who offended us, not so much for their own sake but for our own sake, in Jesus' name. Amen*

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**Day Five (Friday): LOVE DOES NOT REJOICE IN WRONGDOING,  
BUT REJOICES IN THE TRUTH. 1 Cor. 13:6**

**My dear Brother, Sister, Young Person,** a friend of mine has the following situation at work: *her boss is in trouble of losing her work. She is the one who helped her rise in her position at work and has generally been a good leader. Now she is facing a disciplinary hearing for wrong entries regarding her leave and other stuff. My friend now does not know how to deal with it while her colleagues rejoice about it. She feels they must wait on the outcome of the hearing to display their feelings. Did the boss really do it?*

Wrongdoing has become so much part of our lives in SA that corruption has become a household word. On all levels of society we are confronted by one or the other form of it. The worst part of it is that we sometimes do not know where to stand with it or how to handle it. The claws of wrongdoing go deep and threaten our own choices and ways of dealing with such situations. It begins to divide us, our friendships and families and communities and country into those who have accepted and even love it, over against those who are trying to fight it.

Our text is clear: *Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing!* Or let us rephrase it in its proper perspective: *God does not rejoice in wrongdoing!* We know our God is a God of love. And in HIM there is no wrongdoing. God is pure love and in pure love there can never be wrongdoing. The psalmist records it as follows: *O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness... (Ps. 5v4)* So if I call myself a child of God then I must also question my susceptibility and the possible level of wrongdoing in my own life. Is it there? Is there space for wrongdoing in my life, in our lives?

The truth is that as human beings we are susceptible to the grasps of the claws of corruption and wrongdoing. We move in circles of friends and colleagues who may have been drawn into such habits and are thus either vulnerable to it or prone to be associated with such business.

The warning to us is clear in our text: ...in no way should you rejoice or appear to rejoice or condone any form of wrongdoing. Even though the easy way out in many difficult situations may point in the direction of a wrongdoing we must set our foot and mind in the opposite direction.

There was a time in our history when the phrase *Standing for the Truth* became the aim in our country. We must ask ourselves is that time something of the past or should we not regularly revisit the seriousness and intentions of it. It is perhaps serious enough if we hear the text calls us to *Rejoice with the Truth*. Standing for the truth in many ways equates the principle of *Doing what is Right*. Set your mind, your heart, your spirit on what is right and you will find yourself on the path our Lord Jesus Christ trod and wants to walk with us.

***Sing together or learn it: Beloved, let us love one another... 1 John 4v7&8***

***Prayer: Dear Lord, your people are seriously seeking your guidance amidst a flood of sadness produced by the scourge of corruption and evil doing threatening our livelihood and love for you. May our love for you grow in leaps and bounds to make this year a special year for us all! Amen.***

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**DAY SIX: LOVE, THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL GIFT CALLS FOR ACTION:  
1 Corinthians 13:13 Luke 10:29—37**

Dear brothers and sisters, dear reader, the Good Samaritan Parable is a popular and powerful New Testament Bible story that teaches the foundation of what it means to live a Christian life. The parable is about showing practical love or to put it differently to put love into action. You know the purpose of the church is to reach out with hope and healing to a hurting world, to reach out with the love of Christ and show some practical love.

What does it mean to show practical love? It means we cannot ignore a hurting world. The traveler, a Jew, was injured, he was attacked while going to Jerusalem, left with no money, stripped with no clothing and beaten with severe injuries. He was in need of help, love and compassion. The priest saw the man and went on by. How amazing that a man who was to work for the welfare of people ignored this man in need. His focus was more on the duty of religion than on devotion to God. The Levite approached the man but decided not to act. Assisting the man in need, in pain was too much trouble and the Levite continued on his way. But just notice the love that the Samaritan shows to this man in need. If you read the parable carefully you will see that in verse 33 -35 there's verb after verb after verb. I think there are eleven verbs, describing what the Samaritan does for this man. This isn't love as a sentimental feeling, this is love in action. The Samaritan reached out to this man when no one else would do so. He went out of his way to help this total stranger. He could have done just enough to get the man some help. However, we see the Samaritan going the extra mile for this complete stranger. He personally cared for the man and nursed him back to a better point of health, did all he could to help the injured traveler. This is indeed love in action.

You know our Lord Jesus Christ sets a model for active love and compassion for us to follow. Everywhere That Jesus went He showed compassion on everyone, even those who rejected Him. (Read: hew 9:36). Jesus showed compassion on those who needed it most. He ate with tax collectors. He touched lepers to heal them. He openly associated with sinners. He openly loved people. We are to also show an active compassion. We are to follow the example set by Christ. We are to show mercy and compassion on those who are hurting and helpless. We are to reach out to this hurting world. We have been called to go and make a difference.

Beloved in Christ, practical love is love that goes into the world and finds people where people are in life. Practical love is powerful! It makes a dramatic impact on a dying world. The spiritual lesson of Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan is as relevant today as it was more than two thousand years ago. We are called to help those in need, EVEN IF. We are called to help even if the person is Jewish and we're Samaritans, even if the person doesn't look like us, speak our language, or believe in our God. We're called to help even if the person has snubbed or hurt us. This challenge was no easier for those who heard Jesus speak the words than it is for us today. If it seems to be an impossible task, remember that with God all things are possible! (Matthew 19:26). Jesus issued a strong challenge to those who hear this parable; go and do likewise. Jesus is still calling us to go and do. Now is the time to rise and respond to the challenge. Amen!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, you are the source of love and you command us to love each other. Help us to be not only hearers of your Word but also doers. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

***IF YOU CAN'T FEED A HUNDRED PEOPLE, FEED JUST ONE.  
LOVE HAS TO PUT INTO ACTION AND THAT ACTION IS SERVICE.***

***Mother Teresa***