

Love Is Not Provoked

I Corinthians 13:5

This morning we come to one of the more practical helps in our study of I Corinthians 13. We are going to see a solution to those times when we feel utterly out of control—emotionally.

I. Love doesn't allow another person to control my emotional reactions.

The word translated *provoke* (*paroxynomai*) means “to make sharp, sharpen” as in stir up, or stimulate, irritate, provoke, arouse to anger, exasperate—any number of emotions.

This verse is translated “**is not easily provoked**” (KJV), “**is not provoked**” (NASB, NKJV), “**is not irritable**” (ESV), “**does not get upset with others**” (NCV). It's used **only** 4 times in the NT.

1. *There was such a **sharp disagreement** that they separated from one another* (Acts 15:39).

2. *While Paul was waiting for them at Athens, **his spirit was being provoked within him** as he was observing the city full of idols* (Acts 17:16). Jesus feels this in the Temple.

3. *Let us **provoke** one another to love and do good works* (Hebrews 10:24).

II. Whenever I allow another to control my emotions, something is revealed *in* me.

So, what does it say when we are out of control? What is going on when we are yelling and screaming (or smoldering) at another? What is being revealed when we angrily and often abusively insult? It reveals quite a bit—not about the other person, but about you and me!

A. My lack of knowing that I am loved and enjoyed by my Father above.

Cain's anger with Abel illustrates Cain's out of kilter relationship with God (Genesis 4:15).

B. My lack of contentment in eternal things and seeking significance in earthly things.

Joseph's brother's anger over Joseph's coat illustrates *their* neediness (Genesis 37:4).

C. My lack of strength as a giver and a healer and my neediness as a taker.

When the people rejected Saul in favor of David, Saul sought David's life (I Sam. 18:7-11).

III. When my emotions are out of control, there is a way for us to get them under control.

One of the points we have emphasized in our study is that “love” describes who a Christian is. There may be some who listen to the words of Paul and say, “Could I not be at all saved?” “Beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:14).

A. Determine my most vulnerable point – those places where someone can “push my buttons.” “What is desired in a man is steadfast love” (Proverbs 19:22).

B. Develop the habit of always turning to the steadfast love of God (Psalm 33:20-22).

“God hand-delivers a bouquet to your door every day. Open it! Take them! Then, when rejections come, you won't be left short-petaled” Max Lucado.

C. Delight in knowing and understanding others – put your focus on them, not you.

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city” (Pr. 16:32). “The Lord heals all our diseases even our anger” (Ps. 103:2-4).

I can't keep others from rejecting me, but I can keep rejections from enraging me.