

# Charity—Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself—Some Principles, Ideas, & Precepts

## 1 Corinthians 13 — Mistranslations?

**Hugh W. Nibley**, Chapter 8 “The Prophets and Gnostics,” *The World & the Prophets*, 57ff (1<sup>st</sup> edition), 63ff (1987 edition). ... In this great revolution of the second century, the whole orientation of the church changed completely. What brought this about? It was the ceasing of prophetic voices. The continuing demand in the church for the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, gave rise to an army of quacks and fakirs who, though discredited in time, left their mark permanently and conspicuously on the Christian church. These were the gnostics, so-called.

Paul had prophesied that “... whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” (1 Cor 13:8.) Here the so-called original text uses the identical word for the failing of prophecies and the vanishing of knowledge, *katargethesestbai*, “to be taken out of circulation,” “to be made inoperative,” used both times in the future indicative. There is no sense of contingency here [not “It’s possible, but unlikely” or “It might disappear by chance” or “It’s conditional — maybe or maybe not.”]; the whole statement is simple and emphatic: “Such prophecies as there are shall be stopped; such tongues as there are shall be made to cease (*pausontai*); such gnosis as there is shall be done away with.”

These gifts were not simply to fade away; they were going to be taken away. They were already weak enough: We have these gifts now only in a limited form, Paul explains in the following verses, and then he makes the significant remark: But for the present time there remains “faith, hope, and love, these three.”

The colorless “and now” of the King James is not fair to the emphatic *nuni de*, “but at this time” of the “original,” and while the “abideth” of our English [KJV] Bible emphasizes the quality of lasting and reliable firmness, the original *menei* does not mean “to be firm” at all, but simply to stay behind [**linger**, float; “charity lingers behind”]. The emphatic “these three” that remain is in obvious contrast to the three that are going to be taken away, namely, the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues and the *gnosis*—the greatest gift of all. [See D&C 14:7; 132:20-25; Jn 17:3.]

*Gnosis* means that act of knowing, and in some contexts it can be translated simply as “knowledge.” But not when Paul uses it! His frequent use of the word leaves us in no doubt as to what it conveyed to the early Christians. For them it was exactly what we would translate as “a testimony of the gospel.”

“But I think any price is worth paying for the supreme value of the *gnosis* of Christ Jesus my Lord,” writes Paul to the Philippians (see 3:8), “for which I have sacrificed everything,

counting all but dung in comparison with acquiring Christ as my fortune.”

How often we have heard such expressions as that—“I would not exchange my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ for all the wealth in the world!” “God ... hath shined in our hearts, in proportion to the illumination of the *gnosis* of the glory of God in the face of Christ,” he writes to the Corinthians (see 2 Cor 4:6).

Our spiritual weapons, he tells them (see 10:6), “cast down every high thing raised up against the *gnosis* of God, abolishing *logismoi* (human calculations) and bringing every *noema* (argument, reasoning) into conformity with obedience to Jesus Christ.” Here we see that *gnosis* is not the normal fruit of human thought or reason or research — it confounds these *logismoi* and *noemata*. “I am an ordinary man,” says Paul, “as far as *logos* (that is, education, mental power) is concerned, but I am certainly *not* such with regard to the *gnosis*.” “How can I help you,” he says again to the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 14:6), “if I don’t speak to you in revelation or in *gnosis*, or in prophecy, or *didache* (inspired teaching)?” [Note: he makes no mention of charity as an element of his help.] Here the *gnosis* is plainly the knowledge **acquired only by revelation** and not in ordinary ways.

Paul reminds the Colossians (2:3) that the *gnosis* is “hidden away,” and that not everyone has it who claims to. This is the famous “science falsely so-called” of 1 Tim 6:20, where Timothy is really told to avoid arguing with those who claim to have the *gnosis* but don’t have it. [They claim to have testimonies but really do not.]

### Other considerations:

#### I Corinthians 13:4-6

Suffereth long = patient  
kind = constructive  
envieth not = not possessive; the heart is not set on worldly things; does not covet  
not puffed up = not anxious to impress anybody; not proud  
seeketh not her own = not worried about self-esteem (meek);  
does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance  
not provoked = not touchy  
thinketh no evil = does not keep account of sins; not happy when someone sins

Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Cor 12:31. I say unto you, Nay; for **I have shown** [in the list of gifts of the Spirit given **before** talking about charity] you a more excellent way, therefore covet earnestly the best gifts.

## Ways to Obtain Charity — A Gift

**Joseph Fielding Smith**, *Ensign*, Dec 1971, 27 (Conference Report). All my life I have studied and pondered the principles of the gospel and sought to live the laws of the Lord. As a result there has come into my heart a great love for him and for his work and for all those who seek to further his purposes in the earth.

**David A. Bednar**, “The Character of Christ,” BYU-Idaho Religion Symposium, January 25, 2003, 7. I noted earlier in my remarks that the letters A, C, and T form a central component in the word **character**. Also noteworthy is the similarity between the words *character* and *charity* — as both words contain the letters C, H, A, and R. Etymologically there is no relationship between these two words. Nevertheless, I believe there are several conceptual connections that are important for us to consider and ponder.

Let me suggest that you and I must be praying and yearning and striving and working to cultivate a Christlike character if we if we hope to receive the spiritual **gift** of charity — the pure love of Christ. **Charity is not a trait or characteristic we acquire exclusively through our own purposive persistence and determination.** Indeed we must honor our covenants and live worthily and do all that we can do to qualify for the **gift**; but ultimately the **gift of charity possesses us — we do not possess it** (see Moro 7:47). **The Lord determines if and when we receive all spiritual gifts**, but we must do all in our power to desire and yearn and invite and qualify for such **gifts**. As we increasingly act in a manner congruent with the character of Christ, then perhaps we are indicating to heaven in a most powerful manner our desire for the supernal **gift** of charity. And clearly we are being blessed with this marvelous **gift** as we increasingly reach outward when the natural man or woman in us would typically turn inward.

I conclude now by returning to where I began — the statement by Elder Maxwell in that special training session last September: “There would have been no Atonement except for the character of Christ.” It was the Prophet Joseph Smith who stated that “it is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345).

**Joseph Smith**, *et al*, *History of the Church* 3:304. There is a love **from** God that should be exercised toward those of our faith, who walk uprightly, which is **peculiar to itself**, but it is without prejudice.

**Joseph Smith**, *Teachings of the Prophet JS*, 9. Until we have perfect love we are liable to fall and when we have a testimony that our names are sealed in the Lamb’s book of life, we have perfect love and then it is impossible for false Christs to deceive us ... [Perfect loves comes after calling & election is made sure.]

Moroni 7:48. Pray (ask) for it (charity).

Moroni 8:25-26. Before one can have charity (pure love), one must be baptized, keep the commandments, have one’s sins remitted, be meek, and have the gift of the Holy Ghost.

**Joseph B. Wirthlin**, CR, *Ensign*, Nov 1998, 26. Note that charity is given only to those who seek it, only to those who earnestly pray for it, only to those who are disciples of Christ.

## What Charity Is — And Applying It

**Eldin Ricks**, *The New Era*, Apr 1977, 8. Bible lexicons define charity as love (Greek: agape), and the Book of Mormon explains that the love Christ has **for** the human family is charity. (Ether 12:34.) ...

**Robert L. Millet**, “BYU as a Covenant Community: Implications for Excellence, Distinctiveness, and Academic Freedom,” BYU 29 Oct 1992, 24. We yield to such [secular] temptations when we speak only of goodness and fellowship, when our religious enterprises are more ecumenical than enduring, when our sermons and lessons deal with ethics more than doctrine, when we talk in terms of being “men and women of faith” rather than of persons committed to and indoctrinated in the work of Joseph Smith and his successors. We open ourselves thereby to the pull of a social program and relinquish our hold on a redemptive gospel, thereby participating in our own undoing.”

**Elder Delbert L. Stapley**, “The Value of Love,” *Conference Report*, October 1970, 44-47. My brothers and sisters and friends: The scriptures teach us that our God is a God of love. It is the greatest thing God can give us and the greatest thing we can give him. The true measure of loving God is to love him without measure. His love toward us was manifested when he sent his Only Begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. (See 1 John 4:9.)

A degree of the love between the Eternal Father and his Only Begotten Son has existed between other fathers and sons. We should not feel that such love is beyond our ability to receive and to give. We may not be able to match the perfect love shown to us by the Savior, because Christ is the epitome of this God-given quality, but it is a goal toward which all of us should strive.

**Need of the world.** The most important need of the world today to remedy its follies and problems is for man to return to God in love and obedience to his will. Without love, the world will continue in turmoil with worsening conditions until it is steeped in wickedness and sin, at which time the judgments of God will fall upon the unrighteous of the earth. The cures for all the ills and wrongs, the cares, the sorrows, and the crimes of humanity lie in one word—love.

Love, if used in its proper context, will hold the peoples of the world together in understanding and peace. Today the most trampled-upon ingredient for a happy and joyous life is the word love. If the tender, profound, and sympathizing love practiced and recommended by Jesus were paramount in every heart, the loftiest and most glorious ideals of human society would be realized and little would be wanting to make this world a kingdom of heaven. Love is indeed heaven upon the earth, since heaven above would not be heaven without it.

**What love is.** The apostle Paul calls love the bond of perfection and peace. It is the old, the new, and the great commandment, for love is the fulfilling of the law. Love is manifest in charity of the soul. It is made up of many things, all of which lead to a high

idealism in standards of living, personal behavior, and purpose. It is expressed in Christlike example, in words, in actions, in thoughtful attentions and kindly deeds.

Love is not real when one demands attentions and fancied needs, then is not appreciative of them and gives nothing in return for the favors received. That attitude is one of pure selfishness and reflects a lack of gratitude, decency, and respect. Such a person is self-centered and cares not for his failure to acknowledge courtesy or express thanks and appreciation.

Love is the purification of the heart. It strengthens character and gives a higher motive and a positive aim to every action of life. The power to love truly and devotedly is the noblest gift with which a human being can be endowed. True love is eternal and infinite. It is equal and pure without violent actions and demonstrations, which are so much in evidence today....

**Love begins in the home.** Love begins in the home by congenial parents bestowing affection and loving care upon their children. They deal in kindness and understanding, seeking the love and confidence of their sons and daughters. They also show concern about the welfare and happiness of their children. The apostle Paul gave this wise counsel: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. 5:8.)

Physical and temporal needs for children do not fulfill their most pressing wants. Parents' righteous teachings and good example are so important. The family should be unified by a close-knit relationship, doing things together, loving each other, and enjoying each other's companionship. The first emotion a child learns and needs is love. The first emotion he expresses is love. A child reacts to love—or to the lack of it. What is sweeter than having a child put his arms around your neck and saying, "I love you." Love is the real basis of life.

**Insecurity of children.** If parents are immature and cannot settle their differences without anger, fighting, and name-calling, a child becomes most insecure, and as he grows older he is apt to take up with the wrong type of friends just to get away from an unhappy home environment. Let us look at some undesirable things that can happen when a growing child feels unloved and neglected at home. He is often found with questionable companions — persons with lower standards than his own — simply to feel that he is somebody. Unfortunately, that person rarely brings others up to his standards of living, but usually lowers himself to the level of his so-called friends.

Girls particularly who feel unloved are more willing to give of themselves to the smooth-talking boy. They will sacrifice chastity just to get love. Where does the real blame of this tragedy belong — with the girl who so desperately needs to be loved or with the parents who failed in their responsibility to make their love known to her? And what about the boy? What kind of teaching and love has he received in his home? How will he treat and protect the girls he dates, as a result of his home life?

When children are left to fend for themselves, it often destroys the spiritual and orderly environment of the home. If children

feel that their parents really care, they will respond to their wishes. When there is mutual love and respect in the home, there is a desire to please. Girls and boys would probably dress in a more modest way if they felt their parents cared about how they look.

**Lack of dress standards.** Recently in Australia I noticed most of the girls were wearing extremely short miniskirts that left nothing to the imagination. The appearance was most immodest and scandalous, but the girls seemed unashamed, unembarrassed, and at perfect ease. Obviously these girls have no one interested enough to guide them in their mode of dress. Perhaps it is because their mothers also are clad in miniskirts and fail to set a personal example of modesty. These same conditions prevail also in our own country.

Shortly after the miniskirt came into vogue, a woman dress designer was asked in a radio interview if the miniskirt was contributing to the moral delinquency of young girls. She answered with a positive yes. The statistics of unwed mothers has proved this statement to be true. Will mothers and daughters continue to wear immodest clothing, or is it time to get out the sewing machine and attire themselves in respectable standards of dress?

A family discussion of dress standards in a weekly family home evening could change these improper dress styles to those of modesty — and this applies to boys as well as girls. In the spirit of love and wise parental teaching, many of the problems of today's youth can be corrected.

**Responsibility of parents.** Former President Joseph F. Smith gave this warning: "... parents in Zion will be held responsible for the acts of their children, not only until they become eight years old, but, perhaps throughout all the lives of their children, provided they have neglected their duty while they were under their guidance..." (*Gospel Doctrine*, [1966], 286.)

Often the duty parents neglect is failure to correct and discipline their children. Permissiveness does not show love—nor can you buy a child's love. You cannot ignore his misdeeds and let them go unnoticed. When a child does wrong, he should expect to be punished accordingly. However, this should not be done in anger. Often a parent can better communicate with his child following the punishment. A loving arm about the child manifests the love the parent feels, and often opens the door of communication between them. When children are ready to talk, that is the time for parents to listen, regardless of the hour. Solomon counseled:

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. (Prov. 3:11–12.)

**Unsupervised activities.** When parents think only of their own pleasures and friends, where does this leave the child? When they endeavor to keep their "social standing," the child is left alone while parents participate in other activities away from home. They give the child full use of the home with all kinds of refreshments and feel that if the child has some of his friends in, it can compensate for their not being with him.

Then what happens? Children are alone for an evening—often until the wee hours of the morning. What do they do when they get bored? The answer may shock and upset many neglectful parents.

**Mutual service.** Our beloved late President David O. McKay has said: “Another element which makes for a happy home life is mutual service, each member of the home working for the other...” (*Treasures of Life* [Desert Book Co., 1965], 330.) That home is most beautiful in which you find each person striving to serve the other. A child has the right to feel that in his home he has a place of refuge, a place of protection from the dangers and evils of the outside world. Family unity and integrity are necessary to supply this need. He needs parents who are happy in their adjustment to each other, who are working happily toward the fulfillment of an ideal of living, who love their children with a sincere and unselfish love; in short, who are well-balanced individuals, gifted with a certain amount of insight, who are able to provide the child with a wholesome emotional background which will contribute more to his development than material advantages.

**No real home without love.** One of the soundest and safest bulwarks of society that is being undermined today is the family. Modern life is disintegrating the very foundation of the home. In the well-ordered home, where confidence and love abide you will find life at its best. There is no real home without love. Homes are made permanent through love. “Love, it has been said, flows downward. The love of parents for their children has always been far more powerful than that of children for their parents; and who among the sons of men ever loved God with a thousandth part of the love which God has manifested to us?” (Hare.)

Parents and youth are forgetting what pure love really means. The meaning has not changed; but, like so many other virtues accepted as essential to proper standards of behavior, it is being chipped away until the real meaning is so adulterated that hate is becoming more and more a substitute.

**Breaking of marriage vows.** How can a man or woman say they love each other and become sexually involved with someone else? How is it that by our actions we hurt those whom we should love the most? What about parents who break up their homes? Who suffers most, the parents or the children? The selfishness of some people is appalling. The breaking of marriage vows and covenants does not seem to be significant or meaningful.

It is most important that parents remain together and hold their family in an ideal relationship. Parents, do not fail to hold the weekly family home evening. It will draw your children closer to you and you to them. Pray with your family. Establish the traditions of righteousness in your home. Develop love, companionship, and unity. Watch trends — are they up or down? Remember, where family ends, delinquency begins.

How blessed is the family where love abides. How blessed are the children whose fondest memories are those of a happy childhood and youth. Parents, take time to give your children these happy years and happy memories. The world is moving

fast. The pressure upon one’s time is consuming. Many fathers neglect families. Working mothers with children at home do likewise. Find the time to do things together as a family.

**Charge from devoted mother.** I wish to share with you, in part, a testimony of Sister Davidina Bailey, a devoted mother, looking into the future for the care, welfare, direction, and happiness of her children. This was written 16 years before her death this past July. It is a most beautiful tribute from a mother who truly loved her children.

“I have lain awake tonight and cannot sleep, which is unusual for me as I am a good sleeper. I wish to leave this message to you, my children... If you love me ... keep the commandments of God, for my sake, if not for your own, as I would want you to be with me unto whatsoever glory your father and I attain to.

“I charge you . . . do not stray from this gospel if I am not here to look after you in this life. Do not be jealous of one another, as I have loved you all the same. I have tried to be fair to all of you... Do not reprove each other... Do not look for worldly pleasures. Be alert to the powers of Satan and his angels, for his power is mighty and not to be forgotten.

“Always remember, I love you all. You are the spirit children of God. Your father and I have been entrusted in this mortal life to be your parents, so live that we can once again be a family throughout the eternities.”

**Prayer for parents and children.** May God grant us parents the love, wisdom, and good judgment to plan effectively for the care, welfare, and happiness of our children. May we help them to live righteously, to love truth, and to do good. May God bless youth to follow the wise teachings of loving and exemplary parents and all live together in understanding, harmony, and peace. I humbly pray, my brothers and sisters, that we shall teach the gospel, its principles, its standards, its ideals to our children, and set the kind of example that we can say to them, “Come, follow me and do the things you have seen me do.”

I love the Church. I know it is true. I know the gospel is the plan of life the Lord has given to guide and direct us as we meet all the conditions present in the world today. May he keep us firm and steadfast and true in the path of righteousness, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Orson Pratt,** *Masterful Discourses of Orson Pratt*, 281-283. The Universalists think they are very charitable. Why? Because they send all to heaven, whether they are good or evil, saints or sinners. Murderers drunkards and all classes of society are to dwell together in heaven. [A necessary outcome of unconditional love.] And what a heaven it would be! Methodists contending against Baptists, and Baptists against Methodists, Presbyterians against Quakers, Roman Catholics against Protestants, and Nothingarian against Sectarians, and Sectarians against Nothingarians; and then add to the whole catalogue of contending sects, drunkards, blasphemers, whoremongers, murderers, and every species of wicked beings, all jumbled up together. Ah, what a happy place! Brother Kimball says: “And all of them with a revolver and bowie knife at their sides.”

I think I should pray for an outside corner without the walls. I should want to get at a great distance from such a heterogeneous mass. **They call this charity; but it is different from the charity which dwells in the bosom of God. I do not think he has charity enough to associate with a company of this description.** But the Latter-day Saints have their Church founded on true principles, law, and order — principles revealed from heaven, that all on the earth, and in the eternal worlds may be saved on pure principles, and pure principles only. If they ever inherit the kingdom of God, they must go there with hearts as pure as the angels of God; if they dwell in his presence, they must be pure as he is pure, perfect as he is perfect, that the holy order of heaven may be graced with all the perfection, holiness, and godliness of character that we read of in the Scriptures of eternal truth. Such a heaven will be a heaven indeed. It is the goodness and virtue of beings that inherit such a place which make it desirable.

You select a place that is surrounded with many disadvantages, like these deserts and mountain wilds, and place a people perfectly organized and influenced by the Holy Ghost, in all things, doing unto others as they would have others do to them in everything, meting out justice on the principles of righteousness and truth; and let everyone be perfectly honest in his dealings, and let his hands be continually stayed from stealing other people's property, and let there be no quarreling or evil speaking, and if such a people do have to toil and labor in the midst of these mountains and canyons, yet they are happy; they carry heaven in their own bosoms, or the principles that make happiness abide within them. When these Godlike principles become more fully developed — when the Saints become more rooted and grounded in them, and enter into the eternal worlds and find everybody there, like themselves, pure in heart, it will make a perfect heaven. You place the wicked there, with all their abominations, and it will transfer from heaven into hell.

**C. S. Lewis**, *That Hideous Strength* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1946, 1977), 323. And now it came. It was fiery, sharp, bright and ruthless, ready to kill, ready to die, outspeeding light: it was Charity, not as mortals imagine it, not even as it has been humanised for them since the Incarnation of the Word, but the translunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated. They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it would burn their bones. They could not bear that it should continue. They could not bear that it should cease.

*Church News*, Editorial Page, 29 Jan 1977, 16. As the Savior talked with His disciples in ancient America He asked them: "What manner of men ought ye to be?" He then answered: "Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Ne 27:27.)

He taught similar doctrine in Palestine and urged that His followers do the works that He did, even greater works. In the Sermon on the Mount He taught that we should become perfect, even as our Father in Heaven. These were not idle words. The Savior did not so indulge. He was earnest in His teachings. Of a truth we must become Christlike to gain our exaltation.

But that is no easy matter. To become Christlike is to develop traits of character like His, and do so without reservations, but with whole heart and soul. That is why the first and great commandment is so strict. That too is why the Lord expressed it in terms of service as He did in the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

But the Lord said the second commandment is of like importance to the first. We must learn to live with other people in love and honor and harmony. The apostle of old asked how we can say we love God if we hate our brother here on earth. (1 Jn 4:20.)

The Lord has given us a law which helps us to understand and to implement the second great commandment. It is the Golden Rule — to do to others as we would be done by.

How many of us regard that as a commandment in the same sense as the law of tithing, or of the Sabbath, or even as the moral laws? And yet it is just that. To become perfect like God is a commandment. It is in fact the only way to eternal progress. Is not that the goal of our existence, the very purpose of the gospel?

But how can we become perfect like God if we do not have proper relationships with our fellowmen? The second great commandment is like unto the first. If we love not our fellowmen we love not God, the scriptures teach and if we love not God, can we claim salvation in his presence?

How can we determine if in fact we do love our neighbors as ourselves? The measuring rod is the Golden Rule. It will show us wherein we are short. What if each person in all he did actually treated others as he would like them to treat him? Would it be difficult? It would. But would it be rewarding? Would it show up our weaknesses? What self-discipline it would require!

But how else can we learn to love our neighbor as we love ourselves if we do not relate to him as we would expect to be considered in return? This law is a great schoolmaster which the Lord has given us. He expects us to use it. Can we become Christlike without its lessons and discipline? "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, Even as I am."

Vigen Guroian, "G. K. Chesterton: Rallying the Really Human Things," *The Intercollegiate Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Fall 2002, 29. Consider the Christian virtue of charity, for example [of virtues gone wild, disconnected from Christendom]. Instead of the selfless seeking of another's good, charity becomes sugary sentiment. It is invoked to deny that forgiveness entails judgment and repentance, or that sin even exists.