

THE THEOLOGY OF LOVE Introduction Part I
“Just exactly what is love anyway?”
 Reference: **I Corinthians 13:1-13**
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Summum bonum is a Latin phrase that means “the _____.” Based on that definition, love should be the summum bonum of our entire human existence.

Jesus summarized all human interpersonal responsibilities into dual commandments: love _____ and love _____.

Reference: **Matthew 22:35-40** and **I John 4:7, 8** (see screen)

Most people isolate these verses on love from their actual textual context and in doing that radically understate the importance of this concept. These incredible insightful comments on love are actually found in between the middle of Paul’s discussion on spiritual gifts in **I Corinthians chapters twelve and fourteen**.

Definition: Spiritual gifts are specialized abilities the Holy Spirit generates in and through someone that enables that person to minister to _____.

Reference: **I Corinthians 12:7** (see screen)

Most Christians don’t understand that God actually exercises His sovereign prerogative and assigns to us at our salvation the different gifts **He wants us to have**.

Reference: **I Corinthians 12:11** and **I Peter 4:10** (see screen)

This section on love actually begins at the last verse of the preceding chapter (**I Corinthians 12:31**) and understanding that verse is critical to understanding this section on love.



Reference: **I Corinthians 12:31**, *“But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”*

The Greek verb that is translated as *“earnestly desire”* can mean either a _____ to the Corinthians (the imperative mood) or it might mean a statement of fact that was describing something that was _____ about the Corinthians (the indicative mood).

To complicate the problem the grammatical form (imperative or indicative mood) in the Greek language permits either meaning; so, it is essential that we understand the larger textual context (**I Corinthians 12:1-14:40**) in order to know which case it might be. Is this verse in the imperative or indicative mood?

There’s ample textual evidence in **I Corinthians chapter twelve** to justify interpreting this statement in an _____ sense and that’s the reason Paul said in the second half of **verse thirty-one**, *“And yet I show you a more excellent way.”*

The *“more excellent way”* was for these Corinthians to be satisfied using the spiritual gifts God had assigned them and then to exercise those gifts in _____. Then **I Corinthians chapter thirteen** goes on to describe love.

To correspond to our singular word love in the English language the ancient Greeks had four words:

- **Eros** described a _____ love.
- **Storge** described the _____ parents feel toward their children and grandchildren.
- **Philia** described a psychological and social love; i.e. _____.
- **Agape** described the _____ form of love.

Reference: **John 15:13**, *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”*

Definition: Agape love is a _____ - _____ act we do for someone else.

Remember that an attitude _____ an act and that means agape love is an external action that is the resulting fulfillment of an internal attitude.

Reference: **Matthew 23:28** (see screen)