

**THE BIG IDEA:** With the gifts, love is more of a filing than a feeling.

### The Take-Off

Can I have 5 volunteers?

I promise you won't get messy and you'll probably be very glad you volunteered once you find out what you volunteered for!

All I need you guys to do is stand here and demonstrate how you eat an Oreo cookie. We've even provided some milk in case you need it for dunking.

[Allow time for eating, then thank them as they head off the platform]

This morning, I think that the church can learn a lot from Oreos.

In fact, I think that 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 is just like an Oreo, and while we're not in the middle of the series, I think that it's the perfect time to tackle the cream in the middle of that cookie.

That would be the love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13.

Let me say something right off the bat that will make every first-born and last-born children mad: sometimes, it's what's in the middle that makes all the difference.

And all the middle children said, "AMEN!!!!!"

Think for a minute about all the things that happen in the middle that are extremely important:

- halftime
- the 7th inning stretch (not really the middle, but you get the idea)
- the dash in your lifetime (1966 - ???)
- Middle Earth
- the creme in the Oreo (and it's even better when it's double stuffed!!)
- 1 Corinthians 13

But what I hope we can see this morning is that while the middle matters, it only matters because something comes before and after it.

So halftime isn't more important than the first or second halves anymore than chapter 13 is more important than chapters 12 or 14.

What's important is that they all work together to make something incredible, and that's what we've got to make sure that we learn this morning from Oreos.

### **1. The cookie part is good**

- a. We've done a lot of talking over the last few weeks about the cookie part of the Oreo, and we'll do more as we go forward
- b. The cookie part of the Oreo represents the gifts, and as we've found out over the last 2 Sundays, the gifts are great, but they require a good bit of chewing!
- c. Paul spends a lot of time on this in chapters 12 and 14, and we'll come back to them, but there's something amazing right in the middle of these 2 cookie chapters, and that's what I want to spend the majority of our time on today.

### **2. But that middle part is...WOW!**

- a. We argue about all kinds of things, don't we?
- b. We argue about favorite teams, about what color a dress is (even though it's obviously white and gold)
- c. And while we may argue about what the best part of the Oreo cookie is, Paul doesn't leave us that luxury when it comes to the cookie in 1 Corinthians
- d. He begins and ends chapter 13 saying the same thing: the middle is where the magic happens!
  - a. Begins with "now I will show you the most excellent way"
  - b. Ends with "the greatest of these is love"
- e. It's become very popular in social media to debate who the GOATs are in a particular sport or at a particular position
- f. When it comes to the fruit of the Spirit, love is the GOAT
- g. Like the creme in the Oreo cookie that holds the 2 crackers together, love is the creme that holds the church together as it grows in the gifts that the Helper gives us
- h. Listen to how important love is as Paul opens the chapter. The absence of love:

- a. reduces beautiful language into banging on a cymbal
- b. eliminates the advantage of knowing all and being able to do all
- c. eliminates the power of generosity and total surrender
- i. Love is a big deal!
- j. Let's take a peek at some scriptures to see what love is, and then I want to make sure we understand what love isn't.
- k. What love is:
  - a. revealed by God (1 John 4:8, 16)
  - b. generous (John 3:16)
  - c. sacrificial (John 15:13)
  - d. a motivator (1 Cor, 16:14)
  - e. a covering for sin (1 Peter 4:8; Colossians 3:14)
  - f. a covering for offenses (Proverbs 10:12)
  - g. the first fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)
- l. What love isn't:
  - a. Love isn't God (Is all we need love? Beatles thought so - used the word "love" 51 times in their hit song, but they were wrong. All we need is God who is love and who enables us to love)
  - b. Love isn't a feeling (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

### 3. What we can learn from the Oreo

- a. We know - even though we haven't studied it in depth yet - that the Helper gives gifts to the church
- b. What we don't always realize is that those gifts often cause gaps
- c. They weren't designed to, and as we'll see in the final weeks of the series, when they are functioning properly, they bring a whole lot of unity
- d. There's the gap between realizing and materializing - waiting on the gifts, seeking the gifts
- e. There's a gap between discovery and mastery - practicing and developing the gifts
- f. Those gaps are when what's in the middle matters the most
- g. Without the filling, the Oreo is just another cookie; dry, crumbly
- h. If we just focus on the gifts, we can get that way, too
- i. But if the creme was all there was to the Oreo, it's mushy and maybe even too rich
- j. If we just focus on love, we can get that way, too
- k. The Oreo is perfect because the creme fills the gap and holds it all together
- l. That's what love does

### The Landing

The Big Idea: with the gifts, **love is more of a filling than a feeling.**

Colossians 3:14 - love binds everything together in PERFECT unity!!

So if you're in the gap between learning about the gifts and living with the gifts, let God use that time to grow the fruit of love in you.

If you're in the gap between knowing your gifts and knowing how to use your gifts, use them in love among people who love you.

When we do that, we can always know - even if the gap is longer than we hoped for - that we have chosen what Paul said is the most excellent way.

Let's pray.