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# LOVE IS NOT AN "X"; Men at the Cross Devotional

JULY 18TH 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

LOVE IS NOT AN

*Reprint Compliments of Men At The Cross By Joe White*

## VIDEO OF THE DAY

**1 Corinthians 13:1-10, 13**

*1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

I opened a valentine card the other day and saw a string of X's at the bottom, accompanied by the words, "I love

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you Dad." I was touched, but it made me ask myself some questions. What is love? Psychologists tell us that without it we shrivel up and die, yet hardly one in a hundred people could give a definition of it. How is it that something so necessary is so misunderstood?

Most people who sign X's to their valentine cards are unaware that the custom goes back to the Christian era, when the cross, or "X", conveyed the force of an oath. The "X" was also the first letter in the Greek word for Christ, Xristos. Because it was a symbol associated with goodness and honor, it became an acceptable substitute whenever an illiterate man needed to sign his signature. So, in an age when few could write, the "X" began to appear on many documents. To strengthen the signature, and thus prove that he was sincere in the transaction, a man would kiss the "X"-much like witnesses used to kiss the Bible before taking the witness stand. It was this practice of "kissing the X" that led to its becoming a symbol of a kiss.

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So, an "X" is a kiss, and a kiss is love, and we've arrived at a good definition. Right? Well, not exactly. It seems easier to nail Jell-O to a tree, than to define love. Describing it as an emotion comes up short. Even if we follow the popular wisdom that says, "love is a decision", we soon admit that seemingly loving decisions are made daily by people with no more love in their hearts than a cold statue. Love must, therefore, be defined as a person, with all the traits that a loving person would possess. That Person is mentioned in 1 John 4:8, where we read that "God is love." His loving traits are found in chapter 13 of I Corinthians. Try substituting the word "God" wherever the word "love" appears, and your daily need for more of God in your life will come into focus. You will see that you need His patience, His kindness, His humility, and so forth, if you are ever going to become more loving. Be filled with God, and you will be filled with Love.

Love is not a string of X's. It is not an emotion, nor a decision, nor even an action. True love is a Person-God Himself-who must dwell so completely inside a boy or girl that it is impossible to be in their presence without feeling loved.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Read through 1 Corinthians 13 and write down all the descriptions of "love," filling in the blanks every time you come across the phrase, "love is \_\_\_\_\_."
2. How many of these descriptions are fulfilled in you? Is there one that is particularly lacking in your life? If so, which one?
3. What can you do to grow in this area of deficiency?

## LIFELINE:

Love is the most important gift you can share with others. Discuss how you can share each description of this "1 Corinthians 13 love" that Paul is telling us about.

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