

## 14. Attitudes of the Heart – Love

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Today we come to an attitude of the heart which is the most all-encompassing of the attitudes we have seen so far. If a Christian has in his heart an attitude of *love*, many of the other attitudes would naturally flow from it. Let us first consider the *primary* role that love plays in the life of a Christian.

### 1. The Primacy of Love

Love is so central to God's character that it can be simply stated that *God is love* (1 John 4:8). It was love that brought Jesus to earth (1 John 4:9; John 3:16), it was love that led him to heal multitudes (Matt 14:14), it was love that drove him to *seek and save the lost* (Matt 9:36; Luke 19:10), it was love that led him to the cross (1 John 4:10; Rom 5:8) and it is by his love that he dwells within us today (1 John 4:16; Rom 5:5). Because of love's central place in God's character, it was foundational to the teachings of Jesus Christ. So much so, that the idea of loving others became known as the "law of Christ".

📖 James 2:8. **Q.** What is the "royal law" ?

📖 Galatians 6:2. **Q.** How can we fulfill the "law of Christ"?

Christ's theme of loving was so strong and so clear that it became an evident characteristic of discipleship. Even the unsaved could observe the love among Christian brethren and immediately conclude that they must have been disciples of Christ.

📖 1 John 3:11. **Q.** What message was heard from the beginning of Christ's ministry?

📖 John 13:34-35. **Q.** What commandment did Christ give?

**Q.** What example should we follow in loving one another?

**Q.** What would be the result of our love for one another?

It is because love is so central to the character and teachings of Jesus Christ that one cannot claim to be his disciple and not also love like he loved.

📖 1 John 4:8. **Q.** What is not true about someone who does not love? Why?

📖 1 John 3:23. **Q.** What two things did John describe as “his [Christ’s] commandment”?

☝️ What does the fact that John has grouped these two things together as *one* commandment tell us about salvation and Christian love?

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The power of our testimony for Christ lies in the evidence that He has changed our lives. This change is displayed when we love others like Christ loved. This is the love that seeks the salvation of the lost, and loves the brethren even to the point of sacrifice (1 John 3:17; Php 2:4).

It is by no mistake that love is mentioned first in the list of spiritual character qualities (or fruit of the Spirit) found in Galatians 5. Paul emphasized love’s primacy again in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians:

📖 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. **Q.** The word *charity* in 1 Cor 13, is the word *Agape*, meaning *God-like love*. What things did Paul list as secondary to love?

Paul’s ultimate point was that even the best gifts, practiced without love, are useless. In Colossians 3 we read a list of great Christian virtues. At the end of this list, after Paul has listed mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, and forgiveness he again emphasizes the primacy of love.

📖 Colossians 3:14 And \_\_\_\_\_ put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Love is the virtue that binds all the rest of Christian character together. All of the fruit of the Spirit and all of the gifts of the Spirit are to be saturated with love. Without it we become empty shells, poor representatives of Christ and hurtful to his cause.

☝️ If love is so central to Christianity, what should a Christian do if he finds himself with an unloving heart?

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## 2. The Personality of Love

We have learned the importance of love, that is central to the character of God and should likewise, characterize his children. Now let's consider the *personality of love*. How does love behave? Paul answers this question in one of the most oft-quoted chapters of scripture – 1 Corinthians 13.

### a. Love is Steadfast

*1 Cor 13:4 Charity suffereth long...*

1 Corinthians 13:4 begins *Charity suffereth long*. The word here literally means to be “long tempered” or to “patiently endure”. Practically, this can be seen as one is provoked over and over again yet refuses to retaliate (1 Pet 3:9). It is this love that enables us to forgive others even when they repeatedly offend us (Matt 18:22).

📖 1 John 1:9. **Q.** How does this verse illustrate steadfast love?

True love is enduring. It is not swayed by circumstances, nor does it wear thin over time. A fleeting love is no love at all.

### b. Love is Serving

*1 Cor 13:4 Charity is kind...*

Because love is *steadfast* it endures suffering. It can take the hurts, offenses or lack of love that others dish out. Over and above longsuffering there is *kindness*. Kindness does more than endure hurts. It actively seeks to be gracious and serving toward others. More than this, true love serves even those who do not deserve to be served.

📖 Luke 6:27-36. **Q.** According to v27, who should we love?

v32-34. **Q.** What should be distinct about Christian love, compared to the love of “sinners”?

v35-36. **Q.** What will *we be* if we love our enemies like Christ instructed us in this passage? What does this mean?

v35. **Q.** Who is God kind to? \_\_\_\_\_

It is God's kindness fueled by his love that lead Him to send Jesus Christ to be our savior (Titus 3:4-6) and He did this while we were *yet sinners* (Rom 5:8). God now asks us to show the same loving kindness to others even when they do not deserve it (just as He has done for us).

### c. Love is Sincere

*1 Cor 13:4 Charity envieth not...*

Next of all in 1 Cor 13:4 we read *charity envieth not*. True love is not *jealous*. This is not speaking of being “jealous for” someone as God is for his people (Ex 20:4-5; Ex 34:14) but being jealous *of* someone. A husband or wife may be jealous *for* their spouse, meaning they want their spouse to be faithful and belong to them and them alone. This can be a healthy “jealousy” but it is not the jealousy that is spoken of here in 1 Cor 13:4. The jealousy spoken of here is always a sin and one of the most destructive sins we can commit. Proverbs 27:4 tells us *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?* Consider the following examples.

	Who was Jealous of whom?	Why were they Jealous?	What did it lead to?
📖 Luke 15:25-30			
📖 Gen 37:4, Acts 7:9			
📖 Acts 13:45			
📖 Gen 4:3-8			
📖 Matt 27:17-18			

Jealousy lead the crowd to deliver Jesus to death, Joseph’s brothers to sell him into slavery, Cain to murder his brother, the Jews to contradict and resist Paul and the prodigal’s brother to be stirred to anger. It is easy to see how devastating envy can be!

Jealousy can be a matter of wanting something that someone else has or wanting to be something that someone else is (status, acclaim, following). No matter the type of jealousy, it is rooted in pride. It is believing that we are more deserving of benefits or privileges than others. This is the complete opposite of Paul’s exhortation to *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves* (Phil 2:3).

As devastating as all envy is, there is one type of envy that is more sinister than the rest. It is the jealousy that not only says “I wish I had what they had” but goes one step lower and says “I wish they *did not have* what they have”. This is the jealousy, rooted in hate, that actually wishes ill on others. There is no possible scenario in which this type of jealousy and love could dwell in the same heart.

📖 1 Cor 12:26. **Q.** How should members of a church respond when they see another member “honoured”?

☝️ Have you ever been tempted to think negatively toward someone who has been blessed? What can you do to combat these feelings?

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#### d. Love is Self-Effacing

*1 Cor 13:4 Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...*

Love is not jealous because it is not prideful. It does not *vaunt* itself (brag), nor is it *puffed up* (arrogant). Bragging is nothing more than trying to engender jealousy in others!

📖 Prov 8:13. **Q.** If you fear the Lord, what will you hate?

📖 Prov 16:18. **Q.** What does pride lead to?

📖 Eph 2:8-9. **Q.** Why can't anyone boast of their salvation?

📖 1 Cor 1:26-29. **Q.** How did God ensure that no flesh could boast (glory) in His presence?

God despises pride so much (Prov 6:16-19; Prov 21:4) that he has arranged the salvation plan in such a way that no one can be saved and take credit for their salvation. No flesh will be able to boast or brag in the presence of God. Whenever we brag about our accomplishments we exalt ourselves and challenge God as the only one who deserves glory. (Isa 48:11)

☝️ How would a Biblical understanding of the nature of man help us to avoid bragging?

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#### e. Love is Self-Restraining

*1 Corinthians 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly...*

The word *unseemly* means “rude” or “discourteous”. Remember that Paul here is addressing the Corinthians who had much to be corrected in their church. Paul has already rebuked them for permitting an adulterous brother to continue in the church without rebuke. He went on in chapter 11 to address their disorderly worship services and their misuse of spiritual gifts in chapter 12.

 1 Cor 11:21. **Q.** What was happening when the Corinthians came together for the Lord’s Supper?

What better picture of rudeness than someone cutting in line for the best food! Oftentimes rudeness comes about as we put our needs or wants ahead of the desires of others. It seeks to ensure that we are satisfied even at the expense of other people. The Corinthians had developed a pattern of rudeness in their church. In chapter 14 we learn that even during their worship services the Corinthians were vying for the spotlight. True love is not rude but kind, gracious and considerate

 It seems like rudeness can sometimes come very naturally to us while courtesy requires extra effort. What can we do to ensure that we remember to be courteous to others?

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#### **f. Love is Self-Denying**

*1 Corinthians 13:5 Charity seeketh not her own...*


Paul goes on to say that love *seeketh not her own*. That is, it is not selfish but concerned about the wellbeing of others.

 1 Cor 10:23-24. **Q.** In this passage Paul indicates that “all things are lawful” for him. What was more important to him than whether or not something was lawful?

**Q.** If we are less concerned about our rights and what we are “allowed” to do, what will the result be? (v24)

 Php 2:3-4. **Q.** If we, through humility, esteem others as better than ourselves what will we do?


Someone who is overly concerned with their “rights” is likely to overlook the needs of others while he fulfills his own desires. In Romans 14 Paul tells us that he would be willing to forgo eating all meat if it meant protecting his weaker brethren from offense. True love is willing to deny itself for the betterment of others.

 1 Cor 6:7-8. **Q.** Once again, the Corinthians serve as an example of *how not to* love. What

were they doing to one another?

**Q.** What did Paul say they should rather have done?

The Corinthians were so concerned with their rights and what was rightfully “owed” them that they had a habit of taking one another to court! A loving attitude would have taken a loss before it did anything to harm his brother.


 Matt 20:28. **Q.** Jesus did not come to earth to be served. Why did he come? How did he do this?

God is love and Christ is God in the flesh. He is our perfect example of love. Not only did he display his love by dying on the cross for us, but his entire life is an example of how to deny ourselves and how to serve others.

**g. Love is Serene**


*1 Corinthians 13:5 Charity is not easily provoked...*

Have you ever found yourself short-tempered with others or prone to outbursts of emotion? Another characteristic of love is that it is *not easily provoked*. The book of Proverbs praises those who are slow to anger and has few kind things to say about a man who is angered easily:


 Prov 16:32. **Q.** Who is better than the mighty? Who is better than one that “takes a city”?

Who are the successful ones in this life? Generally those who outpace their competition, defeat their enemies or who rule over others. Proverbs tells us that God has a different measure of success. The one who controls *himself* is far greater than the one who rules others.

Prov 25:28 says *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls*. A person who is angered quickly is susceptible to all kinds of provocation. He allows himself to be severely affected by even small irritations. His spirit is like a city that has all kinds of enemies coming and going as they please and leaving destruction in their wake.

 Prov 14:17. **Q.** How does someone act who has a quick temper?

A man who loses his temper makes a fool of himself. He shows others that he has no control over his emotions. His outburst may last only a few moments, but his reputation for behaving foolishly takes much longer to fade.

 Have you ever witnessed someone severely lose their temper? What did you think of them at that time?

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📖 Proverbs 22:24-25. **Q.** What should you not do with an angry or furious man?

**Q.** Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

These proverbs teach us that a quick tempered man is *inferior* (16:32), *foolish* (14:17), and *friendless* (22:24-25)! On the other hand being slow to anger is a virtue to be praised.

📖 James 1:19. **Q.** What three things does James encourage us to do?

How many altercations could be avoided if we learned to be quick to listen to what others are saying and slow to offer our opinion! Listening to others involves understanding their position or seeing things from their perspective. Love is quick to consider what others are saying and slow to speak it's mind.

It may be that we have suffered a legitimate hurt or offense. Are we then justified to respond in anger? Proverbs 19:11 tells us *The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression*. The word “defers” here brings with it the idea “to prolong”. As we have already learned love is longsuffering, but more than that, the loving person is able to overlook offenses committed by those whom he loves (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

## **h. Love is Sparing**

*1 Corinthians 13:5 Charity thinketh no evil...*

The Greek word *logizomai* translated here “thinks no evil” can actually mean “to take an inventory”. Many marriages and other relationships fail because one or both parties carry with them a history or an inventory of hurts that have never been forgiven. 1 Cor 13:5 indicates that the loving person is not resentful and does not keep a record of wrongs committed against them.

This is the type of forgiveness that God offers to us (Rom 4:8; 2 Cor 5:19). It is a love that not only forgives and forgets, but forgives and deliberately chooses not to recollect past hurts. What else leads to bitterness and resentment but repeatedly dwelling on past hurts!

📖 Philippians 4:8. **Q.** We also find the word *logizomai* (think) in this verse. If we are not to drum up and dwell on past hurts, what types of things should we think on? (8)

☘ What are some tell-tale signs that someone is keeping an inventory of past hurts?

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### i. Love is Sympathetic

*1 Corinthians 13:6 Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity...*


Love does not “rejoice in iniquity”. That is, love does not celebrate the sins of others. It is not pleased when others fail or fall. Proverbs 24:17 tells us that we should not even rejoice when our enemies fall!

*Proverbs 24:17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: 18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. (see Job 31:29)*

 Proverbs 17:5. **Q.** Who will not go unpunished?

The Germans have a word for this, it is *schadenfreude*. It literally means to obtain enjoyment from the troubles of others.

One of the clearest examples of one who “rejoices in iniquity” is the gossip. He is the one who delights so much in the failures of others that he can’t wait to spread the news! He repeats the story of the sins of others so that he himself can look better. How can we love someone *and* rejoice when they fail or fall? We can’t. These two attitudes are irreconcilable.

 How should we respond when others fail? (see Galatians 6:1)

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### j. Love is Sound

*1 Corinthians 13:6 Charity rejoiceth in the truth...*

There are many who falsely claim that there is a conflict between love and truth. They say things like “doctrine doesn’t matter as long as we love one another”. They are willing to compromise just about anything “in the name of love”. What the Bible teaches us is that true love does not tolerate untruth or unsound doctrine. True love rejoices in truth.

 2 Thess 2:10. **Q.** This verse is speaking of those who will be deceived by the anti-Christ and ultimately unsaved. According to this verse how might they have been saved?

God is a God of truth (Deu 32:4), Jesus Christ is *the truth* (John 14:6), the Holy Spirit is the *spirit of truth* and guides us *into all truth* (John 14:17; John 16:13), the word of God is truth (John 17:17), and those who worship God must do it in *spirit and truth* (John 4:24). It is no wonder then that in 2 Thess 2:10, “receiving the love of the truth” is used synonymously with being saved. Everyone who has ever been saved has been so because they received the love of the truth. As such, the Christian life will evidence a love for the truth, and a continuation in it (John 8:31).

True love does not allow someone to continue in error if it will damn their souls (1 Cor 5:5). It does not overlook false doctrine in the name of “love”, but it will lovingly confront sin and error (Eph 4:15; 2 Tim 2:25). All of our relationships in the church are bound together by a common love for the truth (2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1).

#### k. Love Suffers

*1 Corinthians 13:6 Charity beareth all things...*

There is a burden to bear with love because it always costs to love. The moment we decide to love, we make ourselves vulnerable and open to hurt. This is why some put up a wall of protection and choose not to "truly" love. God knew this when he gave man a capacity to sin. In order to love, man was given will, and with the gift of a will, God made it possible for he himself to suffer hurt. When God chose to love, God chose to suffer.

📖 Isaiah 53:4-5. **Q.** What did Christ “bear” for us?

**Q.** Why was he wounded? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** Why was he bruised? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** Why was he chastised? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** Why did he receive stripes? \_\_\_\_\_.

True love is willing to cover and protect (but not excuse) those who have sinned. As we have already learned, true love does not rejoice in or gossip about the failures of others; rather, it is willing to bear the hurt caused by the sins of those we love.

The word used here for *bear* literally means “to roof over”. Like a roof that covers and protects, bearing the burden of the elements, love protects those who have sinned. Out of concern for their wellbeing it is willing to bear the brunt of sin.

📖 Gal 6:1-2. **Q.** How will we fulfill the law of Christ?

**Q.** Considering verse 1, what do you think these “burdens” are referring to?

Every one of us has particular sins that are especially troubling to us (Heb 12:1). True love does not see the sins of others and judge or condemn them. It hurts for them and seeks to find ways to help them to overcome that sin.

📖 Romans 15:1-3. **Q.** v1. What should the strong do for the weak?

Q. v2. Why would we do this?

Q. v3. In doing so, what example are we following?

Jesus Christ bore our sins for us on the cross and in doing so he left for us a perfect example of perfect love (1Pet 2:24; 1 John 4:10). Obviously, we are not bearing sin in the same sense that Christ did. Nevertheless, true love bears the sins of others by showing mercy, by bearing the hurts that result from their sins, and by overlooking their failures if it means promoting their spiritual growth (Rom 15:2).

☛ How might this aspect of love be especially necessary for a Pastor or one who is discipling younger Christians to learn?

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📖 James 5:19. Q. Bearing sin is not excusing sin. James here is giving a scenario of a man in the church who is evidencing his lack of salvation by continuing in sin. According to verse 19, what does this man need?

Q. According to verse 20, what two things happen when someone is “converted from the error of his ways”?

The word “hide” here is the very same word used in 1 Cor 13 for “bear”. Love, far from judging the unsaved, leads us to seek the salvation of men and women so that their sins can be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. Love hates sin but seeks to convert the sinner.

**1. Love is not Suspicious**

*1 Corinthians 13:7 Charity believeth all things...*

When the Bible says that love “believes all things” it is not speaking of blind or naïve faith. The idea is to consistently think the best of other people without cynicism or suspicion. It is an unloving spirit that assumes the worst of others or is skeptical of their motives.

☛ What might lead us to be skeptical of others?


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If we find ourselves skeptical or assuming the worst of someone because of a past sin or offense then we may be revealing some unforgiveness that resides in our hearts. This cynicism is actually a defense mechanism, protecting ourselves from a repeat of some hurt that we

have experienced before. But, as we learned above, love also “bears all things”. That is, it is willing to suffer and to bear with the sins and failures of others. It lovingly endures the pain that the vulnerability of love incurs. The same love that bears the sins of others also seeks to think the best of others. It does not become cynical because of past hurts or disappointments.

An unloving heart is quick to ascribe ill motives to the actions of others. It assumes the worst instead of erring on the side of trust. It may be that this trust at some point is broken, but again, the nature of love is that it is willing to bear with that disappointment and to continue to love.

 Luke 7:36-39. **Q.** How is the woman described here? \_\_\_\_\_

This woman had a reputation in her city as a “sinner”. She was probably a well-known prostitute.

**Q.** What did she bring with her into the Pharisee’s house?

**Q.** How does Mark 14:3 describe this ointment? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.** v38. Luke tells us that the woman was W\_\_\_\_\_

**Q.** v38. What did the woman do while she was weeping?

**Q.** What this woman has done is a beautiful picture of faith, humility, repentance and worship (v50), but not everyone saw it this way. What did the Pharisee think when he saw this?

This Pharisee assumed that had Christ known this woman’s reputation he would have rebuked her. The Pharisee’s first and only thought was that this woman was not coming in a spirit of faith or repentance but with ill will. It did not enter into his mind that she might actually have come in repentance, with the desire to give her life over to Jesus Christ the Messiah.

After the Pharisee “spoke within himself”, Christ “answered”. He knew the thoughts in the heart of the Pharisee and rebuked him for them. This reminds us that it is Christ and Christ alone who can see the hearts of men and can discern their motives. The Pharisee saw the woman, remembered her reputation and judged her wrongly. For us who cannot read minds or thoughts, we are to err on the side of trust and believe the motives and intentions of others are pure, until proven otherwise. If we are proven wrong then we are to seek to forgive and restore that brother and to keep on loving.

*Love assumes the best, bears with the worst, restores the offender and continues loving!*


### **m. Love Does Not Surrender**

*1 Corinthians 13:7 Charity hopeth all things...*


Not only does love bear with the sins of others and assume the best of others but even when sins persist and trust is broken, it continues to love and hopes for the return or restoration of

the erring brother.

An unloving heart is quick to give up on others. It is quick to pronounce that someone is “getting what they deserve”, or to write them off forever.

 2 Peter 3:9. **Q.** What attitude does God have toward us? Why?

As long as God’s love and grace continues toward men, we should not give up on others. We love them and pray for them. We pray that God would grant them repentance, that they would come to (or be restored to) the faith. In short, true love does not “give up” on anyone.

 What are your feelings toward someone who seems to have drifted away from the church? Does it reflect this aspect of love?

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**n. Love Stands**

*1 Corinthians 13:7 Charity endureth all things...*

In summary, love “endures all things”. It does not fail, no matter what it encounters. The word here is the same used for Christ as he “endured the cross” (Heb 12:2). Christ’s love enabled him to willingly endure the torture of the cross for those whom he loved.

When we choose to love others (in obedience to God’s command, Mark 12:31; 1 Pet 1:22) we make a forever commitment. Love is not a fleeting emotion but a rigid, unmovable and purposeful commitment. It refuses to let go even when it encounters hurts and disappointments.

 Considering what we have learned, what are some differences between the world’s love and Christian love?

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**Conclusion**

Love is an all-important attitude that should saturate the Christian heart. All our actions and words should be seasoned with love.

When we accept the primacy of love and learn to apply the personality of love we reflect the character of God and evidence the fact that we are disciples of Jesus Christ. This is not an easy thing to do in a society that exalts pride and perverts love. But, as we learn more about God’s loving character and grow in the faith, it becomes increasingly easier.

If you find yourself lacking in love, dwell on God’s love for you. Meditate on the greatest act of love - Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross. Consider the character of God and then look for opportunities to show His love to others.

**Review**

1. What are some things that God the Father and Jesus Christ have done for us through love?
2. Why do you think other gifts of the Spirit, if not seasoned with love, become useless?
3. What is a scenario in which love could show itself "long suffering"?
4. How does the "kindness" of love impact the way we should interact with non-Christians?
5. What does being envious of others say about our contentment with God's provision for us?
6. When do envy and hate overlap?
7. In what ways is pride incompatible with love?
8. Love does not behave rudely. What are some basic areas of consideration that you would appreciate as expressions of love toward you?
9. The loving person is not overly concerned with his "rights". What are some rights that we should be willing to forego for the benefit of others?
10. How might remembering that "love thinketh no evil" help us in our marriages, especially when we have disagreements?
11. How do we know that a person who gossips is unloving?
12. Love is willing to bear the consequences of the sins of others. If you love someone who sins, and others judge or condemn that person, how might you respond?
13. Explain "Love is not cynical".
14. How does a loving person treat someone who has drifted away from the faith?
15. Is there any particular characteristic of love that you feel you need to work on? How do you think you could go about this?