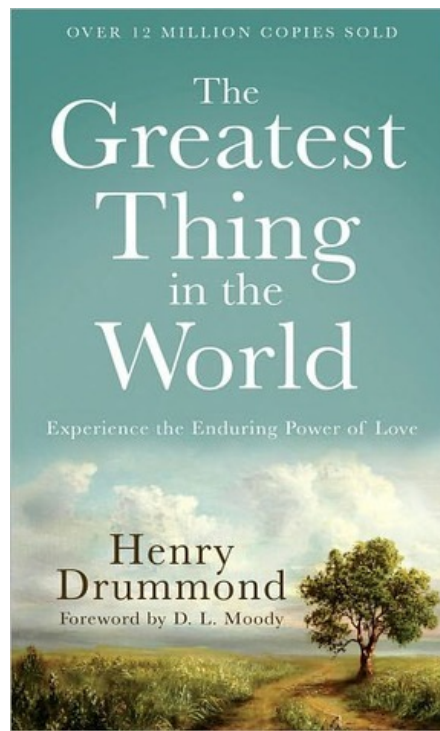




# The Greatest Thing In the World

*Henry Drummond*

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## **The Greatest Thing In the World** Henry Drummond

Based on 1 Corinthians 13, this well-loved classic provides life-changing insight into the nine components of love: patience, kindness, humility, generosity, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, guilelessness, and sincerity. The simple beauty and positive truths of this dynamic message will encourage readers to practice the power and blessing of love in every area of life.

## **The Greatest Thing In the World Details**

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## From Reader Review The Greatest Thing In the World for online ebook

### Jimmy Nyakora says

God is Love. This book changed my perspective of God and Life. Captured in it is the essence of true Christianity and the purpose of living: "to Love and to be Loved". Need i say more?

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### Kate says

LOVE

Patience - Love Passive  
Kindness - Love Active  
Humility - Love Hiding  
Generosity - Love Competing  
Courtesy - Love Polite  
Unselfishness - Love Giving  
Good Temper - Love Behaving  
Guilelessness - Love Believing  
Sincerity - Love Honest

The above is my concise, paraphrased version of this book.

These nine components of love are the background of this 61 page sermon written by a 19th century Scottish evangelical preacher. His review on 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's discussion on Love, is rich and incredibly different than any other thoughts I have ever heard on this chapter, or on any teaching from the bible for that matter.

I felt as if this one teaching encapsulated everything I ever needed to know about Jesus' teachings. I am deeply grateful to Henry Drummond for this powerful treasure of a book.

I own several copies to hand out on a moments notice to those who would like it and pass on as they see fit. It is the only Christian teaching which has ever deeply resonated for me.

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### Frank Theising says

Wonderful. In the cynical and divisive times in which we live, I found this to be a compelling and powerful message that I needed to hear. In fact, this may be a book I re-read annually as a beautiful reminder of why and how we are to live as Christians. The version I have is a collection of sermons by Scottish evangelist Henry Drummond (1851-1897), of which *The Greatest Thing in the World* is the central message. My review and notes are principally on this message from which the book takes its name (the rest of the collected messages are good but not as amazing as the first one). *The Greatest Thing in the World* is Drummond's analysis of 1 Corinthians 13, the Bible's famous chapter on love. I was already quite familiar with the passage, having read it many times before (and heard it read at countless weddings) and my expectations

were not very high going into this book. It had been sitting on my shelf for years and I really only picked it up to fill the gap while waiting for another library book to come available. To my surprise I found this to be one of the most compelling messages on the Christian life I have ever read. Apparently, I am not alone in being moved by it...D.L. Moody thought it such a beautiful message he used to have all his students read it every year. I would encourage everyone to read it, Christian or not. For the believer, I expect you will find it as encouraging as I did and hope it will motivate you to live up to our high calling. To my secular friends, that it would provide a better understanding of Christianity and, though we often fall short, the ideals we strive to live up to.

What follows are my notes on the book:

### **The Greatest Thing in the World**

Philosophers of antiquity and the modern world ask themselves “What is the *summum bonum* – the supreme good? As Christians, we are accustomed to being told that the greatest thing in the world is Faith. Well, we are wrong. The apostle Paul writes “The greatest of these is love.” It is not an oversight. Other biblical writings support this. Peter says, “Above all things have fervent love among yourselves” (1 Pe 4:8). John says “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Elsewhere Paul says “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Ro 13:10). Did you ever think what he meant by that?

In those days, as men followed hundreds of commandments (many manufactured by men), Jesus offered them a simpler way. If you do this one thing, you will do those hundreds of things. If you love, you will unconsciously fulfill the whole law. If a man loved God, would he ever take His name in vain? Of course not. If he loved his brother, would he ever kill, steal, bear false witness, or commit adultery? It would be preposterous.

Drummond breaks Paul’s message into three parts: Love contrasted (v 1-3), love analyzed (v 4-7), and love defended (v8-13).

#### **Love Contrasted**

Paul contrasts love with other things (prophecy, faith, charity) men of that day thought much of. What is the use of Faith? To connect the soul to God. And what is the object of connecting man with God? That he may become more like God, and God is love. Love, therefore, is greater than faith. You can take nothing greater to the heathen world than the impress and reflection of the love of God upon your character.

#### **Love Analyzed**

Paul analyzes what this supreme thing is. He passes this thing, love, through the magnificent prism of his inspired intellect, and it comes out on the other side broken up into its elements: Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Humility, Courtesy, Unselfishness, Good Temper, Guilelessness, sincerity. There are two great classes of sins – sins of the body, and sins of disposition. The Prodigal Son may be taken as a type of the first, the Elder Brother of the second. Consider the unloving response of the Elder Brother. How many prodigals are kept out of the Kingdom of God by the unlovely characters of those who profess to be inside? Jealousy, anger, pride, lack of charity, self-righteousness, touchiness, doggedness, sullenness—these are the ingredients of this dark and loveless soul. We cannot just deal with such a temper. We must go to the source and change the inmost nature and all the angry humors will die away of themselves. Willpower does not change men. Time does not change men. Christ does.

That is the supreme work to which we need to address ourselves in this world, to learn to love. How are to do so? Practice. If a man doesn’t exercise he builds no muscle. If he does not exercise his soul he does not

develop moral fiber nor beauty of spiritual growth. Love is not a thing of enthusiastic emotion. It is a rich, strong, manly, vigorous expression of the whole Christian character—the Christ-like nature in its fullest development. And the constituents of this great character are only to be built by ceaseless practice. Do not isolate yourself. Talent develops itself in solitude; character in the stream of life. That chiefly is where men are to learn to love.

Contemplate the love of Christ, and you will love. Look at the great sacrifice as He laid down himself, all through life, and upon the cross at Calvary; and you must love Him. And loving Him, you must become like Him. Love begets love. It is a process of induction. Put a piece of iron in the presence of a magnetized body, and that piece of iron becomes magnetized. It is charged with an attractive force in the mere presence of the original and as long as you leave the two side by side they are both magnets alike. Remain side by side with Him who loved us and you too will become a center of power, a permanently attractive force; and like Him you will draw all men unto you, like Him you will be drawn unto all men. That is the inevitable effect of love.

### **The Defense**

Paul singled out love as the supreme possession for one remarkable reason: it lasts. Love “never fails”. Prophecies have failed; they have been fulfilled and their work is finished. They have nothing more to do now in the world except feed a devout man’s faith. Knowledge has vanished away. The wisdom of the ancients, where is it? It is wholly gone. A schoolboy today knows more than Sir Isaac Newton knew. You can buy old editions of great encyclopedias for very little. Their knowledge has vanished away. Men flocked in from across the country to see the great inventions of the day. They were the pride of the city. Today they are but a pile of rusty iron on the scrap heap, replaced by the next big thing. The apostle John writes that the world too will “pass away”. Can you tell me anything that is going to last?

The only immortal things are these: faith, hope, and love. Some think two of these will also pass away—faith into sight and hope into fruition. Paul does not say this but he does say that love must last. God, the eternal God, is Love. Do you ever notice how continually John associates love and faith with eternal life? That whoever trusteth in Him—that is, whoever loveth him, for trust is only an avenue to Love—hath everlasting life. Christ came to give men a more abundant life than they have, a life abundant in love, and therefore abundant in salvation. To love abundantly is to live abundantly, and to love forever is to live forever.

### **Pax Vobiscum (Peace be with you)**

God is a God of order. In everything causes precede effects. Pride, selfishness, and ambition are the chief causes of unrest. What are the causes of rest? Christ answers with two things—meekness and lowliness. They cure unrest by making it impossible. They strike at the root cause of a self-centered life. We aspire to the top to look for Rest; it lies at the bottom. Water rests only when it gets to the lowest place. So do men. The man who has no opinion of himself at all can never be hurt if others do not acknowledge him. He who is without expectation cannot fret if nothing comes to him. The lowly man and the meek man are really above all other men, above all other things. They dominate the world because they do not care for it. Christ’s life outwardly was one of the most troubled lives that was ever lived. But the inner life was as a sea of glass. At any moment you might have gone to him and found Rest. Misfortune could not reach Him; He had no fortune. It was impossible to affect Him by lowering His reputation; He made Himself of no reputation.

Why after professing to give rest does he next whisper burden with mention of a yoke? Is the Christian life after all what its enemies take it for—an additional weight to the already great woe of life? Some extra punctiliousness about duty, some painful devotion to observances, some heavy restriction and trammeling of all that is joyous and free in the world? It is just the opposite. A yoke is not an instrument of torture; it is an

instrument of mercy. It is not a malicious contrivance for making work hard; it is a gentle device to make hard labor light. All men carry the general burden of life, it is not something unique to the Christian. Christ saw that men too live painfully. To some it was weariness, to others failure, to many tragedy, to all struggle and pain. How to carry this burden was (and is) the whole world's problem. And here is Christ's solution: Carry it as I do. Take life as I take it. This is not to suggest that religion will absolve men from bearing burdens. That would be to absolve them of living. What Christianity does is make it tolerable.

The weight of a load depends upon the attraction of the Earth. But suppose the attraction of the earth were removed? A ton on some other planet, where the attraction of gravity is less, does not weigh half a ton. Now Christianity removes the attraction of the earth, and this is one way in which it diminishes men's burden. It makes them citizens of another world. So, without changing one's circumstances, merely by offering a wider horizon and a different standard it alters the whole aspect of the world.

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### **Tom says**

This is a short little book about love. Unpacking the "love chapter", 1 Corinthians 13, Drummond points out the 9 virtues that we can practice to live out love as a way of life. He also draws on the life of Jesus and notes how most of what Jesus did was make people happy. There is also a good discussion that I liked on why it is better to give than to receive. Overall I liked the book and it is filled with a lot of good one liners, a very tweetable book. One of the best selling books the last couple of years has been "The Love Dare" which is a 40 day journey to show unconditional love to your love. If the Love Dare is the How to book of Love, I would say this book is "Why" book. Though this book is focused on loving all people in a selfless manner and the Love Dare is focused on relationship with your spouse or love interest, they both draw on the same source material, 1Corinthians 13, to demonstrate the practical application of loving the way Christ does. I highly recommend this book and would encourage you to read it as a devotional as you work through how to live out the 9 virtues that cultivate love in your soul.

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### **Gina Johnson says**

This is actually a collection short essays. The first, The Greatest Thing in the World, is very good and I would have given it 5 stars. The subsequent essays had some good points but overall were very dated both in writing style and in themes.

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### **Ashlee Reed says**

The test of a man then is not, "How have I believed?" but "How have I loved?"

For the withholding of love is the negation of the spirit of Christ, the proof that we never knew Him, that for us He lived in vain.

It means that He suggested nothing in all our thoughts, that He inspired nothing in all our lives, that we

were not once near enough  
to Him to be  
seized with the spell of His compassion  
for the world. It means that:--

I lived for myself,  
I thought for myself,  
For myself,  
and none beside  
Just as if Jesus had never lived,  
As if He had never died.

chilling passage. Life-changing book. I am challenged.

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### **Alexis Neal says**

A short and simple treatment of I Corinthians 13. Drummond doesn't really break any new ground here, but he does a good job laying out the importance of love (paramount), the source of love (God, who is love), and the characteristics of a loving person (patience, kindness, etc.). Nothing earth shattering here, but definitely worth the few minutes it takes to read it. And probably a good resource for those who are less enamored of long complex treatises on biblical concepts.

I was sort of annoyed by the periodic ALLCAPS phrases--they interrupted the flow of the writing and honestly were sort of confusing. But other than that, it's a decent little book on, as Drummond notes, the most important thing in the world.

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### **J.A. says**

Like George MacDonald, Henry Drummond was a 19th century Scotsman who wrote books with a Christian theme. I read MacDonald because he was admired by an author whom I admire, C.S. Lewis. I read this book by Drummond because it impressed another man I admire, John D. Clemens, my grandfather. A few years ago my grandfather felt compelled to record some of the influences that helped him curb his temper. He put his recollections into a letter that he sent out to his extended family. I read this letter recently and discovered that this book by Henry Drummond had so impressed him that he intended to acquire enough copies to provide one to each of his descendants. Unfortunately he passed away before he could accomplish this goal. As a book buyer I found myself in the unique position of being able to carry out this wish of my late grandfather.

Simply buying the books isn't enough to honor his legacy, however. His desire was that we read it and allow it to have a positive influence in our lives, as it did his. This book is a meditation on 1 Corinthians chapter 13, which is the apostle Paul's teachings regarding charity. Drummond asserts that love is greater than charity, as a whole is greater than one of its parts. Those who define charity as being the pure love of Christ will not need to make that distinction; Paul's charity and Drummond's love are interchangeable. Love is the greatest thing in the world according to them both. The book expounds on all of the aspects of love as defined by Paul. In regard to temper, Drummond says that it is the denial of love, and is therefore one of the most harmful sins, one that afflicts even the most noble characters. "The peculiarity of ill temper is that it is

the vice of the virtuous." This book helped my grandfather rid himself of the vice of temper, and I intend to follow his example.

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### **Garth Richards says**

This book is all about LOVE! More than just the our westernized understanding of love however! You will actually understand that love is made up of four different things. Unfortunately in our english language we one have one name for love that is suppose to encompass the complexity of what love is. Love is actually made up of:

EROS--Physical attention(a natural feeling)

PIA--Parent to child(a natural feeling)

PHILO--Approval(a natural feeling)

AGAPE--Understanding(a deliberate use of the mind)

Anyhow, Henry Drummond looks at 1st Corinthians 13:4 and completely breaks down what it means to love. He breaks down what it means to abide in Christ and let his love live through us. I was amazed by this book! I read it before going to Africa and praise be to God, I actually got to speak on some of the aspects of this book to people in the church's and it helped me to share God's great love with my extended family over there!

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### **deZengo says**

It was divine intervention that brought this book to my attention. I had no idea who Mr. Drummond was and why I was drawn to the book. The book to which my encounter with Mr. Drummond's powerful addresses had already peaked my interest once I noticed the hand painted cover!

From the very first statement, the archaic looking book had my complete attention. It was simply - beautifully written for the layman and the scholar to read and comprehend. The author makes understandable analysis and leaves his audience with the most important lesson of all:

EVERY one has asked himself the great question of antiquity as of the modern world: What is the summum bonum--the supreme good? You have life before you. Once only you can live it. What is the noblest object of desire, the supreme gift to covet?

Who knew...the answer was right in front of us the entire time! A must read for those looking to expand their circle of love and understanding.

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### **Carol Arnold says**

This book contain three sermons by Henry Drummond. The first two, "The Greatest Thing in the World" and "Pax Vobiscum" were excellent.

In "The Greatest thing in the World," Rev. Drummond goes to 1 Corinthians 13 to show that love is the greatest thing and the ultimate thing in the Christian's life. If there is no love, there is no Christianity. He uses as an illustration the elder son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son and his unloving attitude. He also

shows from Matthew 25:31-46, where the judge separates the sheep from the goats, that the "goats" will be judged for sins of omission. It is what was NOT done that shows their unloving attitude and proof that they never knew Christ.

The second sermon, "Pax Vobiscum," has Matthew 11:28-30 for a text.

"Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my Yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am Meek and Lowly in heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your souls. For My Yoke is easy and My Burden Light."

Rev. Drummond says he once heard a sermon on this and thought it was full of delightful thoughts. But as he thought further on the sermon, he realized that the preacher never told them how to get this rest. He realized that the Christian virtues of rest, joy, peace, faith, love, etc. are often spoken of but rarely does anyone explain just how we are to obtain these virtues. He takes "rest" as an example and explains how it, like all the others, can be obtained by cause and effect. If we will only search the passages, we can see what will "cause" the "effect" of rest (or joy, peace, faith, love, etc.)

The third sermon, "The Program of Christianity," was not as understandable as the other two. I really could not figure out most of what he was saying. The main thing I understood was that he was saying God uses men to accomplish His purposes.

Overall, I would highly recommend that every Christian read this excellent Christian classic. At least read the first two sermons!

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### **Kathleen says**

Starts out with the famous passage from Saint Paul, which contains the well-known phrase "when I was a child, I used to talk as a child... now I am a man, and have put away childish things" and then Drummond goes on to explain in great detail the meaning of every sentence of that passage, in essay form. It is quite interesting and a quick read-- and I did enjoy seeing how Drummond illuminated the meaning of Saint Paul's words, and especially I was happy to read his explanation of "through a glass darkly," which also appears in Saint Paul's passage. "Now we see as through a glass darkly-" I read that over and over in the original passage and couldn't make sense of it: but Drummond explained that it means that science is always being re-written and things that were discovered to be "true" many years ago have been found to be false then, which all leads up to that your lifetime accomplishments and what you know is only temporary and that Love pervades and lasts and matters in the end.

A nice read.

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### **Rebecca (Coffeebooksandjournals) says**

2.5/5

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### **Susan Vreeland says**

The classic analysis of First Corinthians, chapter 13. Drummond has produced a treatise on love so wise, so

full, so spiritual that it makes me want to elevate and broaden my concept of love and practice the unselfed, generous, broad, spiritual love full of grace that Drummond challenges us to express. Drummond is logical, profound, and high-minded. He shows how this passage from Paul demands much of us. I'd better get started!

I want to buy a crateful and hand them out at a streetcorner--or at least give copies to all my friends next Christmas.

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### **Jay says**

Should you read this? If you are a Christian and live your life to love God and others, maybe, but this book may give you the feeling of being a choir preached at.

If you are not a christian or you are struggling with the religiosity of "religion" and God, yes-- read it.

This was a quick read but may not be anything too profound to lovers of Jesus. I think 6 years ago I needed this book more.

It basically elucidates and breaks down the importance of love through the lens of 1 Corinthians 13.

I wouldn't call it a must read but it's certainly a book that will sharpen you.

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