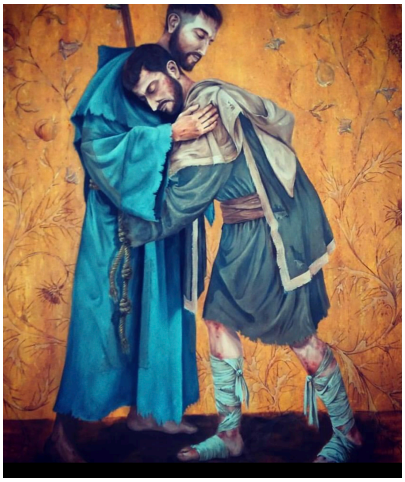
Love does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking.
Francis of Assisi

---

1 Corinthians 13:5a “Love does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking.”



Imagine yourself in the countryside around Assisi, in Italy, in the early thirteenth century. A young man named Francis is riding along on his horse. He comes from a wealthy family. He has enjoyed fine clothes, good company and the pleasures that money can bring.

He lives in a very privileged position compared to others. People suffering from leprosy lived on the margins of society, often separated from their communities and avoided by others. Francis avoids them as he finds their appearance distressing and fears coming close to them. If he sees them approaching, he would rather turn away.

Yet Francis is beginning to question the life he has been living. He has been searching for something deeper than wealth, pleasure and the approval of others. As his faith in Christ grows, he begins to see the world differently. He comes to understand that following Jesus is changing him.

One day, as Francis rides along the road, he encounters a man with leprosy. He could keep his distance, turn his horse away, and continue on his journey. Nobody would think it unusual. But Francis stops. According to the traditional account, he dismounts, approaches the man, gives him money and kisses his hand. Imagine the moment. The man whom Francis would once have avoided is now someone he chooses to approach. His faith has begun to change not just what Francis believes, but how he treats another human being.

Reflective questions — Have you ever felt God prompting you towards someone or something that you would naturally avoid? What makes it difficult to take that first step?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

Francis did not return to his former life after that encounter. In his own *Testament*, he wrote: “When I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them.” Francis understood this change as something God had brought about in him. He began visiting people with leprosy, giving alms and spending time among them. What had once seemed unbearable had, in his words, become a source of sweetness.

But choosing a different path came at a cost. Francis’s family had expected him to continue the life of a wealthy young man. His father, a prosperous cloth merchant, could not understand why his son was turning away from wealth and status. Their relationship became deeply strained. Francis’s friends, too, had known him as a young man who enjoyed social life and worldly ambitions. The man he was becoming was not the man they had expected.

Eventually, Francis renounced his inheritance and embraced a life of poverty and service. He could no longer build his life around wealth, reputation or the approval of those closest to him. He believed he had to follow where God was leading, even when others did not understand. Paul reminds us that love does not dishonour others and is not self-seeking.

Reflective question — Have you ever found it difficult to follow what you believed was right because someone you love might disapprove? Where might your own comfort, reputation or desire to please others be getting in the way of showing love?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

Let Francis’s example inspire you to embrace a love that honours others, puts compassion before comfort, and is willing to follow God’s leading even when the path is difficult.