



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

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## How do you measure a life?

Gospel According to *RENT*  
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

A long time ago I was leading a youth group and one of the young people in our discussion asked a question, “Do you think you can be a good person and be gay?” He put the question in terms of an uncle he loved, but I also knew that this young person might be asking about more than their uncle. I also knew that this person loved Broadway. As the question itself broke my heart, I didn’t want to just give them a quick, “Yes” answer. So I reminded them about the musical *RENT*. “Who is the best character in *RENT*?” I asked. We agreed that the heart of the show, the one who showed the most compassion, kindness, and sincerity was Angel, a gender fluid person who is in a loving relationship with Tom Collins, a gay man.

This is, in part, why *RENT* was so important when it was popular and why it remains such a beloved show. I asked some friends why *RENT* was so important to them. One answered, “It definitely helped me realize that they were people out there that were like me.”

The show presents characters who are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and economics. More importantly, it provides characters who were queer, loving, compassionate, frustrating, and flawed. It presented same-sex relationships as committed and life-giving. The characters’ sexuality was a part of them, but not the only thing. They were able to live, exist, struggle, celebrate, and mourn as real people.

This, I have found, is the secret to the “Gay Agenda.” They want to be treated as real people. They want to be able to live, exist, struggle, celebrate, and mourn like anyone else. They want to be measured by their love—not by the gender of who receives that love. *RENT* examined many of the controversies of the time—the treatment of LGBTQ people, handling

the AIDS epidemic, poverty and gentrification in our cities, drug abuse, and crime. Through all of these controversial topics, it showed a collection of characters who loved—not perfectly—but loved nonetheless. They loved each other and created a community that so many craved. The show that looked at life through the lens of love became wildly popular because it reached a group of people in desperate need of community.

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians addresses many controversial topics of his time. He examines his own role as a leader, lawsuits between members, meat sacrificed to idols, appropriate dress in worship, the proper administration of Communion, sexual immorality, speaking in tongues, and other spiritual gifts. In all of these things, he warns against exploitation. He warns against the dangers of harming the community, of building hierarchies, of excluding those who need salvation. So much of it however, leads up to chapter 13, when he says that all of the arguments and controversies must be seen through the lens of love. If there is no love, then everything that came before is a waste.

Paul measured one’s devotion to Christ in how they loved. And his beautiful description of love is about how to love in community. It includes “rejoicing in truth.” To love someone, you must rejoice in the truth of how they were created. All of the debates, doctrines, Disciplines, disaffiliations, and denominations are meaningless if you don’t have love. It’s all a clanging gong or clashing cymbal without loving your neighbor, loving yourself, and loving God.

*RENT* asks, “How do you measure a year?” Paul told the Corinthians, the only way to measure is in love. I came here today to ask, “How do you measure a church?” Think back on a year of love. A year of taking chances, reaching out, serving people, learning, growing, giving, and praying. How do you measure a church? Measure in love.



***RENT* (1996) was the defining show on Broadway of the 90’s. It won four Tony Awards and a Pulitzer Prize. It’s sparse sets, rock band pit, and diverse characters influenced the genre for decades. Without *RENT*, there is no “Hamilton.” The movie adaptation in 2005 featured six of the original Broadway cast members, including Idina Menzel, Taye Diggs, and Jesse Martin.**

**A new series begins next week.  
Galatians: The Gospel According to Paul**