

## Core Values: Multiplied Leadership 1 Cor. 12

**What is the church?** It is not an organization or a club.

“The church, as established by Jesus Christ and described and defined in the New Testament, is a living organism. It is the spiritual body of Christ, who is its Head, its Lord. The members of that body are entirely and exclusively those who have become new creatures through faith in Him as their Savior and Lord. Though composed of human members, it is not a human organization. It is a supernatural organism, created, established, empowered, and led by the Lord Himself. Because its Head is eternal and indestructible, the church is eternal and indestructible. Jesus assures us that even the ‘gates of Hades shall not overpower it.’” [MacArthur, First Corinthians, p. 278]

**What is Leadership?** J.W. McLean and William Weitzel in their book, Leadership: Magic, Myth or Method, define leadership as:

- A (Spiritual) person- Spiritually Gifted by God
- Involved in a (Spiritual) process- God- Given
- Of (Spiritual) influencing and developing a group of people- Providentially directed by God.
- In order to accomplish a (Spiritual) purpose- Biblically Aligned
- By means of (Spiritual) supernatural power.- Holy Spirit

Many believers struggle to belong in churches because they have not found (1) community or a (2) connectedness to the mission of the family through the use of their giftedness to serve.

### Part 1: Introduction to Spiritual Gifts

#### 1. The Definition of Spiritual Gifts- 1 Cor. 12:1

Paul wants to make sure the Corinthian believers have a clear understanding of their spiritual gifts and the proper use of them. This is why he wrote **“I do not want you to be uninformed.”**

The key to understanding “gifts” is understanding the Greek words Paul used: Charisma. The root of this word gives us our word “grace”. This tells us that spiritual gifts are received by grace. They are not earned!

Pneumatikos. It means characterized or controlled by the Holy Spirit. This tells us that spiritual gifts are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

These words are used in 1 Cor. 12:4-

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;”

**“manifestation of the Spirit” (vs. 7)** Here again Paul is emphasizing that God is the source of spiritual gifts! Spiritual gifts make the Holy Spirit known in the church and in the world. They put the Holy Spirit on display. The Old Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit empowering specific people for specific tasks at specific times (for example, Bezalel in Ex. 31:1-5 and King Saul in 1 Sam. 19:23). But at Pentecost (Acts 2), the Holy Spirit came upon *all* believers to indwell them and to equip them to dispense God’s grace on earth.- Chuck Herring

#### 2. The Design of Spiritual Gifts- 1 Cor. 12:7; 25-26

What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? The church cannot mature or function properly without them. Each believer has special gifts or abilities designed to bring blessing and benefit to others.

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7).

- Spiritual gifts help us distribute God’s grace to others, in the name of Jesus.
- Also, as we use our gifts, we in turn help other believers to use theirs.

1 Peter 4:10-11- As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **“whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

God’s grace (His blessing, mercy, and favor) is shared and multiplied by means of spiritual gifts.

“Spiritual gifts are divine enablements for ministry, characteristics of Jesus Christ that are to be manifested through the body corporate just as they were manifested through the body incarnate (Jesus Christ).” John MacArthur [Commentary, p. 283]

**These Display the Power of the Spirit and the Character of our Lord 1Cor. 12:25-26-** We will care better, suffer together, and honor one another better when we are using our giftedness to serve one another.

#### 3. The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts- 1 Cor. 12:7; 14-20

There is a huge difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents. Talents are inherently natural. Spiritual gifts are inherently spiritual. Talents can be shared by believers and unbelievers alike. Spiritual gifts are supernatural endowments.

Who gets these amazing supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power? Every single believer receives at least one.

**"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7).**

1 Cor. 12:18- "God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose."

#### 4. The Diversity of Spiritual Gifts- 1 Cor. 12:8-11; 21-28

It is important that we understand how important diversity is if we hope to maintain unity in the Body!

**"varieties of gifts" (vs. 4)** basically means allotments or distributions. There are several lists of gifts given the Scripture—1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:11. God did not intend to give His church a complete list of gifts but rather general categories—sign gifts, speaking gifts, and service gifts. Individual believers could have a blend of several gifts.

**"varieties of activities" (vs. 6)** The same gift may be sovereignly used by the Lord with different results at different times in the same believer or in a different believer.

**EVERY BELIEVER IS PERFECTLY GIFTED TO SUIT GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE FOR THEIR LIFE!- Chuck Herring**

Ephesian 2:10- For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

See the importance of every member serving within the church:

1 Cor. 12:21- 27- The members are indispensable.

#### Part 2: The Root RVA's priority for multiplying leadership:

**Community Groups:** In-home gatherings of smaller numbers of believers committed to one another. These groups seek to develop 3 things:

##### 1. Community:

A. Family Togetherness- including all generations

Weekly (Example: weekly group study, name-tags for a season, meal time, prayer time)

Monthly (Examples: Lunch fellowships, gender specific group outings, home meetings)

Seasonally (Examples: Holiday get-togethers, summer outings, 8 for a date)

Annually (Examples: Campouts, group trips, annual traditions)

- B. Shared Meals for Shared Conversations for Shared Lives  
Table fellowship opens hearts for open transparency to open doors for ministry
- C. Utilized Spiritual Gifts  
Knowing one another means knowing how God has equipped each other to serve and expecting the reward of one another's service.

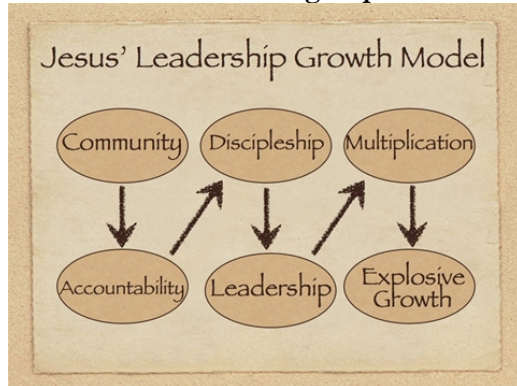
## 2. Conviction

- A. Word-Centered  
Teaching, correcting, reproving, and training in righteousness (2Tim 3:16). This includes evaluating the use of our giftedness.
- B. Prayer Intensive  
Corporate prayer sharpens the believer with Truth.
- C. Gender Based Accountability- Breakout times for men and women to challenge, shape, encourage, and pray for one another

## 3. Commission

- A. Attitude of Sharing  
Sharing the burden of responsibility to reach the lost and unchurched within the group members' spheres of influence.
- B. Accountability to Share  
for each person to use the Spiritual Gifts God has given in a shared way to minister to those outside the church community of faith.
- C. Prayer for Others  
The greatest weapon of our spiritual warfare is prayer

## How would you define success in these groups?



*The measure of success in our small group ministries will primarily be leadership development. There is no success without a successor, and true leaders produce more leaders rather than more followers.*

## CLASSIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### 1. Miraculous Gifts

- Apostle 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11
- Tongues 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30
- Interpretation 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30
- Miracles 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28
- Healing 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28

### 2. Enabling Gifts

- Faith 1 Corinthians 12:9
- Discernment 1 Corinthians 12:10
- Wisdom 1 Corinthians 12:8
- Knowledge 1 Corinthians 12:8

### 3. TEAM Gifts

- Evangelism: passionately leading others to the saving knowledge of Christ, Ephesians 4:11
- Prophecy: boldly and fearlessly proclaiming God's truth, Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28
- Teaching: making clear the truth of God's Word with simplicity & accuracy, Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28
- Exhortation: motivating others to action, application and purpose, Romans 12:8
- Shepherding: overseeing, training, feeding, coaching/leading, Ephesians 4:11
- Mercy-showing: identifying with and comforting those in need, Romans 12:8
- Serving: providing practical help both physically and spiritually, Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28
- Giving: releasing material resources to further the work of the Church, Romans 12:8
- Administration: organizing, administering, promoting, leading, Romans 12:8; 1 Corinthians 12:28

## Section 5: Delineating the Spiritual Gifts- 1 Corinthians 12:8-11

The gifts are given for the good of the whole church. They are not for individual enjoyment, but for corporate employment. The Corinthians especially needed this reminder, because they were using their spiritual gifts selfishly to promote themselves and not to prosper the church. When we accept our gifts with humility, then we use them to promote harmony, and this helps the whole church.<sup>1</sup>

Spiritual gifts can be divided into what we would call “sign gifts” and “speaking gifts” and “serving gifts”.

- The “sign gifts” include miracles, healing, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.
- The “speaking gifts” include prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, teaching, and exhortation.
- The “serving gifts” include leadership, helps, giving, mercy, faith, and discernment.

- **THE WORD OF WISDOM- Vs. 8**

The use of the word “logos” indicates this has to do with speaking ability. The word for “wisdom” here is *Sophia* which is used to refer to the ability to understand God’s will and to obey it. In the apostolic age, it was most likely used in a sense of revelation.

**"But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking." (Acts 6:10, NASB95)**

**"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5, NASB95)**

This spiritual gift has to do with the ability to make skillful and practical application of truth to life situations. This gift can be seen in a person who serves as a counselor, a pastor, and other members of the Body.

- **THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE- Vs. 8**

This is a broad term which basically refers to understanding the truths of God’s Word. No doubt, in the apostolic age this gift was important from a revelation standpoint. It is the capability to grasp the meaning of God’s

revelation and to explain and interpret those truths so that others can understand them. John MacArthur wrote:

*"That gift is foundational for all Christian teaching and preaching, as well as for the proper exercise of counseling, leadership, wisdom and all other ministries and gifts. If a person does not have that ability himself, he must rely heavily on those who do in order to exercise his own gifts rightly."*

Any word of knowledge or wisdom must not conflict with the clear truth of God’s Word!

- **THE GIFT OF FAITH- Vs. 9**

This is a gift to trust God in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Those with this gift have a special ability to lay claim upon the promises of God. Paul wrote:

**"If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:2, NASB95)**

**"And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." (Matthew 17:20, NASB95)**

MacArthur wrote, “Through the history of the church thousands of saints with gifts of faith have believed God in the face of great danger and often death, and in exercising their faith have strengthened the faith of their brothers and sisters in the Lord.” George Mueller trusted God through prayer. His faith enabled him to take care of hundreds of orphans in England.

- **THE GIFT OF HEALING- Vs. 9**

This is the first of the “sign gifts” mentioned in this passage. This gift was especially given to the early apostles and church leaders to authenticate the message and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gift was not used except to confirm the power of the gospel and to lead to the salvation of souls. Paul was sick. Timothy was sick (1 Timothy 5:23). Trophimus was “left sick at Miletus”. (2 Tim. 4:20)

**"Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to**

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<sup>1</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, "An Exposition of the New Testament Comprising the Entire 'BE' Series"--Jkt. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989), 1 Co 12:1.

come....and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."  
(Luke 10:1,9 NASB95)

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed." (Acts 8:5-7, NASB95)

Does God still heal miraculously today? Absolutely. But, God is not obligated to heal every believer when they want to be healed. MacArthur does not believe that these "sign gifts" are still active today.

- **THE EFFECTING OF MIRACLES-Vs. 10**

This was another of the "sign gifts". A miracle is a "supernatural intrusion into the natural world and its natural laws, explainable only by divine intervention." (MacArthur) What was the purpose of these miracles? It was to bring glory to God by leading people to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and the Savior of the world.

"This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." (John 2:11, NASB95)

"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31, NASB95)

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know —" (Acts 2:22, NASB95)

"The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." (2 Corinthians 12:12, NASB95)

It is interesting to note that Jesus only performed miracles during His 3 year ministry. B. B. Warfield wrote:

*"These miraculous gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles, as authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function confined them distinctly to the apostolic church, and they necessarily passed away with it."*

- **THE GIFT OF PROPHECY- Vs. 10**

The Greek word used here means "to speak forth, to proclaim". A person with the gift of prophecy simply speaks forth the truth of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the beginning, the prophets of the church revealed new truth that was to be included in the Bible and sometimes they only proclaimed truth that had already been revealed. Here is the clearest biblical explanation of this gift...

**"But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation." (1 Corinthians 14:3, NASB95)**

Believers with the gift of prophecy are empowered to speak out of God's revealed objective faith not their personal subjective faith!

**"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;" (Romans 12:6, NASB95)**

It would give a better idea of the meaning of this world if we translated it *preaching*. We have too much associated *prophecy* with the foretelling of what was to happen. But at all times *prophecy* has been far more *forthtelling* than *foretelling*. His function is twofold. (a) He brings rebuke and warning, telling men that their way of action is not in accordance with the will of God. (b) He brings advice and guidance, seeking to direct men into the ways God wishes them to go.<sup>2</sup>

- **THE DISTINGUISHING OF SPIRITS- Vs. 10**

The basic meaning of "distinguishing" is that of separating and judging what is genuine and what is not genuine. Since the fall of man, Satan and his demons have been about the business of counterfeiting God's message and even God's messengers. Believers must be discerning! God has so gifted members of the Body to His watchdog over error.

**"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1, NASB95)**

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<sup>2</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 111.

"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11, NASB95)

MacArthur pointed out that – "Discernment is the gift, along with prophecy, that the apostle urges the Corinthians to use in relation to judging the use and interpretation of tongues. Those with discernment are to judge even those who prophesy..."

"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment." (1 Corinthians 14:29, NASB95)

Here is an important point. False teaching can be discerned by comparing the teaching to what the Bible says. False spirits can only be judged by the Spirit's gift of discernment!

- **VARIOUS KINDS OF TONGUES- Vs. 10**

**Tongues** could refer to the ability to speak an unlearned, living language (e.g., Acts 2:11).<sup>3</sup> In chapter 14, Paul defined this gift was the most abused in the church at Corinth.

- **THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES- Vs. 10**

This could be the ability to translate an unlearned, known language expressed in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:27).<sup>4</sup>

*God's Purpose for these Gifts:*

- ***BY THE SPIRIT- "ONE AND THE SAME SPIRIT"- Vs. 11***

This is the summary verse for this section from verses 4-10. Stress is laid upon the fact that the Holy Spirit has sovereignly given these gifts to the church. Notice this is the ninth time in these verses that the Holy Spirit is mentioned.

"Works" means energizing. It is the Holy Spirit who releases His power to make effective the gifts He has sovereignly placed within the Body of believers.

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e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

<sup>3</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:533.

<sup>4</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:533.

- ***FOR THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER- "EACH ONE INDIVIDUALLY"- Vs. 11***
- ***ACCORDING TO HIS WILL- "AS HE WILLS"- Vs. 11***

Here the point is made that every believer is spiritually gifted! All of us are gifted and all of us are called to minister those gifts within the context of the local New Testament church!

*"There are two great moments in a person's life: the moment you were born and the moment you realize why you were born."* —Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell at a Willow Creek Leadership Conference

*"Someone can be a good third baseman, but not a good pitcher. If I'm called to play third base, I'm going to be the best third baseman I can be. It was a liberating moment when I realized I didn't have to be great at everything."* *Max Lucado, Leadership, Vol. 13, no. 3.*

The picture we get is of a Church vividly alive. Things happened; in fact astonishing things happened. Life was heightened and intensified. There was nothing dull and ordinary about the early Church. Paul knew that all this vivid, powerful activity was the work of the Spirit who gave to each man his gift to use for all.<sup>5</sup>

*"Gifts are not necessarily mature at the time of discovery ... they are developed through practice".* *Doris Freese, Leadership, Vol. 1, no. 3.*

## **Section 6: The Power of Participation- Corinthians 12:20-26**

### ***1. WE NEED EACH OTHER!- Vs. 20-21***

***"But now there are many members, but one body."*** Each member of the body is unique, distinctive, absolutely necessary!

Individualism in the Body of Christ is unbiblical. Let's just get that truth out on the table. MacArthur wrote...

"Even as Christians we fall prey to the notion that, because we are complete in Christ and because He is our sufficiency, we therefore do not really need anyone else to live a faithful Christian life...God has made us and redeemed us not only for Himself but for each other. We would never have heard of God or the gospel had it not been for someone leading us to Christ or providing material for us to read. We could not have grown in faith and

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<sup>5</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 112.



obedience had it not been for Christian teachers and friends who helped us and guided us. We cannot possibly fulfill our own ministry, whatever it is, without being mutually dependent on others."

Paul understood this principle of interdependence. Listen to his words—**"For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine."** (Romans 1:11-12, NASB95)

John Wesley said, *"There is no such thing as a solitary Christian."*

There are two basic reasons that Christians choose to live independently:

- First, there are those who have a spiritual self-esteem problem. They don't think they have anything to offer. These believers are described in verses 15-19.
- Second, there are believers who have an inflated view of themselves. They think they are so highly gifted that they don't need others to minister in their lives. These believers are addressed in verses 21-27.

Here the individual says, "I don't need you!" Evidently in the Church at Corinth there existed these highly gifted members who honestly believed they were self-sufficient.

*Love cannot exist in isolation: away from others, love bloats into pride. Grace cannot be received privately: cut off from others, it is perverted into greed. Hope cannot develop in solitude: separated from the community, it goes to seed in the form of fantasies. No gift, no virtue can develop and remain healthy apart from the community of faith. "Outside the church there is no salvation" is not ecclesiastical arrogance but spiritual common sense, confirmed in everyday experience. Eugene Peterson, Reversed Thunder (HarperOne, 1991)p 43*

## **2. WE OUGHT TO RESPECT EACH OTHER!- Vs. 23-24**

Think about how prominent your hand, your eye, and your leg are to your body. However, if you lose one of them, you can still live. Now buried within our bodies are the liver, the heart, the brain. Nobody can see them and admire them. But, if you lose one of these vital organs you will die! We must always appreciate those members of this body who do not have the front stage gifts. They are behind the scenes praying, greeting, caring for babies, etc. This Body could not function without them!

*"Less honorable"* refers to the part of the body that is not attractive—flabby thighs, love handles, bulging belly, etc. What do we do with these?

*"On these we bestow more abundant honor"* This statement pictures for us the wearing of clothes. Look how much money we spend clothing or covering these unsightly parts of our body!

*"And our unseemly members, come to have more abundant seemliness"* The word "unseemly" refers to our private parts. What do we do? We treat them with modesty. When they are properly treated they become more attractive. Those in the body with the out-front gifts must show appreciation for the members who serve faithfully behind the scenes. In addition, these faithful believers should be protected and encouraged.

*"Whereas our seemly members have no need of it"* Those with the more out-front gifts get plenty of encouragement and feedback from the body. They do not need the amount of encouragement that those with the behind gifts need.

*"But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked"* The word "composed" has the basic meaning of mixing different parts together with a specific purpose in mind and that is to produce mutual support and interdependence [BST]. Listen to Jesus' words...

**"And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave," (Matthew 20:27, NASB95)**

Mutual support and encouragement is vital in the Body of Christ!

## **3. WE SHOULD CARE FOR EACH OTHER!- Vs. 25-27**

*"That there should be no division in the body"* A divided body is a contradiction of everything the Lord demands of His church.

*"But that the members should have the same care for one another"* This is regardless of our status in the church. Paul emphasized this principle in Philippians also...

**"Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look**

**out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."**  
**(Philippians 2:1-4, NASB95)**

*"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."* This is mutual love and encouragement in action. There should be no superiority or inferiority. There should be no envy or jealousy.

*"Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."* That kind of love is produced only in the hearts of those who are truly saved and continually submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Consider the three-fold test of the Holy Spirit reality in a Christian's life and in a church's life...(Alan Redpath, p. 185-186)

1. **The Holy Spirit is primarily concerned with character and not gifts (Gal. 5:22-23).** His goal is to take a believer and to conform him to the image of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 8:29). This affirms what we earlier discovered and that is the assurance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the production of character not the speaking in tongues.
2. **The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ not Himself (John 16:13-14).** "The evidence that a man is really filled with the Spirit is not that he has some extraordinary emotional experience, but that moment-by-moment he is conscious of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Redpath, p. 185).
3. **The Holy Spirit has come to equip us for Christian ministry and testimony (Acts 1:8).** In the believer's life there is the anointing, the power, the authority of the Spirit for witness.

#### **Section 7: God's Appointed Servants in the Church- 1 Corinthians 12:28-31**

In these verses, Paul reminds the believers of God's provision for the body. Keep in mind that the Body of Christ is diversified and as a result it is unified. Diversity should never create dissension. Over and over in this section, the Holy Spirit emphasizes the sovereignty, the unity, and the diversity that is to be so evident in the Body.

**"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." (1 Corinthians 12:11, NASB95)**

Here's the point of this passage...DON'T MESS WITH GOD'S PLAN!

Notice first here the gifted men...

- **"Apostles"** The basic meaning for *apostolos* is simply "one sent on a mission". In its primary usage it refers to the twelve and in addition Paul who was set apart by Jesus Himself to be a missionary to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:5). These "apostles" were selected by the Lord Jesus and they were eye witnesses of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22-24). The term is used in a more general sense in the New Testament. Barnabas (Acts 14:4), Silas and Timothy (1 Thess. 2:6), and a few others were called "apostles" (Rom. 16:7, 2 Cor. 8:23). These apostles were called "messengers of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23). Apostles in both the specific group and the general reference were authenticated by signs and wonders and miracles.

**"The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." (2 Corinthians 12:12, NASB95)**

- **"Prophets"** The office of prophet was exclusively for work within a local church whereas the ones called apostles were for a much broader context. Paul is referred to as a prophet when he ministered locally in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), but elsewhere he was called an apostle. These prophets sometimes spoke new revelation from God and at other times they simply expounded revelation that had already been given. They always spoke for God. John MacArthur stated...

*"Another distinction between the two offices may have been that the apostolic message was more general and doctrinal, whereas that of the prophets was more personal and practical....Like the apostles, however, their office ceased with the completion of the New Testament, just as the Old Testament prophets disappeared when the testament was completed, some 400 years before Christ."*

**"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone," (Ephesians 2:19-20, NASB95)**

Evangelists, pastor-teachers, and teachers picked up the mantle and interpreted and proclaimed the truth of God's Word.

- **"Teachers"** The teacher not only has the gift of teaching but God's calling to teach. This may be the same as that of "Pastor-Teacher" as described in Ephesians 4:11.



**"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers," (Ephesians 4:11, NASB95)**

He is called to study and interpret the Word and proclaim that Word to the congregation thus building them up and releasing them to ministry. It is important to make the following distinction—*All who are called to this office has the gift of teaching but not everyone who has this gift is called to the office!* It is clear that the teaching ministry became highly valued and respected in the church. Apollos was recognized as a gifted teacher—

**"Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." (Acts 18:24-28, NASB95)**

Why are these gifted people important to the church? Consider this...*Sometimes the uniqueness of the revealed Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ is seen most clearly when contrasted with other spiritual beliefs.*

Notice second some roles of service using various spiritual gifts...

- **"Miracles, gifts of healing, and tongues"** These gifts have already been discussed earlier in this chapter.
- **"Helps"** This is a gift for service and for supporting others. It is the same gift of "service" that Paul mentions in Romans 12:7. The Greek word for "helps" pictures taking the burden off someone else and placing it on yourself.

**"But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need....because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me." (Philippians 2:25,30 NASB95)**

- **"Administration"** This word literally means *to steer or pilot a ship*. It refers to one who keeps a church on course toward its proper destination. This person holds the team together and keeps it on course. This person has the ability to govern and manage the affairs of the church.

Now through a series of rhetorical questions Paul reemphasizes the sovereignty of God, the diversity of the Body, and the unity of the Body! He mentions most of the offices and gifts to make his point. As believers we must accept the ministries we are given and be faithful in using our gifts to build up the Body of Christ.

"Desire the higher gifts"- Most English translations assume that the Greek verb here is an imperative. However, it could very well be an indicative thus stating as a fact that the Corinthians already covet the *"greater gifts"*. Paul has already chastised them for this jealousy and coveting (1 Cor. 3:3). In chapter 12, Paul has painstakingly emphasized the importance of every gift and every church member.

#### **Section 8: The Preeminence of Love- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3**

Few chapters in the Bible have suffered more misinterpretation and misapplication than 1 Corinthians 13. Divorced from its context, it becomes "a hymn to love" or a sentimental sermon on Christian brotherhood. Many people fail to see that Paul was still dealing with the Corinthians' problems when he wrote these words: the abuse of the gift of tongues, division in the church, envy of others' gifts, selfishness (remember the lawsuits?), impatience with one another in the public meetings, and behavior that was disgracing the Lord. Love was missing in action there in Corinth!<sup>6</sup> Spiritual gifts, no matter how exciting and wonderful, are useless and even destructive if they are not ministered in love. In all three of the "body" passages in Paul's letters, there is an emphasis on love. The main evidence of maturity in the Christian life is a growing love for God and for God's people, as well as a love for lost souls. It has well been said that love is the "circulatory system" of the body of Christ.

Alan Redpath wrote...

*"...In this chapter everything is fragrant. It is like waking up to a spring morning full of sunshine and warmth after the coldness and darkness of winter. We will not hurry over this chapter, but savor its refreshment to our hearts. I trust you will get*

<sup>6</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, "An Exposition of the New Testament Comprising the Entire 'BE' Series"--Jkt. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989), 1 Co 13:1.

*a wonderful spiritual sustenance as you look into the face of our Lord Jesus Christ and absorb the glow of His love."*

John MacArthur wrote...

*"The Bible's simplest description of God – and therefore God's own description of Himself – is 'God is love' (1 Jn. 4:16). Love is the most blessed manifestation of the character of God. John continues, 'And the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him' (1 Jn. 4:16b). Therefore the simplest and most profound description of Christian character also is love."*

The word used for love in this chapter – *Agape* – is concerned with giving not receiving. It is unconditional and sacrificial love. Love is selfless, humble service to meet someone else's needs. Listen to God's Word as it relates to the love that should be a part of every believer's life.

**"Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." (1 Corinthians 14:1, NASB95)**

**"Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." (Colossians 3:14, NASB95)**

**"And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;" (1 Thessalonians 3:12, NASB95)**

**"I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also." (2 Corinthians 8:8, NASB95)**

**"Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." (Philippians 2:2, NASB95)**

**"Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8, NASB95)**

**"And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds," (Hebrews 10:24, NASB95)**

### **1. WITHOUT LOVE I AM INDISTINCT- Vs. 1**

When believers express God's kind of love, people are built up! Listen to Paul's word...

**"Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." (1 Corinthians 8:1, NASB95)**

Beginning in verse 1 and continuing through verse 3, Paul highlights how impotent believers are when they seek to use their spiritual gifts without love. Notice he begins with the ability to speak with the greatest eloquence – *"with the tongues of men and of angels"*.

The Corinthians seemed to prize the gift of tongues more than any other gift as evidenced by his discussion in chapter 12. Paul is saying here that if he had supreme eloquence yet did not have love he would end being insulting! His words would be like a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. Listen, even if a great preacher speaks the truth without love, his words become only noise that grates on the nerves of the listeners. There is an indication here that Paul was referring to the worship of the false gods – Dionysus, Cybele, and Bacchus because in their worship gongs, cymbals, and trumpets were used.

### **2. WITHOUT LOVE I AM INSIGNIFICANT- Vs. 2**

**"PROPHECY"** Paul highlights the importance of the gift of prophecy and the office of the prophet in chapter 12 and chapter 14. The most gifted man of God is not exempt from saturating his ministry in love. In fact, he is more obligated to minister in love than anyone else.

**"...From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." (Luke 12:48, NASB95)**

The prophet must speak the truth in love – **"but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ," (Ephesians 4:15, NASB95)**

**"AND KNOW ALL MYSTERIES AND ALL KNOWLEDGE"** This speaks of the ability to understand the deep things of God and the knowledge of a vast field of truth. MacArthur stated...

*"If all of that would amount to nothing without love, how much less do our very limited intellectual accomplishments, including biblical and theological knowledge and insights, amount to without love? They are less than nothing. That sort of knowledge without love is worse than ignorance. It produces spiritual snobbery, pride, and arrogance."*

Paul is not using hyperbole. He is not saying that the value of your spiritual gift is diminished. He is saying that there is nothing of value in your

ministry! Listen, a believer may be applauded. He may be admired. But, as far as God is concerned, he is nothing!

“AND IF I HAVE ALL FAITH, SO AS TO REMOVE MOUNTAINS” Here a believer is pictured who has a bold measure of faith. He trusts God to do awesome things. But, without faith he is nothing!

### 3. WITHOUT LOVE I AM INEFFECTIVE- Vs. 3

“AND IF I GIVE ALL MY POSSESSIONS TO FEED THE POOR” Get this. No matter how great one’s sacrifice might be, if his underlying motive is not love it amounts to selfishness! It is designed to draw attention to self.

“AND IF I DELIVER MY BODY TO BE BURNED” Some believers throughout the ages have sought martyrdom as a way to make a name for themselves or a way to gain special credit with God (like the Muslim faith). No matter how much one suffers, if he does not do it out of love, he is simply ineffective!

*LIFE WITHOUT LOVE WILL LEAVE YOU STRANDED NO MATTER HOW GIFTED YOU ARE!*

“More people have been brought into the church by the kindness of real Christian love than by all the theological arguments in the world, and more people have been driven from the church by the hardness and ugliness of so-called Christianity than by all the doubts in the world.” *William Barclay, Leadership, Vol. 9, no. 3.*

The word *love* as it is used today in literature and movies and on television is being sadly distorted beyond recognition. Its connections are mostly with the romantic and the erotic. Let me ask you – what’s your definition of love? Do you define it as a “feeling”? Do you believe love should only be based on the merit of the one to whom the love is directed?

In the Bible there are three key Greek words that are translated as “love”. *EROS* is used to refer to the physical aspect of love. *PHILIA* is used to describe friendship love. *AGAPE* is used to refer to God’s kind of love. In our text today, Paul used the word “agape” nine different times in chapter 13. Dr. Ron Allen, in his footnote in the Nelson Study Bible, described agape love like this...

*“Agape love describes a love that is based on the deliberate choice of the one who loves rather than the worthiness of the one who is loved....It is a*

*giving, selfless, expect-nothing-in-return kind of love....True love puts up with people who would be easier to give up on.”*

In our text, Paul emphasizes the priority of love in the Christian community. A lack of unconditional love will not cut it. I want you to see that “love” is all about action not feelings. Each and every description is a verb and they are all in the present tense meaning that these attitudes and actions are to become habitual because of constant repetition. Some of the characteristics are described positively as something you must do. Others are described negatively as something you must not do. Check your “love quotient” as we make our way through the text. You must know this – **TRUE LOVE IS THE OIL THAT TAKES THE FRICTION OUT OF RELATIONSHIPS!**

## Section 9: Defining Love- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

### 1. LOVE IS PATIENT.

3114 μακροθυμέω [*makrothumeo* / mak roth ‘oo meh o/] The Greek word (*makrothumein*) used in the New Testament always describes patience with *people* and not patience with circumstances. Chrysostom said that it is the word used of the man who is wronged and who has it easily in his power to avenge himself and who yet will not do it.<sup>7</sup> This word is also translated as “long-suffering”.

### 2. LOVE IS KIND.

χρηστεύομαι [*chresteuomai* / khraste yoo ‘om ahee/] A kind person is someone who is always looking out for opportunities to do something good for others. Contrast this with the crabby attitude many marriage partners exhibit. Kindness is putting yourself at the disposal of other people, forgetting and losing yourself in their interests, trying to help them and make them happy. Love is just like that.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS.

ζηλεύω, ζηλόω [*zeloo* / dzay lo o/] Love does not boil over with jealousy. 1A in a bad sense it means to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger. 1A1 in a good sense, to be zealous in the pursuit of good. James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each*

<sup>7</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 119.

<sup>8</sup>Publisher Paul Westervelt, *Discipleship Journal, Issue 2 (March/April 1981)* (NavPress, 1981; 2006).

*Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G4068.

There are two kinds of jealousy. One focuses on protection and the other focuses on being possessive. Protection of the relationship is something that genuine love will always do. However, marriage partners get fed up with a suspicious, insecure, smothering possessiveness.

#### 4. LOVE DOES NOT BRAG.

περπερεύομαι [*perpereuomai* /per 'per yoo 'om 'ahēe/] The language of bragging is “I”, “Me”, and “My”. People like this show how great they are by showing how bad their mate is.

#### 5. LOVE IS NOT ARROGANT.

φουσιώ [*phusioo* /foo 'see 'o o/] An arrogant person is only concerned about self. This word means to blow up, to puff up, to inflate. Agape love is humble and is therefore more concerned with serving and helping the other person than displaying arrogance. Relationships cannot thrive if the partners are out for number one. These kinds of people look to get out of marriages because “they are not fulfilled.” Again they are looking out for themselves and not even considering the kids of their spouse.

#### 6. LOVE IS NOT RUDE.

The word “unbecomingly” describes someone who is rude. Too many people take a delight in being blunt and almost brutal. There is a graciousness in Christian love which never forgets that courtesy and tact and politeness are good things.<sup>9</sup>

#### 7. IT DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN.

In the last analysis, there are in this world only two kinds of people – those who always insist upon their privileges and those who always remember their responsibilities; those who are always thinking of what life owes them and those who never forget what they owe to life.<sup>10</sup> {Phil. 2:3-4}

#### 8. LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED.

The real meaning of this is that Christian love never becomes exasperated with people. It is not touchy. Exasperation is always a sign of defeat. When we lose our tempers, we lose everything. The man who is master of his

temper can be master of anything.<sup>11</sup> How do you handle the hurt that eventually will come in a marriage relationship? Love is not provoked!

#### 9. LOVE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED.

The word translated *store up* (*logizeshthai*) is an accountant's word. It is the word used for entering an item in a ledger so that it will not be forgotten. That is precisely what so many people do. Rehearsing your mates' failures will lead to resentment which will then lead to revenge. How wonderfully God has forgiven us! Let us be just as forgiving.<sup>12</sup>

In *On This Day* by Carl D. Windsor, the page for Valentine's Day includes this anecdote: "Even the most devoted couple will experience a 'stormy' bout once in a while. A grandmother, celebrating her golden wedding anniversary, once told the secret of her long and happy marriage. 'On my wedding day, I decided to make a list of ten of my husband's faults which, for the sake of our marriage, I would overlook,' she said. 'A guest asked the woman what some of the faults she had chosen to overlook were. The grandmother replied, 'To tell you the truth, my dear, I never did get around to listing them. But whenever my husband did something that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, *Lucky for him that's one of the ten!*' " *Leadership, Vol. 11, no. 2.*

#### 10. LOVE DOES NOT REJOICE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

It might be better to translate this that love finds no pleasure in anything that is wrong.<sup>13</sup> Unhealthy marriages usually have at least one mate who imagines evil motives from their partner and they are constantly looking for evil. God's kind of love looks for the best in people.

#### 11. LOVE REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH.

One thing is for certain in relationships. When there is an erosion of truthfulness there is an erosion of trust. Christian love has no wish to veil the truth; it has nothing to conceal and so is glad when the truth prevails.<sup>14</sup> Chuck Swindoll wrote, “When you seek the highest good of another, truth is essential.

<sup>9</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 121.

<sup>10</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 121.

<sup>11</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 122.

<sup>12</sup>Publisher Paul Westervelt, *Discipleship Journal, Issue 2 (March/April 1981)* (NavPress, 1981; 2006).

<sup>13</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 122.

<sup>14</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 123.

## 12. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS.

More likely it means that love can bear any insult, any injury, any disappointment. It describes the kind of love that was in the heart of Jesus himself.<sup>15</sup> The Amplified Version reads – “Love bears up under anything and everything that comes.” When you do something out of order, don’t you appreciate it when no one talks about it – when they’re silent and just pass it over? Love knows how to be silent.<sup>16</sup>

## 13. LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS.

Alfred Plummer summarized this verse like this – “When love has no evidence, it believes the best. When the evidence is adverse, it hopes for the best. When hopes are repeatedly disappointed, it still courageously waits.” It means that love always believes the best about other people.<sup>17</sup> When love has no evidence it believes the best!

## 14. LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS.

Jesus believed that no man is hopeless. Love hopes the very best about one’s marriage partner. The Amplified Version reads, “Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances.”

## 15. LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS.

The verb used here (*hupomenein*) is one of the great Greek words. It is generally translated *to bear* or *to endure*; but what it really describes is not the spirit which can passively bear things, but the spirit which, in bearing them, can conquer them. Love can bear things, not merely with passive resignation, but with triumphant fortitude, because it knows that “a father’s hand will never cause his child a needless tear.”<sup>18</sup>

## 16. LOVE NEVER FAILS.

When all the things in which men glory have passed away love will still stand. In one of the most wonderfully lyrical verses of scripture *The Song of Solomon* (8:7) sings, “*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.*” The one unconquerable thing is love.

## CONCLUSION

What it takes to develop this special kind of love that is to characterize the Christian:

1. **COMMUNION** – Only the Holy Spirit can produce this kind of love (Gal. 5:22 ; Romans 5:5).
2. **CONVICTION** – You must have faith that this unconditional form of love is God’s will for your life and that God will bless you for your obedience.
3. **COURAGE** – You must have the courage to love because it will make you vulnerable. C. S. Lewis observed, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to be sure of keeping your heart intact – you must give your heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries, avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safely in the casket of your selfishness. And in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will not change, it will not be broken. It will become unbreakable, impenetrable and irredeemable. The only place outside of heaven where you can be perfectly safe from the dangers of love is hell.” *C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves; submitted by Bill White, Paramount, California*
4. **CHOICE** – You must decide to love like God (agape).
5. **COMMITMENT** – You must devote yourself to your spouse by repeatedly living out the characteristics we have looked at today.

**TRUE LOVE IS THE OIL THAT TAKES THE FRICTION OUT OF RELATIONSHIPS!**

<sup>15</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 123.

<sup>16</sup>Publisher Paul Westervelt, *Discipleship Journal, Issue 2 (March/April 1981)* (NavPress, 1981; 2006).

<sup>17</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 123.

<sup>18</sup>*The Letters to the Corinthians*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 124.