

LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

LEADER'S STUDY

Love is the Root of the Gifts of the Spirit

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

What is happening?

All people are born with particular talents and abilities, and sometimes those skills can be so amazing as to almost seem supernatural. But the gifts given to believers by the Holy Spirit truly *are* supernatural. From the moment you say, “Yes” to Jesus as Forgiver and Leader, you receive a gift, or a combination of gifts, that the Holy Spirit has chosen for you personally. In chapters 12-14 of this book, Paul explains that there are a variety of gifts, but they’re all given for the same purpose: to build and strengthen the Church with the intent of taking the gospel to the lost.

It can be a temptation to glorify ourselves with these gifts, or to idolize others for theirs. Some like to see the flashy gifts at work because of the emotional “high” it can give them. Other believers sometimes feel as if they’re less important because their gifts aren’t so public or obvious. In these three chapters, Paul makes it a point to show that *every* believer has at least one gift; *every* believer’s gift is of vital importance to God’s working through the church; and that *no* gift is effective for His purposes if it isn’t exercised in love—love for the Lord who saved and gifted us, but also love for those to whom we minister with those gifts for His glory. In our passage today, Paul emphasizes that love is the power of God behind every gift, and without God’s love, the most powerful gift is empty.

Where is the gospel?

Christ saved us when we were sinners. None of us deserved it, but because of God’s great love for us, He saved us anyway, at an enormous cost to Himself. God’s love is the reason for the gospel, and it’s the driving force behind it today. Take God’s love for sinners out of the equation, and there is no gospel. Without God’s love at the root of it all, our best efforts are fruitless religious works that profit no one.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: How can I tell the difference between natural-born talents and spiritual gifts? Can a spiritual gift enhance an inborn talent? Can it clash with it? In what ways might people unconsciously exercise their gifts for their own glory, not God’s? How is God calling me to depend on Him more? How is God calling me to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on these truths as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to “follow Him” and make clear “I” statements about how you are going to align with Him.

Some helpful scriptures: John 3:16; 13:34-35; 17:22-26; Romans 5:5; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1-3, 16-18; 4:7-21. What other places in scripture speak to this same truth?

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INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ 1 Corinthians 13:8-13
and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation. Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-for-thought perspective.

To get an idea of the context of this passage, read all of chapter 13 (it's only 13 verses). Better yet, if you have time, read 12:1 through 14:25 to get a broader perspective of what Paul is talking about here.

The Apostle Paul exhibited some of the most visible spiritual gifts (apostleship, teaching, prophecy, miracles and healing, speaking in tongues). Yet he takes pains to explain that all of this is for no good use if love is not evident in the use of our gifts. Why might he have felt it so important to say this?

This chapter is often read at weddings. Does it apply to the love between a man and a woman? Based on the context, is that the primary application?

What does the love between man and wife have to do with what Paul is talking about here? (See Ephesians 5:1-2, 28-33.)

Is it common for a scripture to have an immediate, literal application (in this case, using our spiritual gifts in the church) and also a broader one (exercising those gifts in all of our relationships) Can both be valid? How can we know?

POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group.

In v. 8, what does it mean that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will end? Will there be a time when our spiritual gifts are no longer necessary?

In v. 10, what is meant by "when the perfect comes"?

In what ways do we as believers think like children, v. 11?

When the perfect comes, in what ways might we then give up childish ways?

How does this all have to do with the permanence and importance of love when it comes to using our gifts?

Are faith, hope, and love (v. 13) gifts of the spirit? (See Galatians 5:22.) What is the difference between gifts of the Spirit and fruit of the Spirit?

What seems to be the main point of this passage?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Has there ever been a time when you wished for a particular spiritual gift that you don't seem to have? Why did you want it?

Is it possible to use the Spirit's gifts without love? What might be the result of doing so?

Would I rather be known for my love, or for my spiritual gifting? Why?

If I'm not feeling the love, what can I do about that? How can I get this kind of love Paul's talking about?

With whom are you going to share what you have learned?

(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth and it blesses the one who hears it. Rom. 10:17)

Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?