



Life Lessons from 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13

There are times that my thinking or behavior is not rooted in love. In other words, love is not my motivation. In fact, if I am honest, my motivation is self. What about you?

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he corrects some "wrong thinking" they were experiencing. They were thinking and behaving wrongly about their spiritual gifts. He addresses the issue of spiritual gifts in Chapters 12 and 14 of 1 Corinthians, and then suddenly, it appears that Paul takes a detour. A big detour. I can relate. My train can easily slide off the track. (I like to blame it on menopause brain, but is it?)

Did Paul detour and slide onto another track? The simple answer is "no".

In Chapter 13, Paul talks about love. And I'm not talking about lovey-dovey love. Instead, he writes about "agape" love, which is unconditional love. And, in case we think Paul's train is wrecked, it's not. Instead, he is reminding his readers that "agape" love should be the motivation behind the use of their spiritual gifts.

The Corinthian believers were fighting and bragging about spiritual gifts they felt were best to have and felt important if they had them. Mainly the gift of tongues. Paul reminds them that they should desire the gifts that build up the church as a whole. And that love is needed for the gifts to matter.

Our spiritual gifts may be impressive, but without love, they mean nothing.

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#)

Love is what gives value to our gifts. And the way we love matters.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no



record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)

Love is an attribute (characteristic) of God. And the love of God is not self-centered; it is others-centered. Just as God loved us by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to make atonement for our sins. Jesus was not self-focused; he was *you*-focused. His willingness to die for you and me demonstrates this truth.



Can we follow the example of Jesus and show unconditional love to others? Can we place others' needs before our own? Then, our gifts will matter, and others will see our love for Christ and for them.

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” [1 John 4:7-12](#)

Apply: How can I love others better today? Where is my love “me-focused” rather than



others-focused?

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