

Mosaic: Love Trumps Gifting (3)
1 Corinthians 13, Week of Feb 18, 2018
Bay Park Life Groups - Leader

This fact, that every Christian has a gift and therefore a responsibility, and that no Christian is passed by and left without endowment, is fundamental to the New Testament doctrine of the church.¹

John Stott

Love trumps gifting.

When Christlike, love is present, God's spiritual gifts heal, refresh, and grow others. But when Christlike love is lacking, God's gifts may corrupt us and become a source of pain to those around us. Nothing good comes of it.

Sunday Sermon

Warming up . . .

1. Pick one of the above quotes and share your thoughts.

Digging in . . .

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:3 together and as you read . . .

2. . . . ask yourself the following questions (and be prepared to share after).
 - What is so surprising about these verses?
 - What truth(s) are being driven home through this illustration?

Leaders ~ Some potential surprises? Paul . . .

- Chose gifts that fall into the category of public and visible, as opposed to behind the scene gifts (helps, administration, hospitality).
- Made himself to be part of the illustration – repetition of “If I”.
- Didn't say, *tongues without love are a clanging cymbal or prophecy and knowledge without love are nothing.* Instead he focused on the personal, *I am a clanging cymbal (1), I am nothing (2), I gain nothing (3).*
- Quoted Jesus in the negative - “If I have faith that can move mountains” (Mtt 17:20)
- Illustrated the gifts in their perfection. Not as being done half-heartedly, casually or half giftedly, but as one who would be the ideal go to model of that gift.

Lessons:

- Gifting never trumps love
 - No matter what the gifting
 - No matter how great the gifting
 - No matter how public and beneficial the gifting
- Gifting applied without loving damages both the gifted and the recipient.

¹ John Stott, *Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*, (IVP Books, 1964, 2006) p 136

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 together.

3. Can you think of examples in Jesus' life where he embodied and lived out each of the items in the *love is* list (vv 3-7)?
 - *Patient & kind* = rises above differences, disagreements.
 - *Doesn't envy, boast nor is proud* = doesn't allow ME to get in way.
 - *Doesn't dishonour, not self-seeking* = gracious not controlling.
 - *Not easily angered, keeps no records of wrong* = not irritable, petty but strategically forgetful.
 - *Does not delight in evil but rejoices in truth* = no favourites, false witness, cheating or cover ups, not even for family & friends.
 - *Always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres* = willing to suffer for greater good.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of the supremacy of Christ's love at work in us because they had fallen in love with certain gifts, and their dream of the ideal church. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, *The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.*²

4. Let's imagine together what kind of community . . .
 - . . . might Paul's *love is* list create when it is pursued wholeheartedly?
 - . . . takes shape when the *love is* list is neglected?

Leaders ~ Your challenge is going to be keeping people focused on the positive. It's easier to whine about what happens when others aren't loving us than it is to be honest about how community would shine if we were more loving.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-13 together.

Paul likens the reality of physical maturing (going from being childhood to adulthood) to the spiritual maturing a believer needs to go through. Spiritual maturing is *growing our love*, not just our gifting. Why? Because love trumps gifting, love never fails, and love never ends. Gifting will cease at the end of our lives when we pass on. All that will remain is that which was born in love in the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. How is God challenging you to love more like Jesus with respect to your gifting?

This week we're exploring the gifts of serving (helps) and miracles. Read the descriptions of these gifts (below) and discuss them together as a group.

SERVING a.k.a Helps:

- *diakonia*, Rom 12:7 (translated "serving") = a table waiter. Helps
- *antilēmpseis*, 1 Cor 12:28 (translated "helps") = to lay hold of.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Someone who, ultimately, excels in *doing*. They don't merely state opinions or make suggestions, they act. Those with the gift of service/helps are committed to spreading the Gospel by being doers without being asked or even recognized. You might have the gift of serving if you pick up garbage on the floor in church, start doing the dishes when visiting someone, or constantly step up to the plate to get things done. You do not see such tasks as "beneath me" or "someone else's job."

Miracles:

○ *energēmata dunameōn*, 1 Cor 12:10 = workings of power.

The God who created this universe and set the laws in motion is not beneath or bound by these laws but reigns over them and chooses when or how to suspend them. In the New Testament God used miracles to point to the divinity of Jesus and to validate his mission. I (Pastor Paul) don't know anyone personally who has the gift of working miracles. But that doesn't make me a cessationist (meaning I believe miracles can still happen today). God continues to do miracles when and where he sees fit. Today miracles are more common in places where the Gospel has few witnesses and/or is not welcomed.

Those with the spiritual gift of miracles often have a heightened sensitivity to the presence and power of God through His Holy Spirit. They have a special measure of faith and desire for God to reveal Himself and draw many to faith in His Son Jesus Christ. They take care not to draw attention to themselves or have a following of people, but are constantly pointing others to Jesus. Those with this gift understand that God is Sovereign and He can work when and how He desires, but they make sure they are available and listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This gift is often accompanied by prayer and strong petition by these individuals for God to reveal His glory to people.³

Leader ~ You might need to remind people that having a gift doesn't mean you always excel in that one area. For example, having the gift of wisdom does not mean everything you say is wise. We see this same truth in the New Testament with the gift of healing. The Apostle Paul healed others, but couldn't heal himself. Not because he lacked faith, but because God chose not to heal him. God controls the gifts, not us. The same is true with the gift of miracles.

6. Do you know anyone that might have one of these gifts? Do you have any questions about them? What's still fuzzy?
 - Consider jotting down your questions together and have your LifeGroup leader email them to Randy.

Driving it home . . .

7. How can we pray for each other?

³ SPIRITUALGIFTSTEST.com, <https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>