



# Daily Bible Habit

## I Corinthians

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### Focus Points...*For I Corinthians 13*

#### Stop And Consider...

- \* What is the most important thing necessary for unity in the Church?

#### Listen...

- \* As Paul provides three principles regulating the use of spiritual gifts.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You have promised Your Church the blessing of the Holy Spirit. You taught Your disciples,  
“when...the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth”  
(John 16:13).

As I open Your Word and reflect on Your gift of love, open my heart by Your Spirit to know and receive the Truth. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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#### Commentary:

Paul wrote I Corinthians 13 with one intent purpose: to show them a “more excellent way” to serve the Church with their Spirit-given gifts.

That better way consisted of two main ingredients. *First*, they were to “desire the greater gifts.” *Second*, they were to implement their gifts in “the most excellent way.” (12:29).

What were the greater gifts? The listing of gifts provided by Paul in I Corinthians 12 included the so-called spectacular gifts: healing, speaking in other foreign languages (i.e. “tongues”), etc. These gifts were the lesser gifts. Though lesser gifts, Paul did not say these gifts were not valid. Instead, the purpose of chapters 12-14 was to urge the Corinthians to

“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.” (14:1)

Of all the gifts, the greatest gift is the gift of prophecy. “Prophecy” is simply sharing the message of God’s love in Jesus Christ in a clear, unpretentious way so that even the simple-minded can understand (cf. I Cor. 14:24-25).

Merely having the gift, however, was not enough. Paul made clear that without love, the use of any gift was as empty and meaningless as the sound of “a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (13:1). No matter how great the display,

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no matter how spectacular the presentation, if one did not have love, they would “gain nothing” (13:3).

This was nothing new. Jesus’ miracles always were done in the more excellent way of love. Each time Jesus did a healing, the purpose was not to bring some sort of self-aggrandizement to Himself. It was to demonstrate His great love. The same could be said of the disciples’ miracles in Acts. In every case, when the extraordinary Spirit-given gifts were used, they were *always* used in love in order to present an opportunity to share the Gospel of Love.

In Acts 8:9, Simon The Sorcerer sought the gifts of healing and exorcism. These gifts were denied him because “He boasted that he was someone great.” (Acts 8:9). Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1ff. sought personal glory by lying to God and others by deceptively withholding their full offering. Cain, in Genesis 4, made an offering to God. But it was rejected because his gift was not given in the “most excellent way” of love.

In I Corinthians 12, Paul introduced the first principle regulating the use of spiritual gifts: The Principle of Diversity. This principle teaches that the Holy Spirit gives a large assortment of gifts to a wide variety of people. Not one person has all the gifts.

I Corinthians 13 gives the second principle: The Principle of Love. This principle states that any gift is useless unless motivated by love. Thus, love is the most important thing when serving the Lord. Whereas the gifts are imperfect and will someday cease, “love never fails” (13:8).

I Corinthians 13:4ff. is one of the most recognizable Scriptures. Most often used for the solemn wedding rite, the original purpose of this Scripture was to bring unity among divided, self-seeking Christians. How does that unity occur? Only by serving others with the love of Christ! By avoiding envy and shunning pride and boastfulness, love keeps “no record of wrongs. This is the love which Paul would have the Corinthians demonstrate. This love “always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres” (13:7).

In 13:11-12 Paul introduced a third principle in the use of spiritual gifts. This is the Principle of Maturity. Those who serve in love must not think like immature children.

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (13:11).

I Corinthians 13 is much more than a nice wedding text. It’s Paul’s primer for service in the Body of Christ. Whatever their Spirit-given gifts, those who serve must take on maturity and serve with a heart of love.

Is this your way of serving Jesus and His Church?

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**Prayer:**

Holy Spirit, show me the way of loving service in the Church. Holy Spirit, draw me away from amazing, miraculous displays of power not done in love. Instead, move me to the greater gifts, especially that of prophecy. Give me such maturity and overwhelming love that I might use the gifts You have given to me...only for Jesus. I pray in honor of His glorious loving ministry to me. Amen.

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