

Foundations Bible Study – I Corinthians  
Lesson 4

**Scripture Readings:**

- I Corinthians Chapters 12 and 13

**Lesson**

This lesson is two-fold, first about spiritual gifts in chapter 12, then about love in chapter 13. I hope you will get excited enough to dig deeper into these two subjects, we will travel very rapidly through them in this lesson.

Chapter 12 is one of the best places in our Bible to see how the gifts God gives us are to be used in the church. We all have gifts, talents, things we enjoy, and convictions in our lives. All of them have been given by God to us and others. Paul pulls out of our lives the spiritual gifts and addresses them very well in this chapter. First he begins by teaching that all gifts come from God and from the Spirit. The church in Corinth was told this for a reason: I'm sure the reason still is with us humans even today. The reason is that some folks are thinking and bragging that they have the best gifts from God. Even to the point of, at the very least implying, that some gifts do not come from God at all.

So to answer this problem Paul begins by stating that "All the gifts come from the same Spirit," the Spirit of God. After all God is the creator and the giver of all good and useful gifts in all our lives. Next he moves to the business of the great analogy of the church and a human body. This has been from the time of its writing one of the best and most useful ways to view the church. It is also the greatest way to see ourselves as being the church as well.

We all are called and gifted to work together to share the love of God with our families, communities, and the world. God has given each one of us ways to be a part of the grandeur of this extension of God's presence in the world. As we live and work together we all are being the Church for a world that needs the love of God sooooo much. Don't be jealous, don't be prideful, just be what God has created you to be. Work hard, play hard, pray hard, and do your part to make the Church of God in Christ work well.

After Paul has been teaching and preaching about the gifts of the spirit and how they are to be used he ends chapter 12 with this verse, "I will show you the most excellent way." I think something is coming up that is important....

Chapter 13 of I Corinthians, the love chapter. I read it at weddings, and often at the graveside. It is powerful and hard to understand, it may be the most important thing we can learn as Christians, remember Christ said, "the most important commandment is to love God and others!" But we still have the questions; what is love? How do we live out the love of God, Jesus, and ourselves in relation to

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others? Does love conquer all... always? Was John Lennon right, "Love is all you need?" Does love last? Who really do I have to love? There are a million questions we could ask. I think Paul answers some of them and Jesus does a good job of answering them as well.

I just want to share some of what Paul says here. He gives a short yet powerful description of love. First, love suffers for a long time. Our modern "throwaway society" encourages us to get rid of people in our lives who are difficult, trouble, or bring us down. This attitude runs completely against what God is teaching us here. True love puts up with people who would be easier to give up on.

Love does not envy. If we love others we will rejoice with them, not desire the same for ourselves. Fundamentally, the selfless love that God calls us to does not involve pride, or glory. It does not parade around or act puffed up. In fact true love does not seek its own. If we truly love others, we will set aside our goals, agendas, and everything for the good of others.

Love is not provoked. That is, love is not easily angered or over-sensitive. When we truly love others, we are not so touchy about our own feelings, but we do think of others' feelings in a high matter. (That is hard, at least for me.)

Love does not rejoice with wrongs, but celebrates the right, good, and truth. Love from God has nothing to do with evil, but has everything to do with good and right. Love believes all things, hopes all things, but is not blind or naïve. When we love others we see them as they are, the good and the bad and the ugly... but we never lose faith in them or the God who can change things for the good in their lives. (and our own) Love never gives up on anyone!

Lastly, love endures all things. Love accepts hardships or rejection, and continues on non-stop. To encourage and help, to joy and peace, towards the never ending hope found by faith in the Almighty God. Love in this 13 chapter of I Corinthians, "The Love Chapter," means always looking at others, and always seeking what is best for them; in spite of our own lives. After all this is the love God had for us when God sent Jesus... the only child to be our Lord, Teacher, and Savior. The trouble for me is knowing God expects me to love in the same way.....

### **Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1. What is it you feel God has given to you for your part in the Church?
2. Do you think we need unity in the church around the world today? What can we do to make the church more unified in its mission and task?
3. What is your favorite verse(s) in the 13 chapter and why.
4. Is love all we need? Can you explain your answer?