

LXXXVI. EARNESTLY DESIRE THE HIGHER GIFTS: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

INTRODUCTION.

Beloved, brothers and sisters in Christ, friends and visitors, we come today to the end of 1 Corinthians 12 (this is our 16th sermon in chapter twelves—*yikes [you can thank the Charismaniacs for that...]*). And if we are going to properly understand this passage of Scripture, I think I need to make clear four introductory truths. If we understand these four truths, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 will be understood quite clearly.

Introductory truth

I. THERE ARE SOME GIFTS AND OFFICES WHICH EXISTED ONLY FOR THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

Ephesians 2:19-22 "19 you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

BOYS AND GIRLS

I) So there were some temporary offices in the church which existed to lay the foundation of Christianity.

- Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists (see Ephesians 4).

II) So there were some temporary sign gifts given to the church which existed as signs while the foundation was being laid.

- Tongues, Miracles (powers), Healings, and Discerning spirits.
 - *You will have to refer to our previous sermons if you would like a more detailed explanation

Introductory truth

II. THERE ARE SOME GIFTS AND OFFICES WHICH EXIST FOR THE BUILDING UP OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOYS AND GIRLS

I) There are abiding Offices in the church for edification (pastors and deacons).

1 Timothy 3:1-13

ELDERS/PASTORS/OVERSEERS

"1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

DEACONS

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

1 Timothy 5:17 "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching."

II) There are abiding Spiritual Gifts for edification.

Romans 12:6-8 "6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

CALVIN: "As to the passage before us, we must observe, that of the offices which Paul makes mention of, some are perpetual, others temporary. Those that are perpetual, are such as are necessary for the government of the Church; those that are temporary, are such as were appointed at the beginning for the founding of the Church, and the raising up of Christ's kingdom; and these, in a short time afterwards, ceased." — **John Calvin, Commentary on the Bible, 1 Corinthians 12:28**

Introductory truth

III. THE GOAL OF ALL GIFTS AND OFFICES IS EDIFICATION TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

1 Corinthians 14:12 "Strive to excel in building up the church."

BOYS AND GIRLS

Introductory truth

IV. THE GOAL OF EDIFICATION IS CHRISTLIKENESS.

Ephesians 4:11-16 "11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

BOYS AND GIRLS

DOCTRINE. God has given Christians gifts to help them be like Christ, therefore they must highly value them.

CLARIFICATION:

MY gift does not help me become more like Christ. *Yours does; other's gifts do!*

Your gift does not help you become more like Christ. *Mine does; other's gifts do!*

CON(TEXT). **1 Corinthians 12:27** "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

OUTLINE. There are ELEVEN truths in verses 28-31 that I need to draw your attention to, but we are not going to linger on each one. We will move through them rather quickly so that we can understand the main point of what Paul is doing here, and what God is meaning to communicate through him to us.

I. GOD GAVE APOSTLES TO THE CHURCH TO LAY THE FOUNDATION (1 Corinthians 12:28a).

1 Corinthians 12:28a

"And God has appointed in the church first apostles,"

BOYS AND GIRLS

II. GOD GAVE PROPHETS TO THE CHURCH TO LAY THE FOUNDATION (1 Corinthians 12:28b).

1 Corinthians 12:28b

"second prophets,"

BOYS AND GIRLS

III. GOD GIVES TEACHERS TO THE CHURCH TO BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION—FOR EDIFICATION (1 Corinthians 12:28c).

1 Corinthians 12:28c

"third teachers,"

BOYS AND GIRLS

IV. GOD GAVE SOME THE GIFT OF MIRACLES (*POWERS*) AS SIGNS DURING THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION (1 Corinthians 12:28d).

1 Corinthians 12:28d

"then miracles,"

BOYS AND GIRLS

V. GOD GAVE SOME THE GIFT OF HEALINGS AS SIGNS DURING THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION (1 Corinthians 12:28e).

1 Corinthians 12:28e

"then gifts of healing,"

BOYS AND GIRLS

VI. GOD GIVES SOME THE GIFT OF HELPING TO BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION—FOR EDIFICATION (1 Corinthians 12:28f).

1 Corinthians 12:28f

"helping,"

- This corresponds with the office of Deacon.

BOYS AND GIRLS

VII. GOD GIVES SOME THE GIFT OF ADMINISTRATION TO BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION—FOR EDIFICATION (1

Corinthians 12:28g).

1 Corinthians 12:28g

"administrating,"

- Lit. *Governments*.
 - This corresponds with the office of Elder / Pastor / Overseer.

BOYS AND GIRLS

VIII. GOD GAVE SOME THE GIFT OF LANGUAGES AS SIGNS DURING THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION (1 Corinthians 12:28h).

1 Corinthians 12:28h

"and various kinds of tongues."

- NOTE, Paul intentionally lists Tongues last. Why? Because the Church at Corinth had come to so highly value this gift, yet it was not a gift that was most conducive to edification. He lists this gift last and then tells them in verse 31 "Earnestly desire the higher gifts" in order to correct them, and also to shame them for their poor behavior.

BOYS AND GIRLS

IX. NOT EVERYONE HAD OR HAS THE SAME OFFICE OR GIFTING, THEREFORE WE ALL NEED TO BENEFIT FROM ONE ANOTHER (1 Corinthians 12:29-30).

1 Corinthians 12:29-30

"29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?"

30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"

BOYS AND GIRLS

USE FOR REBUKE

- Let this rebuke those who live as though they do not need others in the body to help them.
 - Let this also rebuke those who live as though they do not need to help in the body.

X. YOU MUST HIGHLY VALUE THOSE OFFICES AND GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU THAT ARE MOST CONDUCTIVE TO EDIFICATION (1 Corinthians 12:31a).

1 Corinthians 12:31a

"But earnestly desire the higher gifts."

- **CALVIN:**
"It might also be rendered—*Value highly*; . . . Paul exhorts the Corinthians

to esteem and desire those gifts especially, which are most conducive to edification."

— Calvin, John. *Calvin On The Bible: John Calvin's Bible Commentary* (pp. 13074-13075). Kindle Edition.

BOYS AND GIRLS

USE FOR EXHORTATION

XI. LOVE TO BOTH GOD AND MAN IS THE PINNACLE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, NOT SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:31b).

1 Corinthians 12:31b

"And I will show you a still more excellent way."

BOYS AND GIRLS

USE FOR EXAMINATION

Q. Do you love God and man or are you preoccupied with yourself?

What does LOVE TO GOD look like?

LOVE TRUSTS—trusts in the promises bought by Christ.

LOVE DELIGHTS—delights in the persons of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit.

LOVE WORSHIPS—worships God in the ways He has prescribed in His written Word.

LOVE OBEYS—obeys what God has commanded in the moral law.

LOVE HATES—hates the things that God hates, and loves the things that God loves.

LOVE LONGS—longs for the glory of God to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

What does LOVE TO MAN look like?

LOVE SEES—sees his fellow man and has a concern for him because he is made in God's image; loves especially sees his fellow saint and has a concern for him because he is bought by Christ's blood.

LOVE SERVES—serves his fellow man for their good, especially other believers.

LOVE SACRIFICES—sacrifices time, talent, and treasure to do good to others.

LOVE FEELS—feels the pain of suffering and the joy of being honored, even when it is others who are suffering or being themselves honored.

LOVE BUILDS—builds up others in the faith by prayer, encouragement, rebuke, and exhortation, so that their fellow Christians may be more like Christ.

USE FOR EXHORTATION

[turn the previous Instructions into exhortations]

CONCLUSION.

Love is not only the pinnacle of the Christian life. Love is the pinnacle of God's work toward us in the gospel! We love because He first loved us.

TURN WITH ME.

1 John 4:7-12

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

USE FOR COMFORT

TEXT WORK

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

[27] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

[28] ^{kai} And ^{theōs} God ^{ti thēmi} has appointed ^{en} in ^{no} the ^{ekklesia} church ^{prōtos} first ^{apostolos} apostles, ^{deuteros} second ^{prophētēs} prophets,

conj. set prep. def. adj. adj.

^{tritos} third ^{didaskalos} teachers, ^{epieta} then ^{dynamis} miracles, ^{epieta} then ^{charisma} gifts of ^{iama} healings

adj. adv. adv. plural

^{antilempsis} helping, ^{Kybernesis} administrating, ^{and} ^{genos} various ^{glossa} kinds of tongues.

helping or aiding the poor or sick
★ Deacons ★

governing
★ Elders Pastors Overseers ★

[29] Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? [30] Do

all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

[31] ^{de} But ^{zelōō} earnestly desire ^{ho} the ^{meag's} higher ^{charisma} gifts. ^{kai} And ^I will show ^{you} you ^{efi} a ^{hyperbole} still more ^{hadōs} excellent way.

conj. busy yourself about... def. Tadj. Greater conj. adv. preeminent superior

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening / Big-Picture Questions

1. The preacher notes this is the 16th sermon on 1 Corinthians 12 and jokes

that we can “thank the charismaniacs” for the length. Why was it necessary to spend so much time on this chapter? How has confusion about spiritual gifts affected the church in the last 125 years?

2. What is the one main command in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31? Why does the sermon say everything in the passage builds toward this command?
3. The overarching doctrine is: “*God has given Christians gifts to help them be like Christ. Therefore, they must highly value them.*”

Which part of this statement challenges you most personally, and why?

Section 1: Four Introductory Truths (Foundation for Understanding the Passage)

1. What is the difference between *temporary* gifts/offices and *abiding* (permanent) ones? Why is it essential to understand this distinction when reading 1 Corinthians 12:27-31?
2. List the temporary offices and sign gifts mentioned. Why did they exist only in the first century? How should this affect the way we view claims of modern apostles, prophets, or ongoing sign gifts today?
3. What abiding offices and gifts still exist today? How do elders/pastors, deacons, and the gifts in Romans 12:6-8 serve the church differently from the temporary ones?
4. The sermon quotes Calvin to affirm that some things in this passage are perpetual and others temporary. How does recognizing this prevent confusion or misuse of the text?

Section 2: The Main Point and the 11 Truths

1. The sermon emphasizes that **my gift does not primarily help me become more like Christ—others’ gifts help me, and my gifts help them.** How does this correct common self-focused thinking about spiritual gifts?
2. Paul lists apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helping, administrating/governing, and tongues. Why does he intentionally place tongues last? What does this teach us about valuing gifts?
3. “Not everyone has the same office or gifting” (vv. 29-30). How should this truth rebuke both lone-wolf Christians and those who refuse to serve others? Which attitude do you see more in your own life?
4. What does it mean to “earnestly desire the higher gifts” (v. 31)? Why is this *not* about personally wanting to possess every gift, and what practical steps does the sermon suggest for obeying this command today?

Section 3: Love — The More Excellent Way

1. Why does Paul immediately point to “a still more excellent way” (love) after commanding us to desire higher gifts? How does this connect chapters 12 and 13?

2. The sermon gives a rich description of what love to God and love to man look like (trust, delight, worship, obey, hate what God hates, see, serve, sacrifice, feel, build). Pick 2–3 of these and discuss:
 - Which one do you find most convicting right now?
 - How can our group practically grow in this area?
1. The Corinthians were preoccupied with their spiritual gifts and themselves. In what ways can modern Christians fall into the same trap? How does love guard us against this?
2. Read 1 John 4:7-12 together. How does God's love for us in the gospel motivate and empower us to love others as the "more excellent way"?

Personal Application & Self-Examination

1. The preacher urges us to "earnestly desire the higher gifts" by actively benefiting from faithful preaching and teaching. How consistent are you in listening to, applying, and benefiting from God's Word outside of Sunday gatherings? What is one practical step you can take this week?
2. Do you live as though you do not need others in the body, or as though others do not need you? How does the truth that we are all members of Christ's body correct this?
3. On a scale of 1–10, how well does our church (or small group) reflect love as the pinnacle of Christian life? What is one way we can grow in mutual edification and love?

Prayer & Action Steps

1. Spend time praying together using the sermon's closing prayer as a guide. Ask God to help you earnestly desire what builds up the church, value the higher gifts, and walk in the more excellent way of love.
2. This week, intentionally use your gifts (or simply serve) to help someone else become more like Christ. Share next time how it went.

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Well, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, friends and visitors, we come today to the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Lord willing we are going to finish this whole chapter and then the next Lord's day we will be in chapter 13, the love chapter. This is our 16th sermon in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. I counted them this morning and thought, "Yikes, 16 in the 12th chapter." But I just have to say, you can thank the charismaniacs for that. We had to take our time really going through this chapter to properly understand spiritual gifts and to be able to understand and apply what God tells us to in verse one. It is he says through Paul, "I do not want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts." So since there are many who are ignorant today about it and especially the last 125 years through the Pentecostal and the

charismatic movement, a lot of mud has been slung about it. A lot of smoke is in the air. And so we just had to try to clear it out and just see if we could understand what God says in his word.

Now, as we study verses 27 through 31, if we are going to properly understand this passage, I think I need to make clear four introductory truths. Now, if we understand, hear me. If you understand these four introductory truths, we can move through verses 27 through 31 rather quickly as I think we should to properly understand what Paul is trying to do here. He is trying to do something very specific. There is only one command in this whole passage. There is one imperative verb. There is one command that he is telling them to do and it is "earnestly desire the higher gifts." That is what he is doing. That is what everything is building towards. And then you can see at the end of verse 31 as well, he says, "And I will show you a still more excellent way," which if you understand this letter at all or if you have read it before, you understand what he is doing is transitioning there from talking about spiritual gifts to speaking of love because the church at Corinth was all obsessed with their spiritual gifts and their own individual gifts and what they could do, but they were unloving toward God. They were unloving toward one another. So he spends the entirety of chapter 13 speaking of love. That is the most important thing. But really what he is doing in it is building to the command to earnestly desire the higher gifts. But here are four introductory truths that I think we need to understand before we move through 27 through 31.

First, there are some gifts and offices which existed only for the laying of the foundation of Christianity. You have to understand that there are some gifts, spiritual gifts and some offices within the church that existed only in the first century and only for the purpose of laying the foundation of Christianity. Okay, so that is first. And we can see this in Ephesians 2:19-22 where Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus and says, "You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." So, you are no longer outside of the covenant. You are in God's covenant. You are in the new covenant. You are Christians. That is what he is saying. You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. So he is writing to Christians and he says, "You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." Christians, here is the simple truth. Christians are built, Christianity is built on the foundation that the apostles and the prophets laid in the first century. So there are some offices and functions of those offices which exist to lay foundations. And once there is a foundation laid, if that is the purpose of a specific office, once the foundation is laid, you do not need to lay it again. So the foundation was laid by the apostles and the prophets in the first century. So there were some temporary offices in the church which just existed to lay the foundation. These are the office of apostle, the office of prophet and the office of evangelist. Many people are confused by that even still today and

they think the office of evangelist still exists today. No. Apostle, prophet, evangelist. Those offices existed to lay the foundation of Christianity in the first century. There were also some temporary spiritual gifts that were given in that period of the foundation laying of Christianity and they existed as signs. Signs to authenticate the message, signs to unbelievers, signs that those laying the foundation are true and are actually laying the true foundation. This is the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. The gift of miracles or most literally it is actually powers. The gift of healings and the gift of discerning spirits. These are called temporary sign gifts and they operated for a specific purpose in the first century as the foundation was being laid. If you want more on that, you will have to refer to our previous sermons for a more detailed explanation of it. I am not going to get into all of that again. That is what we have been doing the last 16 weeks. So there are some gifts and offices that existed just for the foundation laying period, first 30 years roughly of Christianity. Got that? You have to understand that or you are not going to understand 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. You are going to be really confused.

Second foundational introductory truth in order to properly understand 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. **There are some gifts and offices which still exist.** It is not for the foundation laying; that is done. It is for the upbuilding of Christianity. So you have the apostles and the prophets and these offices and the evangelists laying the foundation. Then you have gifts and offices which continue today. But it is not to lay a foundation. And it is for the word is edification which just means the building up of the body of Christ. So there are some offices in the church that still do exist. They were not just for the first century and they exist for edification to help the church continue to grow to be more like Jesus. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 details both elders and deacons, elders, pastors, overseers. Just make sure you understand that. I know some of you are like, you have literally heard me say this a thousand times, but I am going to keep saying it to make sure everybody properly, especially new people, understand. Elder, pastor, overseer. Three different words, same office. Those are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Elder is not a different office than pastor. Overseer is not a different office than elder. Those we typically in our day call it pastor. And that is fine because that is one of the words used interchangeably for this office. So we have pastors or elders or overseers. And then we have deacons. Those are the two main offices in the church, the leading offices in the church. And we also have a distinction made in 1 Timothy 5:17 that there are some elders, pastors, overseers who especially labor in preaching and teaching. So they are not just elders who are able to teach and do teach on occasion, but there are some who labor in preaching and teaching, do more preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." It is not that those who labor in preaching and teaching are a different office, something like that, but they operate maybe with a different gift and with a different emphasis and especially labor in preaching and teaching. All elders must teach and must be able to teach. That is part of the qualifications. But there are

those who especially labor in preaching and teaching. But those are abiding offices in the church that did not just exist for the first century, but we still have them today. Elder, pastor, overseer, and deacons.

Now, there are abiding spiritual gifts that still exist today, are still given today, and they are given for the edification of the church. They were not miraculous. They are not miraculous gifts that exist as a sign during the foundation laying period of Christianity. They are abiding spiritual gifts for edification to help other Christians grow. Romans 12:6-8. "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith, to the faith the standard laid down in the Scriptures; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." So there are some spiritual gifts that did not exist as miraculous temporary sign gifts but that are abiding and still given by the Spirit to us so that we can help one another grow up into Christlikeness.

Now, the reason we had to make those first two things very clear is because in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, you have got temporary offices and permanent offices sprinkled in together. You have got temporary sign miraculous gifts and abiding edification gifts sprinkled in there together. Because at this period in history, all of these gifts were still operating because we are still in that laying of the foundation period when Paul wrote this letter. So, we now have to look at it and go temporary, abiding. Temporary, abiding. The church of Corinth did not because they are still all in operation in the first century. But you need to know as we have looked at the last 16 weeks that there are some temporary, some abiding. And this passage, even Calvin notes, as to the passage before us, we must observe that the offices which Paul makes mention of, some are perpetual, meaning abiding, others were temporary. Those that are perpetual are such as are necessary for the government of the church. Those that are temporary are such as were appointed at the beginning for the founding of the church and the raising up of Christ's kingdom. And these in a short time afterwards ceased. Calvin is right. There are some in this passage that are perpetual and some are temporary.

Now, two more points for clarification before we begin. ***The goal of all gifts and offices is edification to the glory of God.*** The goal of any office is edification. And the goal of any spiritual gift that God gives is edification. Meaning to help others be built up and be strong. That is why in 1 Corinthians 14:12 in Paul's discussion about prophecy, tongues, prophecy, tongues, all that, he says, "Strive to excel in building up the church." As you are wanting to use your spiritual gifts, church at Corinth, this is what you should be striving in. Strive to excel. Not just strive to build up the church. Strive to excel at building up the church, the fellow saints—not a building but the body of Christ that we are mystical members of. So the goal of all gifts and offices is edification to the glory of God.

The goal of edification is not just to be built up and be strong in some vague sense. ***The point of edification is that you would grow to be more like Jesus.*** Edification is not just that person strong. It is that person is like Jesus. That is the

goal of edification. Christlikeness. Listen. Actually, just turn there with me to the right to Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4:11-16. So, I want you to see with your own eyes right here as I read it aloud. The point of edification, the point of helping build one another up.

Ephesians 4:11-16. And he, that is Jesus, gave the apostles. That is an office, not a spiritual gift. He gave. Just because he says gave does not mean he is talking about a spiritual gift. I have to linger there for just a second. There are people who wrongly teach that there is a spiritual gift of apostleship. It is not like you have the office of an apostle, but you have the spiritual gift of apostle. And then they teach that there is a spiritual gift of evangelism or a spiritual gift of shepherding. No, this right here in verse 11 is talking about Jesus when he ascended, he gave gifts to the church. And the gifts he mentions are not spiritual gifts. They are spiritual offices that he gave to the church. So he gave the apostles as gifts to the church. He gave the prophets as gifts to the church, the evangelists as gifts to the church, the shepherds as gifts, the teachers as gifts to equip the saints for the work of ministry. For building up the body of Christ, that is edification. Building up to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. So that the body, everyone using their gifts and serving one another, we would be built up and be strong. Building up the body of Christ. Verse 13. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So what is the goal of edification? That we would all grow to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Continue on verse 14. So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine. Was Jesus like a child when he was an adult in his earthly ministry? Was he like a child tossed about by every wind of doctrine? The Sadducees come and say, "There is no future resurrection." Was Jesus like, "Oh my gosh"? No, he was mature. That is what we should be. That is what we should be aiming to be. That is what edification has the goal of. That we would be strong. Not like children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by human cunning. When the Pharisees tried to dupe Christ by their cunning, did he fall for it? Absolutely not. Well, you should want to be like that. I should want to be like that. That is what Christlikeness looks like. What about when they were crafty and their deceitful schemes? Christ spots it every time and exposes them. We should all want to be like that, mature. Verse 15. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. From whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped. When each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. So the whole point of our office, any office and any gift is edification and the whole point of edification is helping one another become more like Jesus for the glory of God.

All right, so there are the four introductory truths. Now, here is the doctrine that we should glean from verses, go back to 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. Here is the doctrine we should glean from these verses. God has given Christians gifts to help them be like Christ. Therefore, they must highly value them. God has given

Christians gifts to help them be like Christ. Therefore, they must highly value them. Some of the gifts are offices. Some of the gifts are spiritual gifts in this passage. Even some of them are offices. Some of them are spiritual gifts. But the point is God has given gifts to others and you and I must highly value them.

Now, God has given Christians gifts to help them be like Christ. Here is the clarification that we need to make again. My gift, whatever gift God has given me, does not help me be more like Jesus. Your gift helps me be more like Jesus. Whatever gift you have been given does not help you be more like Jesus. Someone else's gifts, my gift, someone else's gift helps you be like Jesus. So when I say God has given us gifts that we must highly value, that is Paul's whole point. He is listing all these things and says earnestly desire the higher gifts. And just sneak peek as to that. He is not saying you should really want to speak in tongues. He could not be saying anything more opposite than that. He lists tongues last purposefully to show it does not matter. He also in saying earnestly desire the whole point is not want to have that gift. The whole point is the higher gifts, you should highly value them, esteem them, and try to benefit from them as much as you possibly can. He is not saying everyone should want to have the spiritual gift that I have listed because that would defeat the purpose of what he just said before that when he says not everyone has the same gifts. His whole point is you should earnestly want to benefit from the higher the greater gifts the gifts that most lead to your edification. So my gift does not help me become more like Christ. Yours does. Others' gifts help me become more like Jesus. And your gift does not help you become more like Christ. My gift does or others' gifts do.

Now be reminded just verse 27. Here is the context. You are the body of Christ. Individual members of it. We have sufficiently covered that in the weeks previous.

Now, very quickly, I realize we are not into the text yet, but I want you to know there are 11 truths in this text that need to be made note of, and we are intentionally going to move through them rather quickly because we have got to linger a little bit longer on the main point of why Paul is bringing all of this up. And he is bringing up verse 31. Earnestly desire the higher gifts. That is the command. That is the exhortation that we need to glean from it. That is the 10th truth I will make note of. So, we will linger a little bit more on the 10th and 11th, but the first nine I think we should understand rather quickly because he is not bringing up an exhaustive list of everything he could be bringing up. He is just mentioning a few things so that he can get to the command to earnestly desire the higher gifts. So now having those four introductory points and I hope understanding the general context, let me point out to you these 11 things we should learn from verses 27 or frankly 28-31. 27 just helps us understand the context.

Start with me in verse 28. Here is the first truth. **God gave apostles to the church to lay the foundation.** God gave apostles to the church to lay the foundation. Beginning in verse 28, and God has appointed or set means he is sovereignly placed in the church first what? First apostles. First apostles. What is an apostle? Simply an apostle is an authoritative representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. When

an apostle speaks, it has the same authority as if Christ were speaking to you. When an apostle writes, it has the same authority as if Christ were writing to you. That is what an apostle is. Now, do we have any apostles today? No. The criteria for an apostle is they were an eyewitness of Christ and they were commissioned by Christ himself. Is anyone an eyewitness of Christ today? No. Has anyone been commissioned by Christ today? I mean visibly and audibly commissioned. It is like no. The only one that was after Christ's earthly ministry was the Apostle Paul. And the Lord Jesus set him apart specifically to make him an apostle. He says, "I am the last of all the apostles. I am the least and I am the last of all the apostles as one untimely born." Jesus appeared to me. He says in 1 Corinthians 15, because Christ appearing to you and visibly and audibly commissioning you, that is a criteria for being an apostle. So, I know it is kind of like, why do you got to spend time on that? Because there are millions of people who think there are apostles today who are still alive and they are dead wrong. An apostle is an authoritative representative of Christ who was an eyewitness and both visibly and audibly commissioned by Christ. There are no apostles today. But God did give the apostles to the church to lay the foundation and we should still benefit from them today and we can when we read the New Testament because they are the ones who wrote the New Testament.

But secondly, look at the next part of verse 28. **God gave prophets to the church to lay the foundation.** God gave prophets to the church to lay the foundation. He says, "Second prophets." I take him to be meaning the same thing that he mentioned in Ephesians 2 that these laid the foundation of the church built. You and I are built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles. Apostles laid the foundation. Prophets laid the foundation. There were New Testament prophets who did not have the same authority that the apostles did, but they did speak from God to the people. And God used them in that foundation period as Ephesians 2 says to lay the foundation for the church. God did give prophets to the church to lay the foundation.

Now thirdly, look at the next part of verse 28. **God gives teachers to the church to build on the foundation for edification.** Apostles laid, prophets laid, teachers still abide today, but we are not, no one is laying the foundation. It has already been laid. We are building. We are explaining and applying God's written word. That is what a teacher is. Instructing from the perfect and sacred Scriptures. God gives teachers to the church to build on the foundation. This is the primary role of elders, pastors, overseers. The primary role is to teach and preach God's word. That is not the only role, but that is the primary role. So God gives teachers to the church to build on the foundation for edification.

Now fourthly, look at the next part of verse 28. He says, "Then miracles," *dynamis*, powers, that is what the word means. And as we have looked at previously, this is particularly dealing with casting out demons miraculously and powerfully in the first century. So **God gave some the gift of miracles or powers as signs during the laying of the foundation.**

Fifth, look, he says, "Then gifts of healing." It is plural. Gifts of healings. So what

is the fifth truth we should learn? **God gave some the gift of healings as signs during the laying of the foundation.** These were miraculous sign gifts who especially went along with the apostles to confirm that they were the messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gifts of healings.

Sixthly, the next part of verse 28, **God gives some the gift of helping to build on the foundation.** This is not a miraculous sign gift. It is the gift that literally means to help or aid people especially when they are poor or sick. What office might that correspond to? What is the office of deacon? The deacon. And just to clarify, because some of us, I am going to bet some of us grew up in churches that had deacons that were not anything like the Bible says deacons are. Deacons are not a ruling board. Deacons have zero authority in the church. Zero. Deacons are servants. The word literally means a table waiter. Table waiter. Deacons are servants who exist to help the pastors make sure that everyone in the church, especially the poor and the sick, are cared for so that the pastors can devote a majority of their time to preaching and prayer. Deacons have zero authority. They help the pastors make sure everyone is cared for, especially the poor or the sick. So even this gift of helping or aiding has to do with corresponding to the office of deacon in the church. God gives some the gift of helping. They are very good at assisting. They are very good at caring for the poor, caring for the sick, caring for those who are in need, meeting needs. That is what they are gifted in.

Seventh, look at the next one. It says just administrating. That is the English Standard Version. It might say governments or something like that in your translation. That is literally—the literal word just means governing or governments. It means leading in a ruling fashion like you are ruling over something and you are able to lead and administrator is pretty good for us in the current way we use that word. That is the gift that he is talking about. **God gives some people that gift (governing) not for foundation laying but to build on the foundation for edification.** And this gift very clearly corresponds with the office of elder, pastor, overseer who must rule over a local church. Not rule with a rod of iron, but elders must rule over the church, govern the church under the authority and the headship of Christ. Christ is the senior pastor. Christ is the chief shepherd and the elders, pastors, overseers who are in a local church are just under shepherds under the authority and lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is not like we are just servant leaders. Now, that phrase needs to die. Servant leader. It is a way to just try to effeminize leadership. No, we are told to rule. Rule, administrate, govern, lead like a shepherd does sheep. And so this is the gift of governance or administrating. God gives some this gift in order to build on the foundation for the edification of the church.

Now notice what is the last gift or office in this list which he mentions: tongues and various kinds of tongues. Now, it is a different order than when he had previously mentioned. He does not even bring up the gift of discerning spirits right here in his list because it is not his main point is not to list every single gift, but he mentions some offices and gifts. He adds in a few others that he had not mentioned previously, but he intentionally lists tongues last. That is for a purpose.

God gave some the gift of languages as signs during the laying of the foundation of Christianity. I just want you to note Paul intentionally lists tongues last because the church at Corinth had come to so highly value this gift. Yet it was not a gift that was most conducive to edification. He lists this gift last and then tells them in verse 31, "Earnestly desire the higher gifts. Focus on benefit from the higher gifts." And he intentionally lists this one as the lowest in the list. Why? Because someone speaking in a different language, a human language, and then it being interpreted does not really serve to edify the church like teaching does. Like preaching does, like prophecy. That is his whole point in chapter 14. He pits prophecy against speaking in tongues, being like, I would rather say five words with my mind, implying preaching or teaching than a thousand words in a tongue. That is not going to build anybody up, not going to help anybody. But God gave some the gift of languages as signs during the laying of the foundation. And he intentionally lists tongues last, especially to rebuke the church of Corinth.

Now, he says in verses 29-30, here is the ninth truth. Are all apostles? The answer is no to all of these. These are rhetorical questions. The obvious answer is no. Are all prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Do all work miracles? No. Do all possess gifts of healing? No. Do all speak with tongues? No. Do all interpret? No. What do we need to learn from this? We need to at least learn this. **Not everyone had or has the same office or gifting. Therefore, we all need to benefit from one another.** Not everyone had or has the same office or gifting. Therefore, we all need to benefit from one another. We all do not have all gifts and offices. So, we desperately need one another if we are going to grow to be more like Jesus. So, again, let this rebuke those who live as though they do not need others in the body to help them. You do not have all offices and all gifts. You need others to help you grow to be more like Christ. There are things you are going to be incredibly good at and there are things you are going to be incredibly bad at. And you need people to help in those areas that you are incredibly bad at. They are good in some area. You are bad in some area. And it is simple as that. It works together like that. We help one another because we are all gifted differently. Let this also rebuke those who live as though they do not need to help others in the body. Some people think, "I do not need any help. I have got it." Some people think, "I need a lot of help and I want it, but I am not going to help anybody else." So, just examine yourself. Are either of those you? Do you live as though you do not need others? Or do you truly live, I need others, but you do not actually help anybody else. If either of those are you, you need to repent. You need others and others need you. So my exhortation is simply, so act like it. You need others. Others need you. So act like it. So not everyone had or has the same office or gifting. We all need one another to benefit from one another.

Now look at the 10th truth that we should learn from these few verses and it is just at the beginning of verse 31. But not everybody has the same gift or office. Earnestly desire the higher gifts. Earnestly desire. *Zeloō* is what it is in the Greek. It just literally means to value highly or to busy yourself about this. His point again, everybody look at me. Paul when he says earnestly desire the higher gifts he is not

in any way saying desire to have these spiritual gifts given to yourself. It is not his point. He has already covered the Lord sovereignly distributes individually the gifts that he wants and then he points out in verses 29 and 30 and so not everyone has the same office or gifts but earnestly desire the higher gifts. If he meant you should want these gifts, it is the opposite of his whole flow of his thought. ***The point of verse 31 is labor to benefit as much as you possibly can from the higher gifts because those are the ones that are most working for your edification, the higher gifts. So you must highly value those offices and gifts God has given you that are most conducive to edification. I will try to say it even more simply. You must highly value those offices and gifts that God has given that obviously help you to most grow to be like Jesus.*** Earnestly desire the higher gifts. Labor. Busy yourself to benefit from the higher gifts. It does not mean you do not need all of the gifts and all of the offices, but his exhortation is somebody speaking in a foreign language that you do not understand is not helping you be more like Jesus. You should be really concerned about those gifts that help you grow in your knowledge of the Lord and your wisdom of the Lord and your application for everyday life and how to live for God's glory which are obviously listed at the top the apostles, the prophets and the teachers because they are the apostles are representing Christ, right? The New Testament. The prophets are speaking direct revelation from God in the first century. The teachers are explaining and applying the Scriptures and he is saying those are the higher gifts. That is what you really need to benefit from. That is what is going to help you grow to be most like Jesus. So earnestly desire the higher gifts.

So brothers and sisters, here is my simple exhortation to you. The higher gifts, seeing that they are those who speak, preach, apply, teach God's word. Do everything you can to listen to the word preached as much as you can. Do everything you can to benefit from the preaching, application, teaching, explanation of God's word as much as you can. And you live in an amazing day. You can listen to sermons whenever you want. And there are a lot of faithful sermons out there. It used to be like I have got a six volume set. It is called Puritan Sermons. It is like this big. Each volume is like 800 pages. And all it was the sermons at Cripplegate. That is what it was called. Cripplegate was a specific building that they would rent out. And these different Puritan pastors because people needed preaching. They needed to hear the word. They needed to understand the word more. They would say, "All right, we are going to have a different Puritan preacher come every morning of the week at 6:00 a.m. You guys all come and listen to an hour, hour and a half sermon and then go to work for the rest of the day." And so people would have to get up incredibly early, walk an incredible distance, and come and in person listen to these sermons. That whole six volume thing is just they printed all of them. They wrote them all down and published them. And it is fantastic. You do not have to do that. You live in such a day that you can get extra preaching, extra teaching digitally just right in your hand. You can listen to audio books while you are driving or while you are exercising or while you are doing lawn work or while when you are doing any kind

of busy work that you are using your hands, you cannot necessarily read. You can listen to the preaching of the word. You can listen to books, things like that. So take advantage of it. Earnestly desire the higher gifts. The gifts that are going to help you grow in your knowledge, your understanding, your application, your love for the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what it would look like. Not just paying attention, laboring to listen to the word preached on the Lord's day, but try to benefit as much as you can. I am not saying you should be listening to a sermon every second of the day, but I am just saying earnestly desire the higher gifts. So, there is my exhortation for you. That is his exhortation. Earnestly desire, highly value those things that are most going to help you grow to be more like Jesus.

Now, look what he says lastly. This is just the really the transition into chapter 13. Though Paul did not write this letter with chapter divisions, so it is all just flowing. But as we understand it, it is like, "Oh, I see where it is going. It is going to the love chapter, the chapter that is at every wedding." That is not really his point, but still fine to read there if you want to. The 11th truth is this. ***Love to both God and man is the pinnacle of the Christian life.*** Spiritual gifts are not the pinnacle of the Christian life. The exercise of our spiritual gifts is not the pinnacle of the Christian life. Love to God and man, that is the pinnacle. That is why he says, "And I will show you a still more excellent way." He spends all of chapter 13 talking about you got all these spiritual gifts, even spiritual gifts you cannot even fathom. And he uses hyperbole in the first few verses. He is like, "But you do not have love. You are nothing. I am nothing. We do not have love. The more excellent way is not look how good I am at using my spiritual gifts. No, the more excellent way is love to God, love to man.

Boys and girls, look up here at me. The most important thing in the Christian life is loving God and loving other people. Like that is tied together. Jesus is asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" You remember that when they asked Jesus, "What is the greatest commandment?" And he says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength." And then he does not stop there. He says, "And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself." So Jesus is asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" And he says, "Love God and love man." I am not just going to give you one. Love. Loving one another. Loving God. That is the most important thing. That is the pinnacle of the Christian life. That is all. That is what edification looks like. Somebody who is mature, loves God, and loves people.

Now, just examine yourself. Consider the Corinthians. They were very preoccupied with their spiritual gifts. And more than anything, you could just say they were very preoccupied with themselves. How about you? Do you love God and man? And that is just the thrust of your life, loving the Lord and loving people, especially your fellow believers. Or are you preoccupied with yourself?

What does love to God look like? I got to spend just a minute clarifying some of this because love God, love man. That is a slogan that gets thrown out like crazy in our day and very rarely defined. And so people just import their own definition in what does it mean to love God? What does it mean to love man? And it is all

distorted and wrong. Let me give you just a few things. What does love to God look like? Well, love trusts. Love trusts. Love to God means trusting in the promises of God and resting in his providence. Do I love God? Do you trust his promises? Do you rest in his providence? Love also delights. Love delights in the persons of the Godhead. Delights in God the Father who elected me. Delights in God the Son who purchased me on the cross and delights in God the Holy Spirit who regenerated me, sealed me, fills me, gifts me, strengthens me and sanctifies me. Delights in God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Love worships. Love to God. What does that look like? Love worships. Worships God in the ways he has prescribed in his written word. Love obeys. Do you love God? How many people in our culture who even profess to be Christians immediately think you just asked if I obey God? I would say very few. It would be like, oh yes, I love God. Meaning I love that he gave me a get out of hell free card and I can live however I want now. But how many Christians would say, well that is synonymous with that looks like obeying God. How do I love him? If you love me, you will keep my commandments. This is the love of God, doing what he commands. Love obeys. Love obeys what God has commanded in his moral law. Love also hates. If you love God, you will hate the things that God hates. And you will love the things that God loves. Love also longs. Love longs for the glory of God to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. That is what love to God looks like.

What does love to man look like? I will show you a still more excellent way. He says in verse 31, love is the pinnacle. What does love to man look like? Well, love sees. Love has its eyes open. Love sees his fellow man and has a concern for his well-being because he is made in God's image. Love especially sees his fellow saint and has a concern for him because he is bought by Christ's blood. Love is not simply a feeling though it involves the affections. Of course, when I say love God, love man, I do not mean like feel warm thoughts about God, feel warm thoughts about men. Love to man sees and has an actual concern for others' well-being because first of all they are an image bearer no matter who they are and if they are a Christian they are both an image bearer and they have been bought by the Lord Jesus Christ and united to the same universal mystical body of Christ. So love sees. Love also serves. Serves fellow man for their good especially other believers. What good is it to see and not serve? No good. No good. Some people do not even see. They do not care. They are not concerned. Some people see but then do not say, "All right, I need to serve." It is like, "What good is that?" No good. Love serves. Love sacrifices. That is the best definition of love is willing self-sacrifice for the good of another. Willing self-sacrifice for the good of another. You are like, "Yeah, I love, I serve, I see, but no sacrifice ever comes into it." It is like, that is not love. Love has to sacrifice time, talent, or treasure to do good to other people. That is what love looks like. Love feels. Love feels the pain of suffering and the joy of being honored even when it is others who are suffering or being themselves honored. Love also builds. Love to man, love to other Christians. Love builds builds up others in the faith by praying for them, by encouraging them, by rebuking them when they need it, by exhorting them when they need it, so that their fellow Christians may be more like Christ.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, love God by trusting his promises and providence. Delight in him. Love him by delighting in him. Love God by worshiping him in the ways that he has prescribed. This is the more excellent way. Love God by obeying what he commands. And his commands are not burdensome. You do not obey for salvation. You obey because he has saved you to good works. This is how you glorify him. Love God by hating the things that he hates. Loving the things that he loves. Love God by longing for his glory to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, working, praying, laboring to those ends. Love your fellow Christian especially by seeing, opening your eyes to have a concern for their well-being. Serve your fellow Christian. Sacrifice your time, your talent, or your treasure to do good to your brothers and sisters. Feel the pain of their suffering. Love them enough to suffer with those who suffer and rejoice with those who are honored. And I exhort you to build love your fellow man by building them up in the faith. Whatever gifts, whatever talents, whatever you have got, you can pray, you can encourage them, you can rebuke if necessary, you can exhort them to love and good works so that they may be more like Christ.

Love is the more excellent way. All this has to culminate in love. Apostles exist to help build us up so we would love God, love man. Prophets existed to help build us up so we would love God and man. Teachers today exist to help build you up so that you would love God and love man. Love is the more excellent way. But it is not only the pinnacle of the Christian life. Love is the pinnacle of God's work toward us in the gospel. We love because he first loved us.

In conclusion, would you just turn with me over to 1 John 4:7-12? I want you to see this with your own eyes. Then I will pray. 1 John 4:7-12. Christians, consider God's love for us in Christ Jesus. Unbelievers, this is what is offered to you. Forgiveness of sins, adoption into God's family, love from God. This is what is offered to you if you will turn from your sins and trust in Christ alone for salvation. This is love. 1 John 4:7-12.

This more excellent way that Paul is about to exhort us to and that I have been exhorting you to has already been exemplified by God towards you. Beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. And this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. This is God's word. Praise be to God.

Let us pray. Our Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you for your law. We thank you for your gospel. Help us to earnestly desire the higher gifts, those gifts and offices that most help us grow to be like Jesus. And help us to be not focused on ourselves, but focused on you and on others. Help us to be people that love the more excellent way of loving you and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Help us to

be a church that is made up of individuals that are concerned with your glory and others' good rather than individuals who are concerned with themselves. We ask you to make us more like Jesus. We need it. We need to be sanctified. We ask you to save those who are not yet united to Christ. We ask you to purify your church and protect us as a local body. Protect us from wolves. Protect us from false teachers. Protect us from those who would try to cause division. And help us to be full of love for one another. We ask you to receive everything we do now. Receive all these things of worship for Christ's sake. And it is in his name we pray. Amen.