

LIFE GROUP GUIDE - Week Starting Sunday 23rd June

1 Corinthians 12 and 13

This Week's BIG IDEA

One way that God's power and love is demonstrated, is through the variety of Gifts that the Spirit equips all followers of Jesus with.

Focussing on God

Before discussions begin, spend some time meditating on the love of God. You could use Ephesians 2: 1-10 to help shape this.

Lead the Life Group in a moment of prayer, expressing their gratitude that God has showed His love to them. You could also use this song to help facilitate some time in His presence:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcR98pAeHBM> ('How Great is Your Love')

Getting into Scripture

This week we consider the positioning of one chapter alongside another; and how Paul juxtaposes a focus on *Spiritual Gifts* (chapter 12) right next to some very famous verses regarding *what love is* (chapter 13).

Jesus models perfect love and power through His life and ministry. And though we display and convey that love in imperfect ways, there is clearly a call over the Christian life to practise and pursue *gifts of the Spirit*; as a manifestation of this love. Not so that one person may be esteemed or elevated over another; but so that *together* we might experience the love of God.

- Read together 1 Corinthians 12 and 13. Yes, there is 44 verses all together – but there is something powerful about reading both in one go. Divide up the verses depending on group size.

Spend a few minutes with those verses open as individuals, noting down anything that stands out to you personally from **chapter 12**.

Give space for people to share what they have noted down.

- What does the Life Group understand about the use of Spiritual Gifts in the life of a believer?
- And what about in the life of a Church community?
- What's been their experience of Spiritual Gifts? (note, it might be helpful to discuss ways in which our Church culture is gradually becoming more open to the use of Gifts, since our 'Eagerly Desire' series last autumn?).
- Has the Life Group noticed any progression in their own discipleship, since we focussed on Spiritual Gifts last year? If so, how? If not, what's holding them back?

What Spiritual Gift i) intrigues ii) excites iii) confuses them the most? Why?

Now focussing on the verses from **1 Corinthians 13**: What words/phrases are most striking to the Life Group? Why?

How is Paul's tone and language helpful in connecting us with the Father's heart?

Why is this chapter so often quoted? (note: in funerals, it can provide comfort from the reminder of the permanence of love; in wedding ceremonies, it can provide a reminder of the firm foundation that love can be to build on).

- Ask the group to consider a time when a loving word was shared (personally or corporately). Can they describe the context / tone etc? How did that make them feel?
- Has there been an occasion when something was shared that did not feel loving / encouraging? How did / could they address that?
- How might the use of Spiritual Gifts in particular provide us with the opportunity to display these kinds of loving characteristics as a Church community? (note: ch 13 v7 provides us with some good language to 'anchor' our practice of Spiritual Gifts).

Time to Pray

This is a wonderful opportunity to now lay hands on one another in prayer. As the one facilitating this Life Group discussion, it's important to encourage expectation that the Spirit Himself will indeed come and fill those who invite Him in. And with expectation, invite the Holy Spirit to speak *to you* AND *through you*. Don't rush this moment, and don't be afraid of some prolonged periods of stillness. This is a key moment to serve, encourage and equip one another.

Note: We must become increasingly provoked that the Holy Spirit wants to bring revelation, resulting in transformed hearts and minds. Often this can be initiated through a word / image that seems too simple or seemingly insignificant. As we grow in our understanding, we discover that these 'simple' prompts very often lead to greater depth and meaning, as what is shared is considered and prayed about.