

Why Do We Need to Serve Motivated By Love?

Judging motives will harm your friendships and marriage.

We do not judge motives because we do not know people's hearts.

However, God knows our hearts and can judge our motives.

What Does The Bible Say?

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

(1 Corinthians 12:7 NLT)

God gives us spiritual gifts to serve one another.

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I

would be nothing. 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing. (1 Corinthians 12:31–13:3 NLT)

Our motivation is that we serve because of love for others, not to bring attention to ourselves.

Paul said the 1st Corinthians had issues within the church:

Jealousy and arguments (3:3)

Bragging and boastfulness (4:7; 5:6)

Arrogance (4:18-19; 5:2)

Egotism (10:24)

The Corinthian church had money, countless spiritual gifts, and a legacy of celebrity teachers, however, they were missing the greatest motivating factor—love.

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Corinthians 13:4–7 NLT)

Positive Aspects

is patient

is kind

rejoices with the truth

bears all things

Negative Contrasts

is not jealous

does not brag

is not arrogant

does not act unbecomingly

believes all things

does not seek its own

hopes all things

is not provoked

endures all things

does not take into account a wrong

does not rejoice in unrighteousness

This description of love is used in many marriage ceremonies, but Paul intended it to be used in how we serve each other within the church.

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” Jesus (John 13:34–35 NLT)

How Can You Obey?

3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

(Philippians 2:3–5 NLT)

Our example of how to serve others is Jesus.

Why do we need to be motivated by love when serving others?

It shows that we are Christ's disciples.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

SPIRITUAL GIFTS LISTED IN SCRIPTURE - Romans 12:6–8

Prophecy

Service

Teaching

Exhorting

Giving

Leading

Mercy

SPIRITUAL GIFTS LISTED IN SCRIPTURE - 1 Corinthians

12:4–11, 28

Word of wisdom

Word of knowledge

Faith

Healing

Miracles

Prophecy

Distinguishing of spirits

Speaking in languages

Interpreting languages

SPIRITUAL GIFTS LISTED IN SCRIPTURE - Ephesians 4:11

Apostles

Prophets

Evangelists

Pastors

Teachers

SPIRITUAL GIFTS LISTED IN SCRIPTURE - 1 Peter 4:10–11

Speaking

Serving

Explore:

In chapter 12, Paul dealt with the value of every member of the Corinthian congregation and the importance of spiritual gifts. The Corinthians desired the more prominent spiritual gifts for themselves. They opted for ambition and neglected love. The gifts are useless, however, and the value is superficial without love. It is this grand subject that the apostle addressed in 1 Corinthians 13.

In verse 31 of Chapter 12, Paul transitioned to the most excellent virtue the Corinthian believers should have strived for: love. If they did not exhibit love, then all of their spiritual gifts and virtues were hollow and meaningless. All the gifts and virtues mentioned in this passage were good and worthy of doing, but performing them without the compass of love would gain nothing. Love should be the primary motivation for using our spiritual gifts.

Tongues is mentioned first here because of the Corinthians' infatuation with and excessive emphasis on this gift (verse 1). Scholars reference the fact that eloquent speech was greatly admired in the first century, especially in the Corinthian congregation. This reveals why tongues was such a sought after gift among them. The tongues of angels is believed by many to be hyperbole on Paul's part. Even if there were a heavenly language, and I spoke it, but did so without love, it would mean nothing, the apostle would say. The sounding brass and clanging cymbals were musical instruments used in mystery religions of the first century. The idea behind these instruments was the notion that they could be momentarily electrifying but the sound would vanish just as quickly. Further, their use of the gift of tongues without love would be no different than the worship of the first century pagans.

The gift of prophecy, one that Paul encouraged the Corinthians to seek after (1 Corinthians 14:1), would also be useless without

love (verse 2). Further, without love, all spiritual knowledge and even a faith that is strong enough to move mountains, means nothing. And verse 3 indicates that all self-denial, even to the point of death for a cause, meant nothing without love. (Read Matthew 6:2 for an example of how someone can give to the poor and needy, yet it not benefit the giver because of self-centered motives.)

Explore:

Beginning in verse 4, Paul described the ingredients of love and made it very personal. In fact, these attributes are richly relational and focus on the well-being of others. Consider first, that love is patient. By definition, patience is the capacity to be wronged and not seek retaliation. This was not the normal response of the Corinthian church. The tendency of the Corinthians, and often with believers today, is to be impatient

with those who need patience the most. Love is also kind in that it responds in kindness toward all, even those who wish to do harm. Kindness is a virtue that is often overlooked, yet is greatly needed, especially within the body of Christ. (See also Ephesians 4:32.)

Envy and boasting, also mentioned in verse 4, seem to refer back to the Corinthians' use of spiritual gifts and portray opposite ends of the same pole. These immature believers were often guilty of envy (jealousy) over the gifts of others or were guilty of boasting of their own gifts. The fact that someone else may be in the spotlight or receive accolades and recognition caused jealousy among the immature believers. The Greek word for puffed up or arrogant is often used by Paul in 1 Corinthians (4:6, 4:18-19, 5:2, 8:1). Apparently, these were attitudes shamefully exhibited by these immature believers. Love, however, does not behave in such a way.

Paul continued his summary of what genuine love looks like in verse 5. Love is not rude, regardless of the fact that the Corinthians often displayed rudeness toward those who held opposing views. By definition, rudeness is a failure to show respect and honor to others. These immature believers demonstrated rudeness regarding women in worship (11:2- 16), the Lord's Supper (11:17-22), and spiritual gifts. As a result, the Corinthians had become irritable and resentful of one another. These are not love's attributes. The person motivated by love is not rude and does not merely look out for him or herself, nor is he or she irritable and resentful.

We also learn from verse 6 that love does not delight in evil, but instead rejoices in the truth. For a congregation dealing with issues such as incest (chapter 5), both of these characteristics were important. Love also protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres (verse 7). The word for truth refers to the gospel message and stands in contrast to unrighteousness.

Bearing all things (verse 7) speaks of enduring difficulties or difficult people. This was a term that spoke of holding fast like a watertight vessel. In this way, the follower of Christ, motivated by love, refrains from giving vent to selfishness in the midst of adversity that would tend to lead to such venting.

Believes all things or trusts does not portray a gullible spirit but instead portrays a positive attitude toward others, especially fellow believers. Behind this expression is an aptitude to believe well of others when there is no evidence to the contrary. Love keeps us from having an automatic skepticism

toward fellow believers. Such skepticism harms the body of believers rather than building it up. Contrary to popular belief, giving others the benefit of the doubt is not an absence of wisdom.

Hopes all things speaks of one who does not despair but instead sees the bright side of things, especially as it relates to fellow

believers. Endures all things or perseveres speaks of endurance amid hardships and persecution, especially in terms of our relationships. In summary, love isn't a suppression of self; rather, it is an expression of trust, hope, and perseverance. When this type of love is exhibited, it reflects the love of Christ, positively affects the body, and gives a positive portrayal of the church to an unbelieving world.

Explore:

Following his elaborate discussion of what love looks like, Paul concluded the chapter with a discussion regarding the permanence of love. Love is eternal and will last forever. All the spiritual gifts about which the Corinthians were divided, however, would come to an end.

In the Corinthian church, some of the members emphasized the manifestation of spiritual gifts, especially gifts such as tongues. Some commentators even reference the fact that some of these

Corinthians were requiring gifts such as tongues as proof of their faith. Paul's point was that these gifts, such as prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, would one day no longer be necessary. Love, on the other hand, will always be necessary and is a true sign of a follower of Christ. (See John 13:35).

Spiritual gifts help us in this world because we are like children and don't have the complete understanding we will have in eternity. Paul illustrated this when he compared the understanding and actions of a child to those of an adult (verse 11). He demonstrated this with a threefold summary—speaking, thinking, and reasoning. While certain behaviors are appropriate for children, that type of behavior ceased when the child grew up. When we are complete in Heaven, the very gifts the Corinthians were fighting about would become obsolete.

The reference to a mirror in verse 12 would have resonated with the Corinthians as Corinth was famous for its bronze mirrors.

The reflection seen in them, however, was an imperfect and distorted image. Paul used this analogy to illustrate the partial reflection that will one day give way to believers' perfect vision of God. The partial knowledge will then be replaced with a perfect knowledge of God. Our understanding will then be complete and we will no longer need the assistance of spiritual gifts.

Paul had referred to a triad of gifts that were short-lived (prophecy, knowledge, and tongues). In verse 13, he commended a triad of qualities that remain— faith, hope, and love. In summary, the three things we have now that will remain throughout eternity are faith, hope, and love. Of these three, however, love is the greatest as it is both eternal and reflective of the nature of God.

Explore:

Scholars are divided as to what Paul meant when he spoke of the perfect in verse 10. Some say this idea referred to the completion of the canon of Scripture, a view possibly supported by the fact that James referred to Scripture as the perfect law that gives liberty or freedom (James 1:25). Others see this as a description of the maturity of the church. In other words, when the church reached maturity, these gifts would no longer be necessary. Finally, others see this as a reference to the fullness of salvation experienced at the second coming of Christ.

Explore:

An important distinction should be made between spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Interestingly, Paul placed his description of love right in the middle of his teaching regarding spiritual gifts. In fact, every passage in the Scriptures

regarding spiritual gifts also contains exhortations to love.

Consider these differences between gifts and fruit.

- The fruit of the Spirit is the result of a process while the spiritual gifts are given in an immediate fashion. In fact, the spiritual gifts are endowed upon the believer at the moment of conversion while the fruit of the Spirit may take a lifetime of development and growth.

- The fruit of the Spirit are not optional traits, but should be true of all followers of Christ. Spiritual gifts, on the other hand, vary from person to person. To borrow Paul's analogy from 1 Corinthians 12:17, not every body part can be an eye or an ear. There are differences in each of us when it comes to gifts and that is a good thing. This is how Christ builds His church.

- The fruit of the Spirit is what every believer strives to achieve. Spiritual gifts, however, provide the means of achieving these goals. The gifts are given with the intent of helping us, and

others, in the development of our Christ-like character.

Explore:

Some have misunderstood Paul's use of the rhetorical device of hyperbole in this passage, understanding 1 Corinthians 13:1 to make a distinction between a kind of speaking in tongues as a human language (Acts 2:6) and a type of speaking in tongues as a heavenly, angelic, or prayer language. The Greek construction, however, suggests that Paul added the reference to angelic languages to push his example to the highest conceivable extreme: "If I were to speak in the languages of men—and even of angels—but didn't have love, I would be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). The context demonstrates that Paul was presenting hypothetical examples of the most extreme and excessive acts possible. Note the repeated use of the word

“all”: “If ... I know all mysteries and all knowledge ... if I have all faith ... if I give all my possessions ...” (13:2–3).

Of course, Paul knew that nobody could speak all the languages of humanity and heaven, any more than people could know everything, reveal everything, and give everything. Yet Paul’s argument is even more compelling, given these exaggerated hypothetical feats: Without love, the most eloquent speech, insightful knowledge, and sacrificial acts are useless.

Charles R. Swindoll, 1 & 2 Corinthians, vol. 7 of Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017), 191–192.

Explore:

Love is the chief aspect of the Spirit’s fruit; in fact, all the rest illustrates it (cf. Gal. 5:22–23 with love’s characteristics in 1 Cor. 13:4–7).

If we think of the various aspects of the fruit of the Spirit as a mathematical sum, the sum adds up to the character of our Lord Jesus. Patience and kindness—the first two aspects of love that Paul mentions—are both found in his description of the Spirit's fruit in Galatians 5:22 and 23. Love is patient with people and it tries to understand them and react accordingly. Love is kind in that it always thinks of a gentle and constructive way of dealing with people and difficult situations.

Derek Prime, *Opening up 1 Corinthians, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2005), 117–118.

Question 1 of 5

Why was it okay for Cain to marry a sister or niece?

Question 2 of 5

How would you define the word love?

Question 3 of 5

How is biblical love focused on the well-being of others?

Question 4 of 5

Is biblical love more emotion or a choice to do what is best for others? Explain.

Question 5 of 5

Why is it important that our good deeds are motivated by love rather than self-interest?

