

The Foundation of Love

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:27–13:13

1. Why do you think Paul placed the famous "love chapter" (1 Corinthians 13) between two chapters about spiritual gifts? What does this positioning reveal about the purpose of the gifts?

Prompt:

- Encourage the group to consider the flow of Paul's argument. Why might Paul want to redirect the Corinthians' focus?
- Ask: What message might Paul be sending by "interrupting" the discussion of spiritual gifts with this chapter on love?

Key Insight:

- Paul isn't side-lining the gifts - he's centring the discussion on what gives them meaning: love.

Scripture Support:

- 1 Corinthians 12:31 - "And yet I will show you the most excellent way."
 - 1 Corinthians 14:1 - "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit..."
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2. In what ways might we be tempted to use spiritual gifts for personal validation rather than for building up the Church? How can we guard against this?

Prompt:

- Invite discussion around pride, comparison, or performance in the use of gifts.
 - relate it to how awkward it might feel to discuss your own gifts in your group
- Ask: How can we tell the difference between using a gift humbly and using it to elevate ourselves?

Key Insight:

- Gifts are for service, not self-promotion. Love protects us from pride.

Scripture Support:

- **1 Corinthians 12:7 – “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”**
 - **Matthew 6:1 – “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.”**
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3. Paul speaks of “greater gifts” - how should we understand this phrase? How does love change the way we evaluate or desire these gifts?

Prompt:

- Discuss the idea that “greater” does not mean superior in status but in usefulness to others.
- Ask: How can love help us choose how and when to use our gifts?

Key Insight:

- The “greatness” of a gift is measured by its impact on others, not its impressiveness.

Scripture Support:

- **1 Corinthians 14:5 – “The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.”**
 - **Galatians 5:13 – “Serve one another humbly in love.”**
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4. Reflect on 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Can you think of times when you've done something good or spiritual, but without love? What difference would love have made in those moments?

Prompt:

- Ask for volunteers to share (as appropriate) moments when action lacked heart.
- Explore the emptiness or frustration of “loveless” service.

Key Insight:

- Spiritual activity without love can lead to burnout, pride, or disillusionment. Love fuels and sustains us.

Scripture Support:

- **Revelation 2:2-4** - "You have persevered... yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first."
 - **Micah 6:8** - "Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."
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5. What does it mean practically to "follow the way of love" (14:1) in your Life Group, church, and daily life? What might change if love truly became the foundation of your actions and service?

Prompt:

- Encourage the group to brainstorm practical ways to live out love - especially in how they use their gifts.
- Ask: What would shift in our Life Group/Church if love was the starting point for everything?

Key Insight:

- Love must shape not only what we do, but how and why we do it.

Scripture Support:

- **John 13:34-35** - "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
 - **Colossians 3:14** - "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."
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6. "Love never fails... but prophecies will cease" (13:8). How does this eternal nature of love shape your understanding of what truly matters in the Christian life?

Prompt:

- Discuss the temporary nature of all spiritual gifts, and the enduring nature of love.
- Ask: How does knowing that love "remains" reshape your goals or values as a Christian?

Key Insight:

- Love is not only foundational - it is eternal. It reflects the very character of God.

Scripture Support:

- **1 John 4:8 - "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."**
 - **John 14:6 - "I am the way..." (linking Jesus to the "most excellent way")**
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Optional Closing Activity

Ask each person to reflect silently for a moment, then share, either:

- One gift they believe God may be calling them to use (or use more boldly),
- One way they can express love more intentionally this week.