

## **Love**

1 Corinthians 12 – 14

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### The Problem:

During Corinthian worship times, every individual felt what they had to say was more important than what others were saying. People were speaking in tongues (that is, using an ecstatic language) without the presence of an interpreter (someone to put what had been said into plain speech). One person would sing, another would teach, another would share a revelation from God, constantly overlapping each other. It was a disordered mess.

### Paul's Response:

We are all united as the body of Christ. But unity does not mean uniformity. The Holy Spirit has given special gifts to each of us – there are apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, organizers, and so on. Each of us performs our function not for our own benefit but for the good of the entire body.

Hope and pray for the gifts you could best utilize to serve your community. But know this: There is one gift without which every other gift pales and indeed becomes useless. Desire most of all the gift of love.

If I could speak any human language or even the language of angels, but had no love, my message would do no more to arouse my listeners than would be achieved by blaring trumpets or a clanging cymbal.

If I could foretell the future, knew everything there was to know, understood the mysteries of God, had enough faith to move mountains, but had no love, I would amount to nothing.

If I gave away everything I had to help the needy, even handing over my own body to be burned, but had no love, I would be accomplishing precisely nothing.

Love is patient and kind, not jealous, not boastful, not proud, rude, or selfish, not easily angered, and it does not hold a grudge. Love is not pleased with injustice but rejoices whenever truth wins out. Love always remains loyal, always trusts, always hopes, always endures.

Love never ends; but when we are perfected and made complete, prophecies, speaking in tongues, all the other special gifts of the Holy Spirit, and this state of imperfect knowledge in which we exist will no longer be needed and will disappear.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, reasoned like a child; now that I've matured, I have put childish ways behind me.

Now we see our semblance with God obscurely, as if looking into a dirty mirror, but then we will be face to face, and will see with perfect clarity. Now I know partly; then I will know fully, just as God knows me fully.

Three things will last forever – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love.

Now, when you come together to worship, everything must be done in love to strengthen the entire assembly. And everything must be done in an orderly fashion, one person speaking at a time with all the others considering carefully what's being said. After all, God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

No one should speak in tongues unless there is someone present with the gift of interpretation. You see, speaking in tongues is a wonderful gift. I do it all the time myself. But it is best used during private worship, since it only benefits the one who uses it. Of course, if there's someone to interpret, the benefit can be shared by all. Rather than exercise the gift of tongues during corporate worship, it would be better to pray for the gift of being able to speak God's truth in a way everyone can understand.