



Word on Wednesday Bible Study

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Have you ever been in a room full of talented people and still walked away feeling empty? Paul was writing to a church just like that — gifted, anointed, and yet a mess. So he stops mid-conversation about spiritual gifts and says, "I will show you a more excellent way." That way is love.

Love is not incidental to ministry. Love is the _____, the _____, and what gives everything else its _____.

"But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still _____." — 1 Corinthians 12:31

I. The Problem of Position — 1 Corinthians 12:27–31

Corinth was the commercial capital of Greece — sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and obsessed with status. That same culture walked right through the church doors.

The Corinthians stopped seeing the gifts as _____ and started treating them as _____.

Paul is not building a hierarchy of _____. He is describing _____ in the body.

The moment we compare our gift to somebody else's gift, we have turned the body of Christ into a _____. And the Spirit of God cannot dwell where _____ rules.

This Is Not Ancient History

This shows up in Sunday school, deacon ministry, staff meetings, choir rehearsals, usher practice, and pulpit committees. The person with the public gift gets treated as inherently more valuable than the greeter at the door, the nursery worker, or the prayer warrior on their knees.

One challenge that has stifled the church in this generation: we started celebrating _____ more than _____.

We applaud _____ but overlook _____. People look at prominence, but God looks at _____.

One day God will not say, "Well done, famous servant" or "celebrated servant." He will say, "Well done, good and _____ servant."

1. Where have you seen the body of Christ treated like a competition rather than a community?
2. Honestly: have you ever ranked yourself (higher or lower) by comparing your gift to someone else's? What happened in your spirit when you did?
3. Name a "behind-the-scenes" servant in your life or church whose faithfulness has held things up. How can you honor that person this week?

II. The Poverty of Performance — 1 Corinthians 13:1–2

Tongues without love is just _____. Prophecy without love is _____.
All knowledge, all mysteries, mountain-moving faith — without love, Paul says you are _____.

Paul is not saying spiritual gifts are bad. He is saying gifts without the right _____ — without love — are spiritually _____.

The Gong and the Cymbal

In the ancient world, brass gongs were used in _____ temples during idol worship. The clanging cymbal belonged to the frenzied worship of the goddess Cybele, right there in Corinth. All sound. All spectacle. All _____. No substance.

A church that has perfected its _____ but lost its _____ is a building full of virtuosos weeping in an empty dressing room.

God is not impressed by your _____. Your performance does not move Him. He is looking for your _____.

"He who does not love does not know God, for God is _____." — 1 John 4:8
Love is not just something God _____. Love is who God _____.

1. What is the difference between performing for God and loving God? How can you tell which one you are doing?
2. Have you ever felt empty after a "successful" act of service or ministry? What do you think was missing?



If 1 John 4:8 is true — that God is love — what does it say about a Christian who is gifted but unloving?

III. The Priority of Purpose — 1 Corinthians 13:3

Paul elevates his argument one more time. Up to this point he has spoken of gifts. Now he turns to sacrifice. Read 1 Corinthians 13:3 aloud.

"If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I _____."

Paul is going after the heart and asking the question of motive. Why do you do what you do?

Sacrifice can be motivated by many things: feeling _____, being seen as _____, hiding from guilt or shame, or pride in being someone who can take it. But not one ounce of sacrifice rooted in something other than love registers in the books of _____.

She was not serving out of love. She was serving out of _____. The sacrifice was real, but the _____ was wrong.

Duty without _____, obligation without _____ — that is working for wages in a currency Heaven does not accept.

A More Excellent Way

It is not a harder way. Not a more complicated way. It is a _____ — a way of being in the world that makes everything else make sense. That way is _____ love.

1. Why do you serve, give, or sacrifice? Sit with that question honestly before you answer.
2. Can you identify a place in your own life where service has slipped into duty without delight? What would it look like to come back to love?
3. What is the difference between agape love and the kinds of love the world usually talks about?



Putting It All Together

Paul has taken us on a journey through three movements. Fill in each one:

- I. The Problem of **Position:** we rank ourselves and compete with one another even in the church.
- II. The Poverty of **Performance:** gifts exercised without love are nothing but religious noise.
- III. The Priority of **Purpose:** even sacrifice is meaningless without the right motive.

Over all three movements Paul hangs one phrase like a banner:

A More Excellent Way

The Invitation

Choose the more excellent way. Choose the way God Himself chose when He looked down on a broken, rebellious, undeserving world — and loved it anyway.

In the end, the greatest evidence that we belong to Him will not be how **gifted** we were, but how deeply we **loved.**

Personal Application

Write one specific way you will choose the more excellent way this week:

Prayer

Lord, forgive us for measuring ourselves by visibility instead of faithfulness. Forgive us for performing when You have asked us to love. Pour Your agape love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and let love be the root of every gift we use and every sacrifice we make. In Jesus' name, amen.