

7 Points to Get the Love Chapter Right

Possibly the most oft quoted passage in the Bible, definitely at weddings, is 1 Corinthians 13—the *Love* chapter. Don't get me wrong—this passage does have a place in marriage. Indeed my wedding ring has inscribed on it in Hebrew:

אהבה לעולם לא נכשלת Love Never Fails (1 Cor. 13:8)

However, in context, this powerful chapter is not speaking of marriage, but congregational unity and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1. Paul starts off in Chapter 12 by telling the Corinthians that there are nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (Prophecy, Miracles, Healings, etc.). He encourages them to seek these gifts. (v. 31). He emphasizes that the body of Messiah needs these gifts.

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (v.7)

When the gifts of the Spirit are not in operation the body suffers. When they are in operation and publicly encouraged (and governed by leadership) the whole body is blessed. How different would our services be if we *really* encouraged people to seek that God would use them.

2. He then makes it clear that God wants to use all of us *but not always in the same way*. Everyone of us can move in the gifts, but not necessarily all the gifts, all the time. Paul says over and over again when explaining the gifts that *they are given to each one of us*.

To one is given..., to another..., to another..., etc, (v. 7-10)

He compares the congregation to a body. The foot needs the

eye, the hand needs the foot, etc. This is where love comes in. He is saying, while you go after God and seek the gifts, don't be jealous of others. Rejoice when your brother is used by God. Praise God when your sister prophesies.

3. As he shares on these supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, which every congregation should have, he says, *However, if you are not being motivated loves, it is all a waste!*

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

4. The love chapter is about loving one another in our congregation; about preferring one another and seeking the good of others. It is about unity. Only in such an atmosphere can the gifts of the Spirit bear much fruit. If God pours out his Spirit on a congregation full of jealous, gossiping egomaniacs. ... the gifts will be exciting, but in the end they will not bear kingdom fruit, but division.

Many years ago after going to a meeting where the presence of God was manifest and the gifts were in operation, an international Messianic leader suddenly realized that he and his colleagues had been wrongfully holding a grudge against other brothers. In the presence of God he understood how petty this was and it led to a monstrous breakthrough, with much repenting and deep restoration.

That is the goal of the move of God; to promote love and unity, not to impress people with our gifts of healing or miracles.

5. When Yeshua did miracles it was often prefaced by the phrase: He was moved with compassion. This is why, in the

midst of his most detailed teaching on the supernatural (1 Cor. 12 & 14) Paul drops in this word of encouragement: It's all about love.

6. His whole point is that we need the power of God and the gifts of the Spirit so the body (the people of God) is built up, but the goal is that a) everyone is used according to his or her gift, b) it leads to unity and c) is rooted in love.

7. As we can read in the earlier chapters (1:10-17), this was a congregation struggling with division, as different ones were loyal to Peter, Apollos or Paul. Chapter 13 comes as a godly plea that the leaders and congregants would not allow petty rivalries keep them from a powerful visitation from heaven.

We too must examine our own hearts:

- Are we jealous of others?
- Are we holding grudges against other believers?
- Are we coveting positions that belong to others?
- Do we rejoice when God moves through others?
- Are we allowing the Holy Spirit to move in our congregations?
- Are we allowing and training our congregation to move in the Holy Spirit?
- And lastly, are we desperate for a love-filled visitation from heaven?

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