

Much More

The Power and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

“A Better Way” – 1 Corinthians 13

Have you ever seen someone take something that was intended for good and use it in some way it wasn't intended to be used?

In parenting, I have seen this happen several times with my kids...

- **Using a fly swatter as a sword and touching each other with it.**
- **Electronic device**
- **Jackson – climbing up his dresser (tipped it over)**
- **Katherine – choked by the rope**

It isn't just a problem with kids. Adults do this, too. People seem to have this special ability to take things that are intended for a good purpose and misuse them.

Over the past two weeks, we have looked closely at [the lists of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Bible](#). One list is in 1 Corinthians 12, and the other list is in Romans 12. These last two messages have helped us get more familiar with these gifts.

Today, we will [shift our focus](#) away from WHAT the gifts are and towards HOW these gifts should be used.

According to the scriptures, it is possible to desire and use these God's gifts in a way that pleases God, and it is possible to desire and use these gifts in a way that does not honor God at all. Paul told the church in Corinth that there is a “better way,” or “a more excellent way” to desire and use the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

[1 Corinthians 12:31](#)

[31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts.](#)

[And I will show you a still more excellent way.](#)

As believers, honoring God in the way we use His gifts should matter.

How can we use the gifts God has given us in a more excellent way?
This morning, we will consider the better way to use the gifts God has given us through His Spirit. We will answer these two questions...

- 1. What does it look like to use the gifts of the Spirit in a way that displeases God?**
- 2. What does it look like to use the gifts of the Spirit in a way that pleases God?**

Body

- 1. What does it look like to use the gifts of the Spirit in a way that displeases God?**

The church at Corinth struggled to use the gifts of the Spirit in a way that pleased God. Rather than using the gifts to edify the church, many in the church were using the gifts to gratify themselves.

Nine times in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul tells the church that they should exercise the gifts of the Spirit in a way that builds up and encourages others. Paul corrects them for using the gifts in a chaotic, disorderly way, and he admonishes them to use the gifts for the profit of all, especially when the church is assembled together.

The Corinthian church is not the only example in the Bible of someone desiring to use the power of the Holy Spirit to edify themselves rather than to honor God and build others up. Another clear example of this wrong kind of heart concerning the power of the Holy Spirit is found in the book of Acts in the story of **Simon the Magician in Samaria.**

Tell the story of Simon the Magician.

Acts 8:20-24

20 But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before

God. 22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” 24 And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

Peter recognized that Simon the Magician desired to use the power of the Holy Spirit for self-promotion. Peter told Simon to pray that God would not kill him for his impure heart and his willingness to abuse the power of the Holy Spirit! This is the same Peter that had recently seen God kill Ananias and Saphira for lying to the Holy Spirit. It appears that Simon the Magician took Peter’s words seriously and desired to repent.

The church in Corinth and Simon the Magician both had something in common: they were self-centered in their desire and use of the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Using the gifts of God’s Holy Spirit for selfish desires, especially to put yourself in the spotlight, does not please God! According to what Peter said to Simon, it is a fearful thing to desire to use the power of the Holy Spirit for self-promotion and personal profit!

So, we have considered...

- 1. What does it look like to use the gifts of the Spirit in a way that displeases God?**

Let’s now consider...

- 2. What does it look like to use the gifts of the Spirit in a way that pleases God?**

In 1 Corinthians 12:31, Paul says there is a “more excellent way” to use the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Paul says that apart from this better way, the gifts of the Spirit profit nothing. What is this better way?

One of the most beloved passages of scripture in the Bible is the love chapter – 1 Corinthians 13. Many Christians turn to this passage to talk about and define love, but most are unaware that the context of this chapter is couched right in the middle of Paul’s teaching on the gifts of the Spirit.

I don’t think it is wrong for us to consider what God’s love is like by examining 1 Corinthians 13. But we miss out on some very important insights if we take this passage out of its context of the gifts of the Spirit!

Based on its context, how should Paul’s teaching about love in 1 Corinthians 13 shape our understanding of his teaching on the gifts of the Spirit?

To please God, the gifts of the Spirit must be used in love.

Let’s read the love chapter together, 1 Corinthians 13. But instead of starting at 1 Corinthians 13:1, let’s start one verse before at 1 Corinthians 12:31. And instead of stopping at the end of 1 Corinthians 13, let’s read one more verse into 1 Corinthians 14:1. By doing this, it is easy to see that the entire love chapter is couched right in the middle of Paul’s teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That is because love *is* the “more excellent way” to use the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, it is the *only way* to use God’s gifts in a way that pleases Him.

1 Corinthians 12:31

31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 14:1

14 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

Paul also emphasizes the importance of using the gifts in love in the context of the gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12.

Roman 12:9-10

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Love IS the more excellent way to use the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, we cannot use the gifts in a way that pleases God without love!

Love does not use the gifts to put the spotlight on self. Love desires and uses the gifts for the building up of others and to give King Jesus all the glory.

Conclusion

In our church we have a saying: “The biblical foundation for disciple-making culture is LOVE.”

Without love, the gifts of the Spirit profit us nothing. With love, God’s gifts are used to build up His Church and to point others to Jesus. How do we use the gifts in love? True love, God’s love, is not something we can produce or muster up in our own strength. To really operate in love, we must depend on the love of God in us.

1 John 14:16, 19

16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him...

19 We love because he first loved us.

You must know God’s love before we can love with God’s love.

Invitation

If you do not know Jesus, you do not know His love. Jesus is the perfect picture of love...

If you already know the Lord, how should you respond? It is clear that someone who knows God and has the gifts of the Spirit can misuse those gifts, just like the church in Corinth or like Simon the Magician.

There are two common pitfalls that can cause believers to drift from love and into selfishness concerning the gifts of the Spirit...

- 1. Pushing Jesus out of the spotlight** (like Simon the Magician, using the gifts of the Spirit for self-promotion or personal gain)
- 2. Leaving Jesus out of the spotlight altogether** (walking in disobedience because of insecurity, fear, or selfishness)

Both error because both miss the mark of love. Both miss the mark of love because both are more concerned about self than loving God and loving others.

Which one of these two pitfalls do you see yourself in the most?

There is another story about Peter and John where the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit were put on display. In the first story, we saw what not to do in Simon the Magician. I want to close us with this second story about Peter and John. In this story, they set the example and show us how to use the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit in a more excellent way.

Tell the story of Peter and John at the temple gate.

Our goal must be to put King Jesus in the spotlight! Using the gifts to love other people and, when that causes the spotlight to shine on us, to reflect that light directly to Jesus.

The gifts are not for my own self-gratification or self-promotion. There is a better way, a more excellent way, and that way it LOVE. Love puts others ahead of myself. Love puts King Jesus in the spotlight. Love lifts high the name of Jesus. May we be a church that is known by others for our LOVE.

Hugh Sauer prays | Lift High the Name of Jesus