

**Introduction:**

- Have you ever worked really hard for nothing? What does that leave you feeling like?
  - We once had an event that we worked really hard to set. We poured ourselves into it only to have it end in a disaster.
  - Maybe you worked really, really hard to get a great performance review only to be reprimanded.
  - I remember working really hard when we were raising capital to build this building. We finished fell just short of our goal (I was Ok with that) only to find that about 150k of the pledges that were made were not going to be fulfilled.
  - After the initial remodel of our home the roof blew off.
  - How about you? What have you really worked hard for but all for nothing? What does that leave you feeling like? Tired, disappointed, confused, angry, 'what's the use'.
- 1 Cor 13:1-7, 13; 16:14. *"Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love."* (1 Corinthians 13:13, NLT) Paul's point in this passage is this: "The greatest of these is love!" Love is a more excellent way. 1 Cor 12:9

**I. Working For Love Is Empty**

- A. Bob Seger had a set of lyrics that said, *"I used her she used me and we neither one cared. We were getting our share. Working on our night moves."*
  1. So many have been hurt by the pre-marital sex sin. So often a lady will give herself away to a man just to be 'loved.' Only to find it is empty. A man will take advantage of a woman. When it all over, it's empty.
  2. Paul is trying to tell the church at Corinth that you can do all this stuff but if it is not motivated by love when you finished it is empty.
- B. By God's design the church has been gifted with many spiritual gifts. Paul wants us to understand this. This is God's working in His church.
- C. Eagerly desire spiritual gifts. 12:1, 7. vs. 31. The trouble with gifts is that you do not have to have a changed heart to use them. Watch what Paul then does. He shows his own life in motion. These are real things that really happened to Paul.
  1. Paul lists all these wonderful gifts: apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, etc. Let me show you a more excellent way...Love! He then lists 5 'ifs'
    - a) If I could speak all the languages of the earth...I am noisy symbol.
    - b) If I had the gift of prophecy...
    - c) If I could understand all mysteries and possess all knowledge...
    - d) If I had the faith to move mountains...I would be nothing.
    - e) If I gave all I had to the poor, and sacrificed my body...I could boast! But I would have gained nothing.
  2. If I do all these things but I do not have God's love in me...I gain nothing! In others words I have worked really hard but for nothing! All that work would not have helped, benefited or gained me a thing.

**II. Becoming Love Is A More Excellent Way**

- A. 12:9 A more excellent way.
  1. Gr. Huperbolen - This verb, having an original sense of "to throw beyond," means "to go beyond," "to stand out," "to excel," or, censoriously, "to transgress the proper measure." The noun means "excess" or "supreme stage or measure." Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#) (p. 1230). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

2. The mode of life described in 1 Cor. 13:1ff. far surpasses a life controlled by the charisms (gifts) (1 Cor. 12:31). Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 1230). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans. Love far surpasses goes way beyond the impact of the gifts!
- B. Now remain: Faith Hope and Love the Greatest is Love
  1. Greatest - Gr. Megas - Great, big, powerful. Huge!
  2. Love is the biggest deal of the Kingdom! It surpasses anything you can think of. If you think the gifts are awesome try love!
- C. 1 Cor 16:14 Do everything with love.
- D. *"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NLT)
  1. Opposite of the passage:
    - a) impatient
    - b) mean spirited
    - c) jealous
    - d) boastful/proud
    - e) rude
    - f) demanding
    - g) irritable
    - h) keeps records of wrongs done to it
    - i) rejoices with injustice
    - j) never embraces truth.
  2. Now think about how much further, greater, far surpassing is love! Think about how much better your life shines and ministers to others when you let love rule. Like Dan Mohler said, "If it is not in Jesus life then what is it doing in mine? If it is not in Jesus mouth, then it should not be found in mine."
  3. If I do not see His love first then I feel indebted to Him and work real hard to earn His friendship and I reduce my self to just serving Him and not knowing Him.

### III. A Step Away From Carnality

- A. Corinth was a carnal church. They did a lot of things that served their own flesh.
- B. Paul is saying to them,
  1. "Let love rule in your heart and it won't be about serving yourself it will be about serving others."
  2. Let love rule in your heart and you won't be deceived by using your gift for selfish gain. It will be about "Where do you want me to use this Father?"
  3. Christianity is about Christ-likeness through knowing Him. And the first thing we should know is His love. The first thing to understand is His love. His love is the atmosphere of heaven...On earth as it is in heaven. His love is the culture of heaven. On earth as it is in heaven.
- C. *"Jesus replied, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."* (Matthew 22:37-40, NLT)