

1 CORINTHIANS 13

Michelle Myers

All quotes are from Michelle Myers unless otherwise noted.

We misunderstand, and subsequently, misuse spiritual gifts.

And as our world becomes increasingly autonomous, layers of comparison and competition still keep the church divided instead of functioning as a body.

Love is what makes our gifts useful on the spiritual level.

Jesus said we would be identifiable as His by our love – not simply because we're the best.

- Every spiritual gift is given by God (12:4-7).
- Everyone receives a spiritual gift from God. (12:7).
- Everyone does not receive the same gift (12:4).
- God allows for gifts to be used in different ways (12:5).
- God, who gives the gift, determines the gift's importance, not the gift itself (12:4-7).
- Your spiritual gift should be used to serve and strengthen others (12:7).
- God empowers you to use the gifts He gives you (12:11).
- No spiritual gift is more important than another (12:15-17).
- All spiritual gifts are needed (12:17).
- God put you where you are to use the gift He gave you (12:18).
- Our spiritual gifts are meant to unify us (12:20;25).
- Together, we display Jesus to the world (12:27).

When Jesus condensed all of the law to love God and love others, He made the law easier to remember, but much harder to live.

Love raises the standard for our how we use our gifts as well.

Love is patient: trust God's timing.

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Story of Joseph

Don't miss this: repeatedly throughout Joseph's story, we see these five words: The Lord was with Joseph.

Joseph served faithfully and patiently as God used slavery and prison as his training ground for the palace.

But God doesn't waste anything -- waiting included.

Fight the urge to rush God's timing and rush into God's presence.

love is kind: see people for who they are, not what they do

Workers who are viewed as tasks will feel used, not loved.

Undervalued people don't work hard, and people typically won't stay where they feel used.

The more important the mission is, the easier it is to stop prioritizing people.

But no one had a more important mission than Jesus, and He never stopped seeing people and caring for them, despite what He was doing or what they were doing.

- The woman at the well
- Zacchaeus
- Judas
- Jesus on the cross

Create evidence you love people for who they are – loved children of God – not what they may or may not be currently doing.

See people for who they are.

love does not envy: celebrate + support

Envy and jealousy, for example, sound like struggles we should grow out of, which is why we created a glamorized, socially-accepted version we call "comparison."

"Comparison" is still a struggle in adulthood when we do not make efforts to get rid of the envy in our hearts.

Envy in the heart sometimes vocalizes like criticism.

Champion those the world would say is your competition

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love does not boast + is not proud: stay teachable

“If you are the smartest person in the room, you’re in the wrong room” I also don’t think that we should pursue pride to the point where we believe a room exists where we’re incapable of learning.

Here are some ways you can actively pursue humility while using your gifts:

- Apologize and be willing to admit your mistakes.
- Ask questions and learn from others.
- Ask for help.
- Stay approachable.
- Have an honest close circle. Honesty will always take you further than flattery.

love does not dishonor others: make the effort to honor

Dishonoring others can be done quickly and without much thought.

In settings of using our gifts, dishonoring others usually takes these forms:

- Gossip
- Developing cliques + hierarchies
- Sarcasm (insults we disguise as comedy)

Honoring others, though, requires our intentionality, not merely our reactions. So to honor others, we should:

- Deal with problems privately and individually.
- Make efforts toward unity + inclusion
- Encourage others privately, publicly, and often.

love is not self-seeking: separate self from ambition

“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.” – Romans 15:20

Kingdom ambition is about the gospel and creating new gospel wins where Christ is not known. The potential for the gospel, not the potential for self, is what determines the direction

Loving God and loving others will absolutely require your ambition – just without seeking of self.

love is not easily angered: overlook most offenses

“it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.” Proverbs 19:11

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When we allow ourselves to focus on minor things, major things get missed.

Instead of getting worked up over why the gospel was being preached, Paul chose to simply rejoice that the gospel was being preached.

love keeps no record of wrongs: stop keeping score

Failure should be expected.

Share the wins, and share the mistakes.

Learn together.

Accept blame before you place blame.

Instead of allowing past mistakes to hold you back, view them as learning experiences so when you try again, you're better prepared.

In a culture of fear:

- people hide mistakes
- cut corners
- do the bare minimum
- do not take initiative unless asked
- Conversations are avoided, feelings are assumed
- questions go unasked
- distance grows while buy-in plummets.

In a culture of love:

- people aren't afraid to ask for help
- go the extra mile
- jump in to assist with someone else's responsibility
- take a calculated risk that just might work
- Communication is open
- problems get resolved
- loyalty grows along with ownership.

Lead up.

love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth

Stand firm.

Warren Wiersbe: "Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy."

love always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres: quit quitting

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Love that comes from God isn't fragile.

Any time we allow ourselves to fight the wrong battles, get discouraged over minor issues or get distracted by defeated enemy, we've simply lost focus of what matters most.

Remember the real battle, and quit quitting over lesser things.

Live and love in such a way that protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres.

love never fails

Faith is our foundation. Everything comes back to responding to who God is and what God has done.

Hope is our motivation. Because of Jesus, our perspective can stay set on things above.

Love is movement. It's how we put faith and hope into action.

Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8) – Your skill will fail you on occasion – but this kind of love will not.

A Prayer to Level Up Skill with Love

Father, You are the giver of every skill I have.
Forgive me when I've allowed Your gift
To inflate my own ego or importance
Or immaturely go unused as if Your gifts were solely for my benefit.

Help me desire You, God, not Your gifts.
And make me grateful for the gifts You've given to others.
Rather than the measurements the world uses,
Help me to measure my gifts with the love that goes with them.

Lord, make me patient.
I trust Your timing.
When I'm tempted to rush Your timing,
Help me rush into Your presence.

Lord, make me kind.
Help me see others for who You made them to be,
Not what they do.
Give me opportunities to show Your kindness to them,
Even when it's not deserved.

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Lord, make me teachable.
Give me the humility to admit when I'm wrong.
Do not let me fall for flattery,
Or become distracted by boasting.

Lord, keep my actions far from dishonor.
Do not let gossip or hierarchies have a grip on me,
But put unity and inclusion constantly on my heart.
Give me opportunities to encourage and honor others.

Lord, help me separate self from ambition.
Help me create Kingdom wins where Christ is not known.
Determine my direction where there is potential for the gospel,
Forgetting potential for self.

Lord, help me overlook most offenses,
So I have the maximum time to pursue what matters.
Help me to forgive others,
To the same measure I have been forgiven.[1]

Lord, help me stop keeping score.
Help me accept blame before I place blame.
When others around me make mistakes,
Help me detour shame from holding them back
by lovingly reaffirming who God made them to be.

Lord, help me rejoice in truth,
Quit quitting over lesser things,
And hold fast to You, the Love that never fails.

Amen.