

"I will show you an even better way." 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 31

The apostle Paul has been speaking to the Corinthians about spiritual gifts and the place and role of each individual Christian in the community of the church, body of Christ.

But there has been a problem in the Corinthian church. They have been enjoying great spiritual power and using the gifts of the Spirit freely. They have been healing, speaking in tongues and prophesying. Unfortunately, however, they have been using these gifts self-indulgently, failing to recognise that the gifts of the Spirit are given to build up and edify the church.

Paul wants them to understand that spiritual power exercised without consideration for the interests of others can be damaging, even being used to condemn and punish others. He wants them to know that there is a better way; that spiritual gifts are supposed to be used to encourage and strengthen others, and that happens when they are used as instruments of love in an attitude of grace.

So he proceeds to declare that tongues used without love is just so much noise, like a clanging cymbal; people who use gifts of prophecy, knowledge and even powerful faith without love are nothing; even generosity without love gains nothing.

The fact is that, whatever we do, it is still the attitude of our hearts that is all important. The things we do for God, for others and for ourselves will only be of any real, eternal value if they have their source in our connection with God's heart of love. Only then are they an expression of the love of God extended through our own hearts and lives into the lives of others and into the world.

I believe that what we do emerges from what we are, and therefore what we are needs to be people who are first and foremost connected to the life of God through our own individual, personal relationships with him. Only then will what we do be generated from the proper source and bear the right fruit.

Paul continues by listing some of the characteristics, or qualities of grace, that emerge from the love of God reflected in our own lives. Tomorrow, we'll start looking at those.

Prayer.

Father, thank you that your love and grace is the source of all good things in my life. Please help me to see where in my life I am engaged in things which do not have their source in your love. May I love you and others because you first loved me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*All these devotionals can be found on our website [inghamitechurch.org](http://inghamitechurch.org) on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.*