

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE FELLOWSHIP

First Corinthians

Lesson Four



Chapters 12-14 of 1 Corinthians are among the most important and controversial in the entire New Testament. The theme of this section of the book is spiritual gifts and their use by members of the Body of Christ in the church. Chapter 13 is one of the best loved passages of literature known to mankind, the famous “Love Chapter.” Please spend some time in prayer before beginning this study asking the Lord to reveal to you what you need to know about the many important spiritual truths you will encounter as you study this crucial passage of His Word.

Please memorize the following verse and be prepared to write it out at the end of this lesson.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

CHAPTER TWELVE

INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 _____ Check

1. (v. 1) What was Paul’s desire for the believers regarding spiritual gifts? _____

2. (v. 2) What did the Corinthians follow when they were pagans? _____
3. (v. 3) No one speaking by the Holy Spirit can say what about Jesus? _____

4. (v. 3) Likewise, only those speaking by the Spirit of God can say what about Jesus? _____

5. (vss. 4-6) Describe how God can create unity out of diversity. _____

Note: The mention of One Spirit, Lord (Jesus) and God (the Father) is an implicit reference to the triune nature of God. Paul is using the unity in diversity of God's nature to illustrate the unity in diversity of spiritual gifts.

6. (v. 7) Why is each person given the manifestation of the Spirit? _____

7. (vss. 8-10) List the nine miraculous gifts that are mentioned in these two verses.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |

Note: There are three other lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11-12). This list is unique in that each gift is in some way a manifestation of miraculous power from God. (The gifts of wisdom and knowledge refer to divinely given information that a person would not normally have, such as knowing the thoughts or intent of another person c.f. Acts 5:3-4). These particular gifts are sometimes called *sign gifts*, whereas those listed in the other passages are often referred to as *ministry gifts*. The purpose of the sign gifts was to prove, primarily to Jews, that God was blessing the ministry of Paul to proclaim the gospel of God's grace to Jews and Gentiles without distinction. We can see from other parts of scripture that these gifts were temporary in nature and once the legitimacy of the gospel of grace and the Body of Christ was established that God would phase out these particular manifestations of the Spirit.

Other gifts were *foundational* in nature (apostles, prophets, cf. Ephesians 2:20) and were necessary for the establishment of the Body of Christ before the clear teaching of the completed Bible was available to all believers. These gifts as well were temporary in nature. The ministry gifts (teachers, administration, mercy, giving, etc.) are permanent and are a part of the Body of Christ until we are taken to be with the Lord in the rapture.

8. (v. 11) By whose will are these gifts given to members of the Body of Christ? _____

ONE BODY WITH MANY PARTS

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 _____ Check

8. (v. 12) What metaphor does Paul use to describe those that know Christ? _____

9. (v. 13) Into what has every believer in Christ been baptized? _____

10. (vs. 13) Do you believe this verse refers to water baptism or spiritual baptism? _____

Note: The word *baptism*, as used in the Bible, means to be placed into or identified with something. Often it refers to being placed in water, but in many other cases it is used figuratively. In this case this passage speaks of believers being spiritually placed into the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

11. (vs. 13) Is there any favoritism about who is baptized into the Body of Christ? _____

12. (vss. 14-26) In this section Paul describes the importance of being part of the Body of Christ by comparing it to a physical body. Summarize in your own words the point that Paul is trying to make in these verses

13. (v.28) What are the eight gifts of the Spirit listed in this verse?

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ |

14. (vss. 29-30) Are all members of the Body of Christ suppose to have the same gifts? _____

15. (vs. 31) What are we to seek? _____

16. (vs. 31) What is Paul about to show the readers? _____

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SUPREMECY OF LOVE

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 _____ Check

Note: 1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most well-known and best loved chapters in all of the Bible. It is given to show the overwhelming importance of love. The context, however, is that of spiritual gifts. Paul knew that the gifts could become matters of serious controversy and it was absolutely necessary for the Corinthian believers to understand that Christian love is far more important than the gifts themselves. Please study this chapter with an attitude of prayer.

Note: The ancient Greek language had three words that are commonly translated into English as “love.” *Eros* was understood as sexual love, *phileo* was used to refer to human love, such as that between friends or brothers. The word used most commonly for God’s love is *agape*. “This word indicates a selfless concern for the welfare of others that is not called forth by any quality of loveliness in the person loved, but is the product of a will to love in obedience to God’s command.” (*NIV Study Bible*; Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan; © 1995; p. 1753)

1. (v.1) What is the value of being able to speak in tongues if one does not have love (charity – KJV)? _____

2. (vss.1-4) Summarize the main point of verses one to four. _____

3. (vss. 4-7) There are at least 15 characteristics of love, both positive negative) that are given in verses four to seven. List those characteristics below.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 13. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 15. _____ | |

4. (v. 8) What will love never do? _____

5. (v. 8) What will happen to prophecy, tongues and knowledge? _____

6. (v. 9) How did Paul describe (supernatural) knowledge and prophecy at the time he was writing? _____

7. (v. 10) What will happen to those things which are “in part” (KJV) or “imperfect” (NIV) when that which is perfect comes? _____

8. (v.11) How does Paul illustrate maturity and immaturity? _____

9. (v. 12) What metaphor does Paul use in this verse to illustrate the incompleteness of Divine revelation at the time he was writing? _____

Note: The Greek word translated “perfect” (verse 10) is *teleos* and can mean “end,” “fulfillment,” “completeness” or “maturity.” Paul is probably referring here to the completion of the New Testament Scripture as the thing which is “perfect” or complete. In verse 12 Paul talks about seeing our reflection poorly in a mirror. James uses the metaphor of the mirror to describe the Word of God (James 1:23). Therefore, Paul is saying that when the Scriptures would be completed the gifts of tongues, prophecy and knowledge would no longer be necessary (the things of immaturity) and would pass away. If Paul were referring to a later time for these things to pass away, such as the return of Christ, he would be saying that the Body of Christ would never be mature during this present age.

10. (v. 13) What three things remain throughout the time of the Body of Christ?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

11. (v. 13) Which is the greatest? _____

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TONGUES AND PROPHECY

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 _____ Check

1. (v.1) What are the Corinthians encouraged to do? _____

2. (v. 2) When someone speaks in tongues to whom are they speaking and why? _____

3. (v. 3) What is accomplished when someone gives a word of prophecy? _____

4. (v. 4) Who benefits when some speak in tongues? _____

5. (v. 4) Who benefits when someone prophecies? _____

6. (v. 5) Why was prophecy a greater gift than tongues? _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Read 1 Corinthians 14:6-20 _____ Check

Note: The *gift of tongues* refers to the Spirit-given ability of a believer to speak in a language which he did not understand. The Greek word (*glossa*) most often was used to refer to an earthly foreign language, although sometimes Paul uses it to mean an angelic language (1 Corinthians 13:1). It was given to be a sign of the working of God's Spirit among various groups of people, first for Jews that believed in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and later for members of the Body of Christ. While the gift of tongues was meant to be a sign of the presence of God's power among a group of people it was never expected that everyone needed to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30). Paul taught that this gift was temporary in nature (1 Corinthians 13:8) and would no longer be necessary once the Church had reached a mature state through the completion of the written Word of God.

7. (v. 6) Does speaking in tongues for its own sake have value to the church in general? _____

8. (v. 7-8) What is the point Paul is making through the illustrations he uses in these verses? _____

9. (v. 9-11) What is Paul saying about the value of speaking in tongues with no one to interpret the meaning of the words? _____

10. (v. 12) What types of gifts were the Corinthian believers to desire? _____

11. (v. 13) What should someone speaking in tongues ask the Lord for? _____

12. (v. 14) If someone prays in a foreign tongue does their mind (understanding) benefit from the experience?

13. (vss. 15-17) Will another person in the congregation be edified if he does not understand what the person speaking in tongues is saying? _____

14. (vs. 18) Did Paul speak in tongues? _____

15. (vs. 19) What does Paul say about the relative importance of teaching in a way that someone understands rather than speaking in tongues? _____

16. (vs. 20) What instruction does Paul give the Corinthian believers in this verse? _____

THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES AND PROPHECY

Read 1 Corinthians 14:21-25 _____ Check

17. (vs. 21) This verse is a quote from Isaiah 28:11,12 and was originally written to the nation of Israel. How did God say they would respond when they heard foreign languages spoken to them? _____

Note: This passage in Isaiah is given in the context of judgment on Ephraim (northern Israel). The Jews that knew this scripture would recognize it as a sign of God's judgment on their nation.

18. (vs. 22) Tongues were a sign for _____ and prophecy was a sign for _____

18. Read Romans 9:31-32. Was the nation of Israel primarily one of believers or unbelievers in the Lord Jesus Christ? _____

Note: Given the fact that Israel was primarily in a condition of unbelief, that tongues were a sign of judgment on unbelieving Israel and Israel sought after signs (1 Corinthians 1:22) we may say that tongues were given to prove to the nation of Israel that God had judged them for their unbelief and that He had now begun working with the Body of Christ.

19. (vs. 23) What will be the reaction of unbelievers that walk into a congregation where everyone is speaking in tongues? _____

20. (vs. 24-25) What will be the response of an unbeliever that hears people prophesying? _____

GUIDELINES FOR ORDERLY WORSHIP

Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 _____ Check

21. (vs. 26) What is the reason for each part of the worship service (hymns, instruction [doctrine], revelation, etc.)? _____

22. (vs. 27) What instruction does Paul give for speaking in tongues in the church? _____

23. (vs. 28) What should the speaker do if there is no interpreter? _____

24. (vs. 33) Why does God want worship to be done in an orderly way? _____

25. (vs. 34) What instruction does Paul give about women in the church? _____

26. (vs. 35) What should a woman in the congregation do if she has a question? _____

Note: While the wording of this passage is quite strong, still it is unlikely that this should be understood to be a total prohibition from women speaking at all in the congregation. Paul gave instructions for how women were to pray and prophesy in church (1 Corinthians 11:5), thus he acknowledges that they do speak while participating in the worship of the congregation. Most likely Paul is referring to argumentative and disruptive talk that publicly questions the authority of the spiritual leadership.

27. (vs. 37) What should the spiritual person recognize about the writings of Paul? _____

38. (vs. 40) What is Paul's final commandment regarding tongues, prophecy, spiritual gifts and worship in general? _____

Write 1 Corinthians 13:13 from memory on the lines below.

Use the space below for any questions or comments:

I would like to be contacted by a minister in my area that can help me better understand God's Word. If checked please include a telephone number _____

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