



## Repentance Tabernacle Church

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### A More Excellent Way

**Focus Verse:** 1 Corinthians 13:1 - Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

**Lesson Text:** 1 Corinthians 13-14

**Truth About God:** God is love, and love is the foundation of everything He does.

**Truth For My Life:** I will minister to others in love.

Love is the foundation of all spiritual activity. Everything we do in the Kingdom must be grounded in love. According to 1 John 4:8, God is love, so if we are going to carry out any element of His work, we must demonstrate that same characteristic. Being flawed humans, our capacity to love is limited without a divine infusion of His nature. Gratefully, God has ordained such a supernatural investment. *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"* (Romans 5:5).

There is nothing for us to add to Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Each of us should examine our love against that checklist to determine if God is shining through us in how we treat people. If what we call love is tainted by impatience, jealousy, pride, selfishness, or anger, then it is not love. Love is the lasting Kingdom element. It will remain long after other things we associate with the church have passed away. Even though the gifts of the Spirit are important enough that God inspired Paul to address them at length, they are merely temporary, for they will be neither needed nor operative in eternity. But love will remain.

Having this kind of love means loving when we are hurt, when people betray us, when we are abandoned, when we are falsely accused, and when our motives are questioned, because Christ endured all of that. Yet through it all, He patterned for us the proper response and the characteristic that will best equip us for Christian service. He loved. All absence of love can transform powerful tools into dangerous weapons.

The gifts God gives have a very specific purpose: to build up His church. If someone has any other motive for the operation of the gifts, that person is misguided. *"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church"* (1 Corinthians 14:12).

Spiritual gifts are a sign to unbelievers and the uninformed. When the gifts are being operated in love for the edification of the church, they have the additional benefit of pointing the eyes and hearts of unbelievers toward Christ. The gifts exhibit God's power and sovereignty to those who do not know Him. Supernatural demonstrations cannot be readily explained away. The gifts are never disruptive. They operate in submission to local spiritual authority. Again, love is at the root of a divinely ordered, productive worship service.

When we are together in worship, our responsibility is to allow God's love to equip us to look for opportunities to minister to others. They exist in the body for ministry to those with hurts among us. Love always prefers another over itself. For effective ministry to flourish through love, children of God must live in an arena of mutual submission. As members of the body of Christ, we must be willing to subjugate our own needs for the good of others: *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another"* (Romans 12:10).

When a Christian ministers to another member of the church, the Spirit of God often works on behalf of both at the same time. It is as though the virtue of God that flows through the first person to the second has an effect on both. When we submit our will for the good of another, we may receive our answer as well.

We must make the choice when we leave our homes to come to church, **"Today, I will be compelled by love. No matter my needs, I will seek to minister to someone else."** When each member approaches worship with that mindset, the result will be lives eternally impacted by the Holy Spirit. Bodies will be healed. Relationships will be restored. Discouragement will be chased from minds. Unbelievers will be converted. And the gifts of the Spirit can flow uninhibited for the good of the church.