**INTRODUCTION**

**In 1984, the famous R&B singer Tina Turner asked a question in song: “What’s Love Got to Do with It?” The song became a huge success for her and led to the revival of her singing career. Tina Turner’s question had already been answered many centuries earlier, as the apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church at Corinth. The church was in trouble: divisions and discord were threatening to tear it apart. Spiritual gifts, the very things that God had provided to build it up, were being misused or neglected. Pride, envy, and anger were eating away at the peace and unity of the fellowship. This church needed something even more powerful than the GIFTS of the Spirit – it needed the FRUIT of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)**

**When the New Testament speaks of LOVE, we first need to identify what KIND of love is being discussed. The Greek language has many words for love – at least *six*:**

* **Agape – divine love. This is the love that God has for us, and the kind of love we SHOULD have for God, and for each other. This is the kind of love that Paul describes in I Corinthians 13. It is by far the most frequently mentioned kind of love in the New Testament.**
* **Eros – romantic or physical (sexual) love. This is what most people mean when we speak or sing of love in today’s English language. It does not appear at all in the New Testament.**
* **Philia – brotherly love. This is the kind of love that siblings or close friends have for each other. It is mentioned frequently in the New Testament.**
* **Storge – family love. This is the love that parents and children have for each other.**
* **Xenia – guest love. This is the love shown to “those who are far from home” (guests or acquaintances), often described as hospitality.**
* **Philautia – self-love. This is the love that we have for our own personal well-being. However, when it grows to the point where it excludes all others it can become unhealthy, and even dangerous. Malignant self-love is one of the signs of the “perilous times” described by Paul in II Timothy 3:1-5.**

**All of these are translated into English as “love”; the King James translates agape love as “charity”, but this meaning for that word has been lost in the modern language. When reading the Bible, a concordance is useful for understanding what kind of love the original Greek is talking about. The attributes of Christian love (agape) are described in this chapter.**

**Keep in mind that as we enter this chapter, its context is the importance and proper use of spiritual gifts in the church. This started in Chapter 12 and continues through Chapter 14. The purpose of spiritual gifts is “the common good” (I Corinthians 12:7 NIV). All believers receive at least one, and the Holy Spirit sees to it that the gifted members are placed in the church like the parts of the human body. All are to work together in harmony. Sadly, the Corinthian church was NOT working in harmony, and now Paul will show them a “better way” of relating to each other – the way of divine love.**

1. **Read verse 1. Which of the nine spiritual gifts listed in chapter 12 (verses 8-10) does Paul mention in this verse?**
2. **Without charity (Christian love) what is the actual impact of this spiritual gift?**
3. **Read verse 2. Which gifts of the Spirit are mentioned in this verse?**
4. **Without charity (Christian love), how important or impactful is the person who exercises these wonderful gifts? Answer: Without love, the person who exercises these powerful gifts is “ “. What should this mean to everyone who teaches or preaches? (See Ephesians 3:17-19)**
5. **Read verse 3. What two extreme acts of DEVOTION to Jesus are mentioned in this verse?**
6. **What is the eternal value of such unselfish acts of devotion if they are NOT motivated by charity (Christian love)? Answer: It is of profit.**
7. **Read verses 4-7. How many attributes of charity (agape or Christian love) are listed in this passage? Answer .**
8. **In YOUR opinion, which of these attributes is most challenging, and WHY?**
9. **Exercise: for each person in the Bible passages listed here, identify how they show love: Joseph (Genesis 45:1-15; 50:15-21); Moses (Exodus 32:7-14; Numbers 14:11-21); Ruth (Ruth 1:11-18); Boaz (Ruth 2:4-17); Barnabas (Acts 9:26-28); Dorcas (Acts 9:36-39). Can you think of any others?**
10. **Read verses 8-10. How is charity (Christian love) DIFFERENT from all of the gifts of the Spirit? (v.8) Answer: Charity .**
11. **As wonderful as the gifts of prophecy and knowledge are, what does Paul say about them in verse 9? Answer: we only know and prophesy . (imperfectly; see II Corinthians 12:1-4; I John 3:2; Revelation 10:1-4)**
12. **What “momentous event” will end the need for spiritual gifts? (v. 10) Answer: “When that which is is come.” (See Matthew 24:29-36; Acts 1:6-11; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; II Thessalonians 2:1-8; Revelation 21:1-4)**
13. **Read verses 11-13. To what stage of life does Paul compare to our Christian experience? (v. 11) Answer: .**
14. **What happens when we reach full maturity? (v. 11) Answer: The “childish things” are . (See Ephesians 4:11-15)**
15. **How do we currently see the future, and the things of the Spirit? (v. 12) Answer: We see these things “through a , .” (the word “darkly” is the Greek word *ainigma*, from which we get the English word *enigma*, which means “something hard to understand or explain”, mysterious or obscure)**
16. **How will we see them in the future? (v. 12) Answer: “ to .” (Matthew 5:8; I John 3:2)**
17. **According to Paul (himself a well-educated man), what must even the greatest scholar of the present time admit? (v. 12) Answer: “I know “. Will this always be true? Answer: . (Psalm 27:4; Revelation 10:7)**
18. **Read verse 13. What THREE things “now abide” (remain) in the church? Answer: “But now abideth , , “. (I Thessalonians 1:1-3)**
19. **Of the three, which ONE is greatest, and (in your opinion) WHY?**

**Summary**

**In the middle of his teaching on the variety and value of spiritual gifts, Paul has finally revealed to the divided and disputing Corinthians the secret of true spiritual power – unconditional, sacrificial love for each other. This is the kind of love that God the Father and Jesus the Son have for us, and that we are commanded to have for each other (John 3:16; 13:34-35). It doesn’t “come naturally”. Rather, it is the product of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 5:1-5). It is manifested as we YIELD to the Spirit, allowing Him to change (transform) us from the “inside out” (Romans 12:1-2). Only then can our spiritual gifts serve their intended purpose – the building up of the body of Christ – the church.**

**Chapter 14 returns to the subject of the proper use of the spiritual gifts in the worship service, with special emphasis on the gift of tongues.**