



GROUPS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Series: Beautiful Body - Week Two, Jan 28, 2024

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:31, 1 Corinthians chapter 13 (NIV11)

Community is shaped by the conversations we share.

These questions are just a tool to help you meaningfully engage with the themes of this week's teaching.

Message Summary:

- **Gen Z** - 1 Cor 13 is often read at weddings. However, we haven't yet preached on it at Commons. The chapter is so familiar that it has lost a sense of meaning to us. Gen-Z language bible translations try to do what we also try to do - find a new way to say old things. And this is the key for us - to dig through some of our own bias to properly see something we've skimmed over one too many times.
- **Greater Gifts** - 1 Cor 12:31 can be interpreted in different ways. One approach, sees the whole ch 13 as parenthetical, and that 1 Cor 12:31 is directly connected to 1 Cor 14:1 and Paul has a gift of prophecy in mind. Another approach to see the list of gifts in 1 Cor 12 as ascending or descending, and depending on that you'll end up with what is considered a greater gifts - speaking in tongues or prophecy. Prophecy in the Bible though is never about fortune telling. It is about speaking the truth in love, and that can be a corrective or that can be an encouragement. Jeremy argues that a better translation of 1 Cor 12:31 is more corrective than comparing

and sound something like this - "You have zealously — maybe even jealousy—desired the greater gifts, but now I will offer you something better..."

- **The Love Chapter** 1 Cor 13 - whole chapter needs to be read as "a push back against our constant want to create our identity over and against what someone else brings to the table." The word Paul uses for "nothing" can also be translated as worthless or invalid. What he's getting at is that if the use of our gifts is not grounded in love, our gifts seem to be what God imagines them to be. They can even become an antithesis of gift, they become grab. Love is what keeps our gifts and makes them gracious.
- **What to Do with It** - 1 Cor 13: 4-8a. Paul is not describing a real life. He is talking about what we aspire to, together. The point of the chapter is to encourage us to try again when we fail to love as we should. It is meant to develop and strengthen our imagination for what love could be. And that journey towards love starts when we believe that we are a necessary part of a community, and when we abandon hierarchy, and when we offer ourselves to each other and welcome each other home.

Connect: What has been your experience with the "love chapter," 1 Cor 13? Would you agree that it's become so familiar to us that we struggle to properly see it in its context and what it's calling us to?

Share: What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “greater gifts”? How have you seen or experienced this concept in your faith journey? And how does Jeremy’s perspective on Paul’s removal of hierarchy of gifts in a spiritual community help you hear this phrase differently?

Any thoughts on “prophecy” as truth-telling to correct or encourage? How can you apply this understanding of prophecy to your life and how does it tie into the greater message on love?

Reflect: Jeremy shared about how his particular gifts sometimes can be a hindrance to true partnership with his wife, Rachel. And how we often want to win instead of partner. Our use of our brilliance or unique and honed skillset can actually sometimes be unloving. Share a time when you’ve experienced the challenge of using your gifts in a way that aligns with love. How did you navigate that tension?

Engage: Discuss the impact of recognizing that without love, our talents and gifts may become invalid or misdirected. How can we ensure that love remains the foundation of all that we do? Any practical things that help you move towards growing in love and grounding your gifts in it too?

Dive deeper into this thought from the sermon to interact with the question:

*“What Paul says is: If I do not have love, I am nothing. If I do not have love, I gain nothing. And that Greek word “nothing” is the word *oudeis*, which means nothing but in a nonliteral sense like here, what it also means is worthless — or — maybe even better — invalid. And I think that’s actually the usage Paul has in mind... He’s not saying that without love our gifts don’t exist — cause that’s not true. And he’s not saying that without love our gifts are worthless — cause that’s not necessarily true either. I think he means something more like invalid. Without love, your gifts cease to be what God imagines them to be*

They become something else... Perhaps, if we’re not careful, even the antithesis of gift. They become grab.”

Take away: What is your one takeaway from today’s conversation?

Alternatively, if the description of love that Paul gives is something we all should aspire to, and if it is meant as an encouragement, what are some tangible actions we can take to foster an environment of togetherness and mutual support in our community and beyond?

Pray:

*Christ who calls this body beautiful,
Not because of what we are now
But because of all the potential you see in us
To bring our full ourselves in strength,
To welcome our neighbour with courage,
To embody a presence in the world — confident that we are beloved
And that we can therefore love well in return.
Might our anxiety about our difference
Be slowly swallowed up in excitement over what we might learn from
each other,
Believing that our perspective on you is limited by design
And made whole only in shared story.
For those questions we wrestle with alone
And those doubts we harbour silently
Might we give voice, and space, and welcome to one beside us
To enter in,
And offer correction,
To provide a new way forward,
Or simply listen in quiet acceptance.
Might that shared journey
Illuminate the path you have laid ahead of us
And slowly might that path lead us, over time, to steps that contribute
to your kingdom come in small moments here on earth.
In the strong name of the risen Christ we pray.
Amen.*