

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

Study Guide

Deeds Without Love Are Worthless

Kevin Yule
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Major Points

- 1 You can do everything right and have every resource, but without love as your motivator, your service is worthless — like a noisy gong or clanging cymbal.**
1 Corinthians 13:1
- 2 The Corinthians elevated showy gifts like tongues, prophecy, and knowledge above others, but God never gave gifts for self-exaltation — He gave them to build up the church.**
1 Corinthians 12:7
- 3 God cares more about the 'why' behind our service than the 'what' — serving out of obligation or guilt rather than love misses the entire point.**
Isaiah 1:13-14
- 4 Love is the only eternal virtue; prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will pass away when 'the perfect' — Jesus Christ — returns and we see God face to face.**
1 Corinthians 13:8-10
- 5 Salvation is not earned by accumulating deeds but received through faith in Jesus Christ, and our eternal reward is measured by what was done from genuine love.**
1 Corinthians 3:13-15

Key Quotes

"You can do everything. You can do everything right. You can do everything God asks of you. But if all you're doing is doing it and you are void of love, he's going to say you are nothing.

at 4:01

"God cares more about the why than the what. And that's Paul's whole argument here. God cares about your heart. God wants you to do the right thing because you love him and you love his church.

at 15:08

"If you're serving out of obligation because you feel like you have to. Take a break. Come up here and bang on that symbol for a half hour. It's way more fun than what you're doing. And it's just as useful.

at 18:36

"Don't give me your list of what you did. I have one question for you. What do you believe about Jesus?"

at 27:47

"There is no greater joy than operating in the Spirit and using what God has given us to build up those around us.

at 34:10

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Yule said God cares more about the 'why' than the 'what.' Can you identify an area of your Christian life where you may be going through the motions out of duty rather than love? What would it look like to shift your motivation?
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2. Pastor Yule used the illustration of having all the money in his account but no cash in hand. How does this picture help you understand Paul's argument that gifts and deeds without love are worthless?
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3. Pastor Yule described how the Corinthians elevated tongues, prophecy, and knowledge above gifts like hospitality and encouragement. Do you see similar patterns of ranking gifts in the church today? How should we respond?
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4. Pastor Yule presented two views on 'the perfect' in verse 10 — the completed canon of Scripture or the return of Christ. Which view do you find more compelling and why? How does this affect how you understand spiritual gifts today?
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5. Pastor Yule challenged the congregation that if you are serving out of obligation, you should take a break. Do you agree with this strong statement? What is the danger of continuing to serve without love, and how can a believer restore genuine love as their motivator?
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Word Studies

ἀγάπη agape

Greek

Unconditional, self-sacrificial love directed toward the good of another; not driven by emotion or reciprocity but by deliberate will and commitment. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul uses this word to describe the essential character quality that must undergird all spiritual gifts and service.

Usage: 116 times

τέλειον teleion

Greek

That which is complete, mature, or brought to its intended end. Translated 'the perfect' in 1 Corinthians 13:10, this adjective is debated as referring either to the completed canon of Scripture or to the return of Christ, when all partial knowledge and prophecy give way to full, unmediated knowledge of God.

Usage: 19 times

χάρισμα charisma

Greek

A gift of grace; a free gift or endowment bestowed by the Holy Spirit on believers for the edification of the church. Central to the context of 1 Corinthians 12-14, where Paul argues that every charisma is given not for personal exaltation but for the common good of the body of Christ.

Usage: 17 times

Cross References

Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus warns that many will claim to have done great deeds in His name but will hear 'I never knew you' — directly paralleling Pastor Yule's warning that a list of religious accomplishments without genuine love and faith is worthless.

Romans 12:6-8

Paul lists diverse spiritual gifts (prophecy, service, teaching, encouragement, generosity, leadership, mercy) and urges each to be exercised with sincerity, reinforcing that every gift — not just the showy ones — matters when used with genuine love.

Colossians 3:14

Paul calls love 'the bond of perfection' that ties all virtues together, echoing the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 13:13 that love is the greatest virtue because it binds everything into unity.

Micah 6:6-8

The prophet asks what the Lord requires — not thousands of rams or rivers of oil, but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. This Old Testament parallel supports the sermon's theme that God values the heart posture behind obedience over the outward performance itself.

John 13:34-35

Jesus gives the new commandment to love one another as He has loved us, declaring that this mutual love is the identifying mark of His disciples — the ultimate motivation behind all service in the body of Christ.

Further Reading

- **The Four Loves**
by C.S. Lewis
- **The Mark of the Christian**
by Francis A. Schaeffer
- **1 Corinthians (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)**
by David E. Garland

Scripture References

REFERENCE	TYPE	TIME	CONTEXT
1 Corinthians 13:1-3	Read Aloud	10:20	<i>If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, bu...</i>
1 Corinthians 13:4-8	Read Aloud	20:50	<i>Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or bo...</i>
1 Corinthians 13:8-12	Read Aloud	25:40	<i>Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass...</i>
1 Corinthians 13:13	Read Aloud	30:20	<i>So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; b...</i>
Philippians 2:3-4	Read Aloud	23:10	<i>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but i...</i>
1 Corinthians 3:12-15	Referenced	11:50	<i>Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, ...</i>
1 John 4:8	Referenced	26:20	<i>Anyone who does not love does not know God, becaus...</i>
Isaiah 1:13-14	Referenced	21:50	<i>Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomin...</i>