

Introduction

About a hundred and thirty miles from here, in Wilsonville, Alabama, a man by the name of Lemuel Howard Hill was born in 1899. He was one of nine children, and his father was a cotton farmer. He went by Howard, and later legally changed his name to Howard H. Hill. Growing up on a farm, he learned how to use various tools and weapons. At the age of four, his father made him a bow and arrow set. Then, at the age of six, he made his own bow and arrow set, and used it for target practice and hunting. Howard was not just good at archery, he was a tremendous athlete. He played baseball, basketball, football, and golf. He played baseball, football, and basketball for Auburn Polytechnic Institute, which is now called Auburn University. He paid for his tuition by giving archery lessons. He got married in 1922, and moved to Florida, where he played semi-professional baseball and worked as a machinist at Hughes Tool Company. My grandfather also played AAA baseball in Florida, and there was not much money in it, so working a side job was common. Then, he considered playing professional golf, but ended up becoming a competitive archer. In 1928, he set a record for the longest shot with a bow and arrow, shooting it 391 yards, using a bow with a draw weight of 115 pounds. He won 196 field archery competitions in a row, and became famous. Warner Bros. hired him to be a technical advisor for their movies, but later he became a writer and a producer, producing twenty-three films about archery. He also played a role in Robin Hood, where he was filmed shooting his own arrow to split a competitor's arrow already in the bull's eye.

Howard could consistently hit his target or goal. In 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul wrote that the “goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” His target was love. In everything he and his team taught the goal was love. Over the next few weeks we are going to break this verse down. We are going to look at love from a pure heart. We are going to look at love from a good conscience. Then, we will look at love from a sincere faith. Many people do not have a good grasp about our heart, conscience, or a sincere faith, so one of my goals is to give you a good understanding of what it means to love from a pure heart, and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Today, we are going to look at the goal of love. Second, we will look at the importance of this goal. Third, we are going to look at the surpassing value of love.

(1 Ti 1:5) “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

The Goal Is Love

1. The Goal
2. The Priority of this Goal
3. The Surpassing Value of this Goal

1. The Goal

The Greek word for goal is telos (Strong's G5056). The root word is tello, which means a point in the distance. We get our English word, telescope, from this Greek word, and it means to see from a distance. Howard consistently hit that point in the distance. This root word, tello, is used in many different words, and there are 149 verses where a form of it is used. For example, when Jesus said for us to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect, the word perfect is teleios, which means to be complete, perfect, or mature. God's plan for our lives, the goal or target for us is to be mature.

(Mt 5:48) “Therefore you are to be perfect (telios, Strong’s G5046), as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Paul also used that word in Colossians 1:29-30, where he said that he wanted to present every man complete (telios) in Christ, and for that purpose he labored, striving according to God’s power, which mightily worked within him. Paul’s goal was to help people to grow and mature in Christ.

(Col 1:28–29) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete (teleios, Strong’s G5046) in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

It was not just Paul’s goal; it was Christ’s goal. In Hebrews 12, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. The word, Perfecter, is teliotes (Strong’s G5051), which means one who completes or consummates, a finisher. We find in Philippians 1:6 that Paul was confident that Jesus, who began a good work in us would perfect it. God has a goal for you and I, to be compete or mature in Him. Paul believed that Jesus was going to hit the bullseye in our lives, to bring us to maturity.

(Heb 12:2) “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

(Php 1:6) “*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect (epiteleo, Strong’s G2005) it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

There are many different goals in our lives. We might have a financial goal, to become debt free, or to save a certain amount of money. We may have a goal to lose weight, with a target weight in mind, that we are going to accomplish by a careful diet and exercise. We may have a goal of reading through the Bible in a year. God has lots of goals, and maturity is just one of them.

In Luke 13, some Pharisees told Jesus that Herod wanted to kill Him. He responded, saying, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal (teleoo, Strong’s G5048).’” His goal was to give His life for the ransom of many. When Jesus was on the cross, just before breathing His last breath, He said, “It is finished.” The Greek word was teleo; Jesus had accomplished His goal, which was paying for our sins so we could be forgiven and have eternal life with God.

(Lk 13:32) “And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal (teleo).’”

(Mk 10:45) “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

(Jn 19:30) “Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished (telios!)” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”

What was the motivation behind that goal? It was love. It was because of love that the Father sent Jesus to die for our sins. God loves us and wanted fellowship with us, so He sent the Son to

accomplish that goal. It was not just God, the Father; it was also Jesus, the Son. Jesus said there is no greater love than to lay your life down for your friends, which is what Jesus did. God demonstrated His love in that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us.

(Jn 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

(Jn 15:13) "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

(Ro 5:8) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

2. The Priority of this Goal

Why should the goal of love be a priority for us? Why was love Paul's goal in all his instruction, which included his instruction in person, and his instruction that we have in God's word? In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, he gave six reasons, but there are some other reasons it should be our goal.

A. Love is the distinguishing mark of a believer.

The first reason why this goal should be a priority is because it is the distinguishing mark of a believer. God is love, and we are His representatives. We are not to be conformed to the world, but transformed into the image of Christ. He is love and if we are going to be like Him, our lives need to be characterized by love.

In 1 John 4:7-8, we are exhorted to love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." God is love; that is who He is. If we have been born of God, we are to have God's love in our lives, and it should be evident to those around us. It is the mark of a believer.

(1 Jn 4:7-8) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Love is the way that Jesus said that people would be able to tell if we are His disciples. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said that His disciples would be known by their love for one another.

(Jn 13:34-35) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

I grew up with some bad experiences in the church that our family attended, and I became an atheist. I wanted nothing to do with Christianity. In my freshman year of college, a man from Southwestern Baptist Seminary came by my dorm room several times and shared the gospel with me. There was something different about this man, and I could see the love of Christ in this man's eyes. By his love, I knew that he was a genuine disciple of Christ. I also saw for the first time that being a Christian is about having a relationship with God. I did not receive Christ that year, but right before my sophomore year, I received Christ. It was the love and kindness of God that softened my heart and drew me to Him.

B. Love is the Greatest Commandment

Love should be a priority because it is the greatest commandment. Every book that I have ever read on setting goals give the following principle. Set high goals, goals that are high enough to excite and motivate you, but are also attainable. Jesus said in Matthew 22:35-40 that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart and the second is like unto it, that you should love your brother as yourself. If those are the two greatest commands, the two greatest or highest goals that we could set would be to love the Lord with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Why the goal of love? Because it is the highest goal that we can set, and the highest priority that we can have.

(Mt 22:35–40) “One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, {36} “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” {37} And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ {38} This is the great and foremost commandment. {39} The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ {40} On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

As I pray for people during the week, I begin by praying for love. On Mondays, I pray for people to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. I pray for them to have a passion for God, and to be intimate with God. I pray for people to know God’s word and to keep His commandments. Jesus said in John 14:21, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” So, I pray for people to abide in God’s Word, to know it, and to be obedient, because it shows their love for God.

(Jn 14:21) “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

As I pray for people to love God, I pray that He would be pre-imminent in their lives. God is a jealous God, and we are not to have any other gods or idols before Him. He wants to be first in our lives. He does not want sports, recreation, wealth, or anything else to come before Him. If we are going to love Him with all of our heart, we must put Him first in our lives.

I pray for people to long for God, and to want to spend time in His presence. When Moses left the tent of meeting, young Joshua remained in the tent. He longed to know God, and to spend time in His presence.

(Ex 33:11) “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.”

(Ps 42:1) “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.”

If I know that the person that I am praying for does not know God, then I pray for their salvation. I pray for them to know and experience God’s love. John said, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” I pray for them to know God so they can love God and others.

(1 Jn 4:7–8) “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

On Tuesdays, I pray for people to have a love for one another. It is the second greatest commandment. I pray for husbands to love their wives, and wives to love their husbands. I pray many of Paul’s prayers. He prayed for people to be rooted and grounded in love.

(Eph 3:14–17) “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, {15} from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, {16} that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, {17} so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love”

Paul prayed for people to know and comprehend God’s love. He prayed that they would “comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and dept, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” If people already knew God’s love, he probably would not have been led to pray that for people, but he knew that people don’t understand God’s love. It’s hard to hit a target that you cannot see. People need to understand what love is so that they can work towards that goal.

(Eph 3:18–19) “may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, {19} and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

Paul prayed for peoples’ love to increase and abound even more. Even if they were known for their love, he prayed that they would increase and abound even more. We can never have too much love.

(1 Th 3:12) “and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;”

Why do I pray these things on Mondays and Tuesdays for people? I pray because these are the two most important commandments that God has given us. Our goal should be love one another because these are the two greatest commandments.

3. The Surpassing Value of this goal

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul told the Corinthians that he did not want them to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. He devoted chapters twelve and fourteen to the gifts, and the exercise of the gifts in their services. He told them to earnestly desire the greater gifts. The exercise of gifts is obviously very important to Paul, and for all of us.

(1 Co 12:1) “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.”

(1 Co 12:31) “But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.”

In chapter fourteen, Paul again tells them to earnestly desire spiritual gifts. However, he first tells them to pursue love, yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts. Their goal, their target, their pursuit

needs to be love. They were not to neglect the spiritual gifts; they were to earnestly desire them, but they were to pursue love.

(1 Co 14:1) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”

Sandwiched in between an understanding of the gifts, and the exercise of the gifts, was a chapter about love. Paul began by giving six reasons that the value of love surpassed the gifts.

A. Love is more valuable than the gift of tongues

First, he said that if he spoke with the tongues of men and of angels, but did not have love, he would just be a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. His point is obvious, that love was far more important than speaking in tongues.

(1 Cor 13:1-3) “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

Paul spoke in tongues, and he encouraged others to speak in tongues. It is not one of the greater gifts, because it only edifies the person speaking in tongues. Paul wanted people to pursue the greater gifts, like teaching and prophesy, because the whole body was edified with those gifts. Paul said that he spoke in tongues more than any of them. Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 13 is that love is more important than speaking in tongues.

(1 Co 14:18–19) “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; {19} however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

(1 Co 14:4) “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.”

B. Love is more valuable than the gift of prophecy

Second, Paul said, “And if I have the gift of prophecy... but do not have love, I am nothing.” Prophecy is one of the greater gifts because it edifies the whole church. Prophecy edifies, exhorts, and consoles.

(1 Cor 13:2) “And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

(1 Co 14:3) “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”

Paul said for them to pursue love, yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that they would prophesy. Paul was given much prophetic revelation. He also received prophecies from others on numerous occasions. He had a lot of respect and appreciation for prophecy, but he understood that love was more important than the gift of prophecy.

(1 Co 14:1) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”

C. Love is more valuable than the gift of knowledge

Third, Paul said that if “we know all mysteries and all knowledge... but do not have love, I am nothing.” Love is more important than knowledge. We have a great focus on knowledge in the church, but Paul said that love was more important than knowledge. If we do not have love, we have nothing.

(1 Cor 13:2) “And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

God wants us to have knowledge. Paul had just written about not being ignorant about spiritual gifts. In Ephesians 4, he wrote about attaining to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. We need knowledge so that we can grow and mature. Yet love is more important than knowledge.

(Eph 4:13) “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Paul prayed for people to grow in their knowledge. In Ephesians 1, Paul prayed that God would give the church of Ephesus a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. He prayed that the eyes of their heart would be enlightened. Paul wanted people to have knowledge.

(Eph 1:17-18) “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. {18} I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”

In Hosea 4:6, God tells us that His people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Knowledge is important, but love is more important than knowledge.

(Ho 4:6) “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

When I was a young Christian, someone told me that God was not interested in us becoming spiritual libraries, but to have transformed lives. What he meant was that instead of focusing just on knowledge, we need to focus on applying the word of God in our lives and being transformed. While this man did not mention love, the goal and priority in our life should be love.

D. Love is more valuable than the gift of faith

Fourth, Paul said that if we have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, we are nothing. Paul was not discounting the value of faith. Paul tried to build up the faith of others, and he was a man of faith. However, Paul clearly understood that love was more important than faith.

(1 Cor 13:2) “And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

God tells us in Hebrews that without faith it is impossible to please Him. In order to come to God, we must believe who He is. I want my life to be pleasing to God. I want to be rewarded for seeking Him. I want to see people healed and saved. I want to receive answers to prayers and fulfilled promises in my life, so faith is very important to me. However, love is more valuable than faith.

(He 11:6) "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

We know God and we come to God by faith. Paul tells us in Ephesians that it is by grace through faith that we are saved. We begin by faith and it is by faith that we please God. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. Yet, without love, our faith means nothing.

(Eph 2:8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

In Paul's conclusion of chapter thirteen, he said, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." These are three pillars that are very important in our Christian walk, but the greatest of these is love. Love surpasses the value of faith. Even if we have the faith to remove mountains, and we do not have love, we are nothing. The goal of love is more important than the pursuit of faith. We need to know God's love. We need to experience God's love. We need to walk in God's love. We need to be known by love. Our love should be obvious to the world. Without love, we are nothing.

(1 Cor 13:13) But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

E. Love is more valuable than the gift of mercy

Fifth, Paul said that love is more important than mercy, or being benevolent. He wrote, "if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." We know that giving to help our brother in need is one way to lay our lives down for our brothers. However, we can give all of our possessions for wrong motives and reasons. If our actions are not motivated by love, if they are not driven by love, then it does not profit. We can feed the poor, but still not have love.

(1 Cor 13:3) "And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

Jesus was always reaching out to the poor. He taught out of Isaiah 61 that He was sent to preach the gospel to the poor.

(Lk 4:18-19) "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

Jesus told people to sell their possessions and give to the poor, so that they could have treasure in heaven, and to follow Him. Giving to the poor was important to the Lord, but the goal of love is more important than giving to the poor.

(Mt 19:21) "Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.""

Jesus had compassion for people, and He taught others to have compassion. When the Pharisees questioned Him about eating with tax collectors and sinners, He told them to go and learn what this means: "I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." He told the Pharisees in Matthew 12 the same thing, to understand that God desires compassion, not sacrifice.

(Mt 9:11–13) "When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" {12} But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. {13} But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

(Mt 12:7) "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent."

In Matthew 14, Jesus saw a large crowd and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. In Matthew 14, He felt compassion for the crowds because they had not eaten in three days, so He miraculously fed them. Jesus was full of compassion and mercy. However, without love, feeding the poor and showing mercy to people profits us nothing. Our mercy should be flow out of our love and be done in love.

(Mt 14:14) "When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick."

(Mt 15:32) "And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way."

F. Love is more valuable than martyrdom

Sixth, Paul said that love was more important than martyrdom. He says, "if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." Martyrdom is the epitome of being sold out to the Lord. It is the willingness to lay your life down for the gospel. It is a willingness to stand up for the sake of the gospel no matter what happens. Yet, martyrdom without love profits nothing.

(1 Cor 13:3) "And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

We find in James 1 and Revelation 2 that there is a crown given to martyrs. It is sometimes referred to as the Martyr's Crown, and sometimes as the Crown of Life. It is given to those who persevere under trial and are faithful unto death.

(Jas 1:12) "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

(Re 2:10) “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Martyrdom was very common in the early church. Eleven of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb were martyred. The stoning of Stephen brought a severe persecution against the church. Historical documents record the death of over two thousand believers in that persecution.

Apostles of the Lamb that were martyred:

- James, the son of Zebedee, was put to death by Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D.
- Philip was crucified in 54 A.D.
- Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia, in the city of Nadabah, in 60 A.D.
- Matthias was stoned and beheaded in Jerusalem.
- Andrew, the brother of Peter, was crucified in Edessa.
- Mark, was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria.
- Peter was condemned to death, and crucified in Rome. He was crucified, head down and feet up, because he said he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Christ.
- Jude, the brother of James, was crucified at Edessa in 72 A.D.
- Bartholomew, after preaching and translating the gospel into the language of India, was crucified by the impatient idolaters.
- Thomas preached the gospel in Parthia and India, and was martyred with a spear.
- Simon preached the gospel in Africa and in Britain, where he was crucified in 74 A.D.

Other notables in the NT that were martyred:

- Paul was martyred by Nero in Rome in 66 A.D.
- Barnabas was martyred in 73 A.D.
- Stephen was martyred in Jerusalem around 34 A.D.
- Luke is said to have been hung on an olive tree by the idolatrous priests of Greece.

Even if we deliver our bodies to be burned and die of martyrdom and do not have love, it profits us nothing. Love has a surpassing value to martyrdom.

G. Love never fails

The final reason that we should make love our goal is that it never fails. At the end of 1 Corinthians Paul wrote, “Love never fails.” He said that gifts of prophecy will be done away. The gift of tongues will cease. The gift of knowledge will be done away with. All of these gifts are temporal. Jesus gave us these gifts to help us until the perfect comes.

(1 Co 13:8–12) “Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away. {9} For we know in part and we prophesy in part; {10} but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away... {12} For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

Some say that this refers to the canonization of Scripture. However, we still only know in part, and when the perfect comes, we will know in full, not in part. We still need the gifts. Others say that the perfect is when the church is mature, we will not need prophecy, knowledge or other gifts. Again, we only know in part; we still see dimly. The gifts are still important today.

I believe that the perfect refers to when Christ comes back for His bride, and we are with Christ in His kingdom. At that time, we will see face to face, and will fully know things. In our resurrected state, we will not need these spiritual gifts. Paul's main point here is that spiritual gifts are temporal, and will be done away with, but love never fails. Love will never be done away with.

Conclusion and Applications

When I played professional golf, I was introduced to David Pelz. He was a former research scientist at NASA, but now took that same scientific approach and applied it to golf. For a season, I allowed him to teach at the golf course that I managed. I learned a lot from him about many different things. His instructions about posture, eye alignment, and putter alignment helped me immensely, and I became a much better golfer because of applying those principles in my game. David did a breakdown of the importance of different parts of golf and came up with the following statistics. He said that 43% of a person's ability to score was putting. Driving the ball accounted for 25%, and wedge play accounted for 11%. Those three clubs or areas accounted for 79% of a person's ability to score. His point was that we should focus our attention on the greater priorities. Instead of spending hours hitting three irons, we would be better off spending hours putting, and working on our wedge game. I changed my practice routines and devoted a minimum of one hour per day just in putting. He gave lots of different drills to use while working on your putting. I focused on these things because they were the most important things to work on. In our spiritual life, love is the most important and valuable goal that we can have. Therefore, we should make love our goal in everything that we do.

Love is more valuable than the gifts. The gifts will eventually cease when the perfect comes, but love will never cease, and it will never fail. We should pursue the goal of love because it is the highest priority. We should pursue the goal of love because it is the greatest command. We should pursue the goal of love because it is more valuable than all the gifts. Finally, we should pursue the goal of love because it is something that will never fail.

Let's look at some applications. Our first application is to prioritize your relationship with God. Set aside time for God every day, preferably at the start of your day. Spend time in prayer, speaking to the Lord, and also listening. Spend time in God's word. If you do not have a daily reading plan, find one, and commit to reading every day. The Navigators, a ministry started by Dawson Trotman, used a wheel to show priorities. They had Christ at the center, with the vertical spokes of prayer and word. They also had horizontal spokes to show the priority of relationships with others, to other believers and with unbelievers. At the Connection Church website, there is a tab for Connection Tools, and there are a number of reading plans there that you can download. Oftentimes, God will speak to you out of His word. Spend time in worship. Cultivate your relationship with God.

Our second application is to prioritize your relationships with others. You should be connected to a local church, and you should also be part of a smaller group, which is where most relationships will develop. Make these relationships a priority. Protect the time that you set aside for your small group meetings.

Third, memorize and meditate on verses on love. You can find many verses on love in this message, and you can also do a word study on love and find verses to memorize. 1 Corinthians 13 would be a great place to start. As you meditate on them, ask God to help you apply those verses in your own life.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for Your love. You are love, and everything that You do is out of love. Jesus, thank You for loving us so much that You were willing to die for our sins so that we could have fellowship with You and the Father. Thank You for Your sacrifice and for Your example. Lord, help us to make love the goal in everything that we do. Help us to do everything out of love. Lord, we want and earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but help us to pursue love even more than the gifts. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- When Paul said that the goal of their instruction was love, Timothy was about to bring correction to the false teachers in Ephesus. What does that teach us about love?
- Is love the primary goal of most churches? Of most believers?
- Goals should be specific, measurable, and attainable. How will we know if we are hitting the goal of love?
- What are some ways to keep the goal of love before us, individually and corporately?
- If we are pursuing love, what are some things that we can do to help us reach that goal?
- Was there ever a time where someone recognized you as a believer because of your love?

01 The Goal Is Love**Introduction (1 Ti 1:5)**

1. **The Goal** (Mt 5:48, Col 1:28-29, He 12:2, Php 1:6, Lk 13:32, Mk 10:45, Jn 19:30, 3:16, 15:13, Ro 5:8)

2. The Priority of this Goal

- A. Love is the distinguishing mark of a believer (1 Jn 4:7-8, Jn 13:34-35)
- B. Love is the Greatest Commandment (Mt 22:35-40, Jn 14:21, Ex 33:11, Ps 42:1, 1 Jn 4:7-8, Eph 3:14-19, 1 Th 3:12)

3. The Surpassing Value of this goal (1 Co 12:1, 12:31, 14:1)

- A. Love is more valuable than the gift of tongues (1 Cor 13:1-3, 14:18-19, 14:4)
- B. Love is more valuable than the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 13:2, 14:3, 14:1)
- C. Love is more valuable than the gift of knowledge (1 Cor 13:2, Eph 4:13, 1:17-18, Ho 4:6)
- D. Love is more valuable than the gift of faith (1 Cor 13:2, He 11:6, Eph 2:8-9, 1 Cor 13:13)
- E. Love is more valuable than the gift of mercy (1 Cor 13:3, Lk 4:18-19, Mt 19:21, 9:11-13, 12:7, 14:14, 15:32)
- F. Love is more valuable than martyrdom (1 Cor 13:3, Jas 1:12, Re 2:10)
- G. Love never fails (1 Co 13:8-12)

Conclusion and Applications

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.