

## If Not Love

### Scripture Reading — 1 John 4:7-12

*If I ... do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.*  
—1 Corinthians 13:1 —

For seven years I served on the board of a seminary. Our meetings often focused on the church's need for excellent communicators. Members of struggling congregations told us the main job of our seminary was to produce good preachers. "Effective communicators," they said, "are the key to healthy congregations."

We agreed that in the chaos of competing voices claiming to be trustworthy, the church needs leaders to speak the sure, clear Word of God. In a world where a thousand seductive voices call us away from what is wise and true, we need people to remind us of God's surprising, life-giving good news and to help us understand it and apply it to our lives and neighborhoods.

But the apostle Paul knew a church with outstanding preachers, and he was not impressed. Paul wanted his readers to know that the most effective preacher is worthless without love. Without love the most articulate, winsome, engaging speaker is an obnoxious cymbal. What that first-century church needed most is what every church needs most: love.

What Paul says about love is like what the actress Helen Hayes said about charm: "If you have it, you don't need to have anything else; and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have."

### Prayer

*Lord Jesus, we stumble around looking for magic formulas that will set things right. Help us to receive and live out the love you have been offering us all along. Amen.*

**Devotion topics:** [Bible](#), [Good News](#), [Christianity](#), [Discipleship](#), [Love](#), [Church](#)

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