

Our Greatest Need

Scripture Reading — 1 Corinthians 13

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love ...
—1 Corinthians 13:1 —*

I've talked to a lot of people who are fed up with the church. For some, church is a poor stand-in for a mountain hike on a beautiful Sunday morning. For others, church means little more than attending a worship service to keep a family member from nagging.

Even some who esteem the church value it like an Edsel. They venerate it because it's old, not because it's useful. Many agree with Winston Churchill, who said he related to the church rather like a flying buttress: "I support it from the outside." Some sympathize with the atheistic philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who, when asked what made him so negative toward Christians, said, "I would believe in their salvation if they looked a little more like people who have been saved."

So, is there any hope for the church? I don't ask as a cynic who dodges and belittles the church, but as one who has promised to nurture and encourage its people. Augustine, a fourth-century skeptic who later became a leader in the church, spent years dashing his mother's hopes that he would join her in attending worship services. But eventually he came to value the church so deeply that he stated, "You cannot have God as your Father without having the church as your mother."

In light of this, let's restate our question more positively: What is the church's deepest need? How would you answer?

Prayer

Forgive, O Lord, the church for its many foibles and fail-ures. Give us grace to see it as you do. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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