

The Holy Spirit, Teacher's Guide

Week 8: When the Perfect Comes: The Duration of the Gifts

1 Corinthians 13:8–13; Ephesians 4:11–16

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson completes the doctrinal arc begun in Weeks 5 through 7 and addresses, head-on, the largest religious movement of our time. The charismatic and pentecostal world, hundreds of millions strong, holds that tongues, prophecy, and healing gifts continue today and often makes them the measure of spiritual life. Paul's own words supply the answer this lesson must establish: the miraculous gifts were partial, piecemeal deliverers of revelation, and they came with a stated expiration, "when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away" (1 Corinthians 13:10). The teacher must handle the exegesis of "the perfect" (to teleion, the complete thing) carefully and honestly: in a context contrasting partial knowing and partial prophesying with a coming completeness, the natural referent is the completed revelation of God's will, the faith once for all delivered (Jude 3), not heaven or the second coming, and the lesson works through the reasons, including the fact that faith and hope "abide" beyond the gifts' cessation (13:13), yet faith gives way to sight and hope to possession at the Lord's return (2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 8:24). Ephesians 4 corroborates from the side of church design: apostles and prophets belong to the foundation (2:20), and the equipping offices move the body from infancy to maturity, no longer tossed by winds.

Equally important is the definition the class must carry out the door: biblical tongues were real human languages (Acts 2:6–11), spoken by men who had never learned them and understood by native hearers, and even at Corinth they were governed: two or three at most, in turn, with interpretation, in silence otherwise, under the speaker's control (1 Corinthians 14:27–32). Modern glossolalia, non-linguistic, unverifiable, often uncontrolled, fails the Bible's own description before any argument about duration begins. The teacher should present this evidence fully but must also guard the lesson's spirit: tens of millions practice these things sincerely, students have family among them, and 1 Peter 3:15's gentleness and respect are not optional garnish but the commanded manner. We refute doctrines; we do not caricature people.

Finally, do not let the lesson end in negation. Paul's whole argument runs toward what abides: faith, hope, and love, with love the greatest, and toward the mature body that builds itself up in love as each part works properly (Ephesians 4:16). The church after the gifts is not the church diminished; it is the church grown up, holding the complete word, equipped by Christ's gifts of evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, and displaying the Spirit's true ongoing signature, which the next two weeks will unfold: the indwelling, the fruit, and a love that never ends. Students should leave confident, not defensive; warm, not combative; and more in love with the excellent way than with any argument about it.

Question 1

Student Question:

In 1 Corinthians 13:8, Paul names three miraculous gifts, prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, and declares they “will pass away” and “will cease,” while “love never ends.” Why does Paul draw this contrast between the temporary gifts and permanent love, and what was this contrast meant to correct in the Corinthian church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Set the contrast inside Corinth's actual dysfunction, because chapter 13 is a corrective, not a greeting card. The congregation overflowed with gifts (1:7) and underflowed with love: factions (1:12; 3:3), lawsuits (6:1–8), the rich shaming the poor at the Lord's supper (11:20–22), and assemblies where tongues-speakers performed simultaneously without interpreters while prophets competed for the floor (14:23, 26–33). Their operating assumption was that miraculous endowment equaled spiritual rank. Paul's three opening hypotheticals in 13:1–3 demolish it: tongues of men and angels without love is noise; prophetic powers and mountain-moving faith without love is “nothing”; even martyrdom without love gains nothing. Gifts measure nothing about a heart; love measures everything.

Then comes the durability contrast of verse 8, and the teacher should make the class stare at the verbs: “Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away (katargeo, be rendered inoperative, abolished); as for tongues, they will cease (pauo, stop); as for knowledge, it will pass away.” Three miraculous gifts, prophecy (inspired speaking of revelation), tongues (Spirit-given languages), and knowledge (inspired possession of revelation, the “word of knowledge” of 12:8), all stamped with termination, while love alone carries the label “never ends.” Paul is ranking by lifespan: the Corinthians prized what was scheduled for removal and neglected the one thing that would outlast the universe of gifts entirely.

Draw out why this correction needed making, because the principle generalizes. The Corinthians had confused the spectacular with the spiritual. It is an easy confusion: gifts were visible, audible, and rankable; love is quiet, slow, and hard. But the gifts were tools for an era, delivering and confirming revelation during the church's infancy (Weeks 5 and 7), while love is the character of God Himself (1 John 4:8) and the family resemblance of His children (John 13:34–35). A tool is honored by being used for its purpose and retired when the work is done; a character is forever. Paul's argument structure across chapters 12–14 says exactly this: gifts, rightly ordered (12), are outranked by love (13), and even while they lasted, love governed their use toward edification (14).

Note for precision: Paul does not despise the gifts; he regulated and even encouraged them in their day (14:1, 39). The contrast is not good versus bad but temporary versus permanent, partial versus complete, instrument versus end. That framing protects the class from two errors at once: the charismatic error that makes the temporary central, and the cold error that, having

rejected counterfeit gifts, also forgets to pursue the love that was always the point. The chapter's first word of application is the one Paul gives: "Pursue love" (14:1).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Chapter 13 as correction: gifted Corinth's loveless dysfunction (1:7 with 1:12; 6:1-8; 11:20-22; 14:23)
- The three hypotheticals: gifts without love are noise, nothing, no gain (13:1-3)
- The verbs of verse 8: prophecies abolished, tongues ceasing, knowledge passing, love never ending
- Temporary instruments versus permanent character: ranking by lifespan
- The spectacular confused with the spiritual, then and now
- Paul's balance: gifts regulated and honored in their era, but love the excellent way (14:1, 39)

Discussion Prompts

- Why would a church 'not lacking in any gift' still be the most troubled congregation in the New Testament?
- What does it reveal about us that visible abilities impress us more than patient love?
- How does knowing the gifts' expiration change how you read the love chapter at weddings and funerals?

Question 2

Student Question:

The Corinthians ranked one another by giftedness and turned worship into competition, while neglecting the love that gives every gift its value (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Where do you find yourself ranking Christians, including yourself, by visible talents rather than by Christlike love? What "noisy gong" activity in your life needs love restored to it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Corinthian disease was ranking: by baptizer (1:12), by wisdom (1:20-25), by gift (12:14-25), by patron at the supper (11:21-22). The gift-ranking was the most spiritual-looking version, which made it the most dangerous; envy and pride had dressed up as devotion. Paul's body metaphor in chapter 12 had already answered it: the apportioning was the Spirit's sovereign choice (12:11), the body needs unimpressive parts most (12:22), and God composed the body "giving greater honor to the part that lacked it... that there may be no division" (12:24-25). Nobody earns a gift, so nobody may boast of one; nobody lacks a function, so nobody may despair of one. Then chapter 13 removes the scale entirely: the only measure that registers in God's accounting is love.

Help the class find the modern scales, because we no longer rank by tongues but we surely rank. By public ability: the fluent class comment, the strong song leading, the polished prayer, while

the quiet visitor of the sick goes unranked. By knowledge: Bible trivia as status, the ability to win arguments mistaken for spirituality (Paul's own warning sits in this very letter: "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up," 8:1). By visibility of role, by family pedigree in the church, by attendance streaks, by who gets asked to lead. And the self-ranking cuts both directions: pride in the gifted, and the quiet despair of the member who concludes she is "nothing" because her service is invisible, exactly the foot saying "because I am not a hand, I do not belong" (12:15). Both the boast and the despair use the same false scale.

Then turn to the question's pointed phrase: the "noisy gong" activity. Paul's hypotheticals in 13:1-3 are first person, "if I speak... if I have... if I give," inviting self-audit, not neighbor-audit. The haunting possibility is religious activity at full volume with love absent: teaching done for reputation, serving done with resentment, giving done for control, correcting done for the pleasure of being right, hospitality performed but not felt. The activity itself may be commanded and good; loveless execution converts it to noise in God's hearing. Ask students to name (inwardly) their most public spiritual activity and then to ask the chapter's questions of it: is it patient, is it kind, does it envy, does it boast, is it irritable, does it keep score (13:4-5)?

Close with the restoration the question seeks: love restored to the activity, not the activity abandoned. The cure for loveless teaching is not silence but teaching that serves the learner; for resentful service, not quitting but praying for the people served until they become persons rather than tasks; for scored giving, generosity practiced in secret until the ledger dies (Matthew 6:3-4). Love here is not a feeling awaited but a practice resumed, fifteen verbs in 13:4-7, every one of them choosable this week. The gifts have passed; the verbs remain.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Ranking as Corinth's disease in every form: baptizer, wisdom, gift, patron
- The Spirit's sovereign apportioning kills both boasting and despair (12:11, 15-25)
- Modern scales: public ability, knowledge as status, visibility, pedigree (8:1)
- The noisy gong audit: first-person hypotheticals, self-examination not neighbor-examination
- Loveless execution converting good activity to noise (13:1-3)
- Love as practicable verbs, not awaited feelings (13:4-7)

Discussion Prompts

- Which visible abilities does our congregation most admire, and what invisible love goes unranked?
- When has your service slid from love into performance or resentment, and what pulled it back?
- Pick one verb from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to practice deliberately this week: which, and toward whom?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says “we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away” (13:9–10). In the context of revelation delivered piece by piece through the gifts, what is “the partial,” what is “the perfect” (or complete) thing that was coming, and why does this argument point to the completed revelation of God’s will rather than to heaven or the second coming?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Walk the argument’s terms with the text open, because everything turns on matching “the partial” to “the perfect.” Verse 9 defines the partial: “we know in part and we prophesy in part”, the inspired gifts of knowledge and prophecy delivered God’s revelation in installments, a piece at Corinth, a piece at Thessalonica, a letter here, an oracle there. The church of that era held God’s will the way one holds a book arriving chapter by chapter. “The perfect” (to teleion) is the neuter adjective meaning the complete, finished, whole thing, the completed entity of which those installments were parts. The argument is a part-to-whole argument: when the whole arrives, part-deliveries end, as installments stop when the book is bound. The gifts that delivered revelation piecemeal would be rendered inoperative by the arrival of the complete revelation, the whole faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), the Scripture that furnishes the man of God “complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17, recall Week 5).

Now give the reasons this reading, and not heaven or the second coming, fits Paul’s argument, and take them in order. First, the grammatical contrast: “the perfect” is neuter, a complete thing, standing opposite “the partial” (also neuter), partial knowing and prophesying, that is, partial revelation; the natural complete counterpart to partial revelation is complete revelation, not a place (heaven) or a person (Christ, who would take the masculine). Second, verse 13’s checkmate: “so now faith, hope, and love abide, these three”, faith, hope, and love continue beyond the gifts’ cessation. But at the Lord’s return faith becomes sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) and hope is swallowed by possession (“hope that is seen is not hope,” Romans 8:24–25); if “the perfect” were the second coming, faith and hope could not outlast the gifts, yet Paul says they abide when the gifts have passed. Therefore the gifts cease at a point before the end, after which faith, hope, and love still operate, exactly the era of the completed word, the age we live in. Third, Ephesians 4’s parallel (Question 7 ahead): the revelatory offices run “until we all attain to the unity of the faith,” the one faith fully delivered, with maturity, not the parousia, as the stated terminus.

Handle the mirror of verse 12 honestly, because it is the standard objection: “now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face... then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” Doesn’t “face to face” mean heaven? Answer from the imagery’s own logic: a mirror (Corinth was famous for its polished bronze ones) gives an indirect, partial reflection; the contrast is between revelation in fragments and revelation complete, between glimpsing God’s will

piecemeal and beholding it whole, language James echoes when he calls the completed word “the perfect law of liberty” into which a man peers as into a mirror (James 1:23–25). “Face to face” is the Old Testament’s idiom for clear, direct communication (Numbers 12:8, where God spoke with Moses “mouth to mouth... and not in riddles”, while Moses remained very much on earth). Paul’s “I shall know fully” speaks of the full knowledge available when the whole counsel of God stands revealed, contrasted with his own era’s partial inspiration, not of omniscience in glory. The reading is consistent, and the class should see that no verse in the paragraph requires the end of the world, while verse 13 positively forbids it.

Be fair and confident at once: acknowledge to the class that some sincere students of Scripture have read “the perfect” as the eternal state, and the kindest way to engage them is verse 13 plus the part-to-whole context, questions, not volume. But the doctrinal stakes deserve naming: if “the perfect” has not come, then prophecy and tongues should still be delivering and confirming new revelation, and the canon is open, which collides with everything Weeks 5 and 7 established (Jude 3; Galatians 1:8–9; Hebrews 2:3–4). The cessation reading is not a convenience; it is the verse working in harmony with the New Testament’s whole account of revelation: promised to the apostles, delivered in their generation, confirmed by signs, completed, and closed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The part-to-whole argument: partial knowing and prophesying versus the complete thing
- To teleion as the completed revelation: Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16–17
- Verse 13 as the decisive clock: faith and hope abide past the gifts but not past the second coming
- The mirror and “face to face”: Numbers 12:8; James 1:23–25, clarity of revelation, not location in heaven
- Why the “heaven” reading reopens the canon and collides with Weeks 5 and 7
- Engaging the alternative reading with questions and verse 13, not volume

Discussion Prompts

- In Paul’s argument, what exactly was ‘in part,’ and what would make it complete?
- How does the abiding of faith and hope in verse 13 settle when the gifts were to cease?
- Why does it matter today whether ‘the perfect’ has already come?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul compares the era of the gifts to childhood and the era of completion to manhood: “when I became a man, I gave up childish ways” (13:11). Growing up means trading flashier things for deeper ones. How have you seen your own faith mature over the years, and where might you still be clinging to spiritual childhood because it feels easier or more exciting?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul's illustration in verse 11 is autobiography every adult recognizes: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways." In context, the analogy interprets the eras: the age of the gifts was the church's childhood, speech, thought, and reasoning suited to infancy, revelation in fragments, milk before meat; the age of the completed word is the church's adulthood. Note the verb: "I gave up" is the same *katargeo* as verse 8, childish things are "rendered inoperative" by maturity itself. The point is not that childhood was bad; it is that childhood was for then. A grown man playing with a rattle is not charming; he is a tragedy. The application to those demanding the infancy-gifts in the era of maturity makes itself.

But the question turns the analogy toward personal formation, and the teacher should follow it there, because Scripture uses the same growth language for individual faith. Hebrews 5:12-14 rebukes believers who "by this time ought to be teachers" but "need milk, not solid food," the mature being those who by "constant practice" have powers of discernment trained. Peter commands growth: "like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation" (1 Peter 2:2), and ends his last letter, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord" (2 Peter 3:18). Paul aims at presenting "everyone mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). The Christian life has a designed trajectory; staying put is not neutral but a kind of refusal.

Help students recognize spiritual childhood's symptoms, gently, since all of us carry some: a faith dependent on feelings and excitement, needing events and emotional highs to stay warm (the child's appetite for dessert over dinner); doctrine by authority figure rather than tested conviction (the Bereans outgrew this, Acts 17:11); prayer that is all asking and no thanksgiving or confession; fragility under disappointment, sulking at God when answers delay; an appetite for novelty over depth, new books, new speakers, new experiences, while the Gospel of John lies unmined; and the need to be noticed in service (the child's "watch me!"). Against these, the marks of maturity Scripture names: discernment trained by practice (Hebrews 5:14), stability under wind (Ephesians 4:14), contentment learned in any state (Philippians 4:11-12), and love that has stopped keeping score (13:4-7), the adult furniture of verse 13.

Make the application honest in both directions, as the question does. "How has your faith matured?", let students name real growth with gratitude, because recognizing growth encourages more (and some students need permission to see how far God has brought them). "Where are you clinging to childhood because it feels easier or more exciting?", easier: letting others do my thinking, study, and praying; more exciting: chasing spiritual stimulation rather than steadfastness. One childish thing to put away this week, named concretely: the entertainment-test for worship, the sulk at unanswered prayer, the dependence on a favorite teacher instead of the text, the "watch me" in service. Maturity, Paul says, is when you give such things up, not because they are condemned, but because you have outgrown the need.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Verse 11 in context: the gifts as the church's childhood, the completed word as adulthood
- Katargeo repeated: childish things rendered inoperative by maturity itself
- The individual trajectory: milk to solid food, growth commanded (Hebrews 5:12–14; 2 Peter 3:18)
- Symptoms of spiritual childhood: feelings-dependence, borrowed convictions, novelty appetite, 'watch me' service
- Marks of maturity: trained discernment, stability, contentment, scoreless love
- Naming growth with gratitude and naming the rattle to retire

Discussion Prompts

- What did your faith depend on ten years ago that it no longer depends on, and what changed?
- Why is the demand for constant spiritual excitement a mark of childhood rather than depth?
- What is one 'childish way' you sense it is time to give up, and what adult practice replaces it?

Question 5

Student Question:

The tongues of Scripture were real human languages, never learned by the speaker but understood by hearers (Acts 2:6–11), and even at Corinth they required interpretation and were subject to the speaker's control (1 Corinthians 14:27–28, 32). How does this biblical description equip us to evaluate modern practices called "tongues," which are not identifiable languages and are often uncontrolled?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Establish the definition where Scripture establishes it: Acts 2. The apostles "began to speak in other tongues (glossais)," and the multinational crowd supplies the meaning: "each one was hearing them speak in his own language (dialekto)... we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God," with fifteen-plus language regions itemized (Acts 2:4–11). Biblical tongues were glossolalia in the strict sense the text defines: real, rule-governed human languages, unlearned by the speaker, instantly intelligible to native hearers, carrying propositional content ("the mighty works of God"). The gift reappears with the same character at Caesarea ("just as on us at the beginning," Acts 11:15–17) and Ephesus (19:6). There is one biblical definition of the gift, and Luke wrote it down.

Carry the definition to Corinth, because the standard claim is that 1 Corinthians 14 describes something different, ecstatic, non-linguistic speech. The text says otherwise. Paul's whole corrective assumes the tongues were languages: they could be interpreted (14:5, 13, 27–28), and interpretation (hermeneuo) is what one does with language; uninterpreted tongue-speech

is compared to foreign languages, “there are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning... I will be a foreigner to the speaker” (14:10–11); and Paul grounds the gift in Isaiah’s prophecy about God speaking to Israel “by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue” (14:21, quoting Isaiah 28:11, where the foreign tongue was Assyrian, a human language). The Corinthian problem was not a different kind of tongue; it was the right gift wrongly used, languages spoken where no one present understood them, profiting nobody (14:6–9, 16–17). Hence the regulations: two or at most three, each in turn, one interpreting; if no interpreter, silence in church; and “the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets,” the speaker in full self-control, “for God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (14:27–33).

Now do what the question asks: lay the modern practice beside the biblical description, attribute by attribute, and let the comparison speak. Biblical tongues: identifiable human languages; modern glossolalia: linguists who have studied recordings (and this has been studied extensively) find no language structure, no consistent vocabulary or grammar, typically syllable strings built from the speaker’s native sound inventory. Biblical tongues: unlearned and immediate; modern: commonly coached, practiced, and learned (“just let the syllables flow”). Biblical tongues: understood by native hearers without interpreters (Acts 2) or interpreted with verifiable content (1 Corinthians 14); modern: “interpretations” are unverifiable and notoriously vary for identical utterances. Biblical tongues: under the speaker’s control, restricted in number, silent without an interpreter; much modern practice: simultaneous congregational speech, claimed irresistibility, no interpretation, the precise scene Paul forbade and said would make outsiders conclude “you are out of your minds” (14:23). The modern phenomenon fails the Bible’s description before the duration question is even reached; whatever it is psychologically, and sincere people do experience it sincerely, it is not the gift of Acts 2.

Add the duration frame from this very chapter for completeness: even the genuine gift carried Paul’s expiration, “tongues... will cease” (13:8), tied to the arrival of the complete revelation (13:10). So the evaluation of modern claims stands on two independent legs: the practice does not match the gift, and the gift itself was scheduled to cease. Equip students to use the gentler leg first in conversation, simply reading Acts 2:6–11 with a friend and asking, “is this what happens at your fellowship?”, because a definition honestly faced often does the work an argument cannot.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The fixed definition: Acts 2’s known languages with content, the reference point for every passage
- Corinth’s tongues as the same gift misused: interpretation, Isaiah 28:11, the foreigner analogy
- Paul’s regulations: number, order, interpretation, control, silence otherwise (14:27–33)
- The attribute-by-attribute comparison: language structure, learnedness, verifiability, control
- 1 Corinthians 14:23: uninterpreted mass tongue-speech condemned by Paul himself

- Two independent legs: the practice fails the description, and the gift had an expiration
- Sincerity acknowledged without conceding the phenomenon's identity

Discussion Prompts

- If you read Acts 2:6–11 aloud with no commentary, what would a listener conclude tongues were?
- Which of Paul's Corinthian regulations are most plainly violated in modern tongue-speaking services?
- Why is it possible for an experience to be emotionally real and still not be the biblical gift?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul insisted that in the assembly he would “rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Corinthians 14:19), because everything must build up the church (14:26). When you speak in Bible class, conversation, or online, is your aim to instruct and build up, or to impress? What would change if edification governed your words this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul's five-to-ten-thousand ratio in 14:19 is one of Scripture's most violent exchange rates, and it prices a single value: intelligibility in the service of others. The man who possessed tongues “more than you all” (14:18) would trade ten thousand words of self-expression for five words that taught somebody something. The reason runs through the whole chapter like a refrain: “the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding” (14:3); “strive to excel in building up the church” (14:12); “let all things be done for building up” (14:26). Edification, oikodome, construction work on other people, is the assembly's governing rule, and by extension the Christian tongue's governing rule everywhere.

Expose the rival aim the question names, because it was Corinth's and it is ours: speaking to impress. The uninterpreted tongue edified no hearer, but it displayed the speaker; that was its attraction. Our settings differ, the mechanics do not. In Bible class: the comment crafted to exhibit knowledge rather than to help the room, the question asked to display the asker, the correction delivered for the pleasure of being right. In conversation: name-dropping our service, steering stories toward our successes, theological vocabulary deployed at civilians. Online, the temptation's natural habitat: posts engineered for applause, arguments joined for an audience, “hot takes” on sacred things, the performance of outrage or piety for people we will never serve in person. Jesus diagnosed the root long ago: doing righteousness “to be seen” by others, who thereby become not neighbors but mirrors (Matthew 6:1–5). And James insists the tongue is the maturity-meter: “if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man” (James 3:2).

Give the class Paul's edification test in usable form, three questions for any word in any medium: Will this build the hearer, or display the speaker? (14:26; "let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear," Ephesians 4:29, note that edifying speech fits the occasion and targets actual hearers' actual needs.) Is it intelligible to this audience, or am I speaking Corinthian, jargon, showpiece vocabulary, insider speech, at people who cannot profit? (14:9, "how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.") And would I say it if no one were watching but the person served and the Lord? Colossians 4:6 gathers the standard: "let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person", each person: speech as service is always addressed, never broadcast for self.

Make the week's application concrete in the three venues the question lists. In class: resolve that your next comment will aim at the room's understanding, shorter, plainer, and prepared by actually studying the text beforehand (the best class comments are acts of prior labor, not performance). In conversation: practice the discipline of the drawing-out question (Proverbs 20:5), making the other person's edification the agenda. Online: before posting, run the three tests, and consider the older discipline of simply not posting, ten thousand words withheld in favor of five words spoken to a real person may be the most Pauline trade available to a modern Christian. "Let all things be done for building up" makes every word a construction decision; this week, students should decide what they are building.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The exchange rate of 14:19: intelligible service priced above impressive display
- Edification (oikodome) as the assembly's governing rule and the tongue's everywhere (14:3, 12, 26)
- Modern Corinthianism: class performance, conversational display, online applause-engineering
- Matthew 6:1-5: audiences turned into mirrors; James 3:2: the tongue as maturity-meter
- The three-question edification test: build or display, intelligible or jargon, service or broadcast (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6)
- Withholding words as a spiritual discipline in the age of platforms

Discussion Prompts

- When are you most tempted to speak to impress rather than to build, and who pays for it?
- How would Ephesians 4:29 change what you post, comment, and forward this week?
- What would it look like to prepare one class comment this week as an act of service to the room?

Question 7

Student Question:

Ephesians 4:11–16 says Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers “to equip the saints... until we all attain to the unity of the faith,” so the church would “no longer be children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.” How does this passage show the foundational, era-bound role of apostles and prophets (see also Ephesians 2:20), and what has Christ provided so His church can reach and maintain maturity today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Read the gift list of Ephesians 4:11 as church design, because that is Paul's frame: the ascended Christ (4:8–10) “gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.” Two groups stand in the list. Apostles and prophets were the revelatory offices: eyewitnesses commissioned by Christ (Acts 1:21–22; 1 Corinthians 9:1) and inspired spokesmen, and Paul has already fixed their place in the architecture: the household of God is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5, the mystery “now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”). A foundation, by nature, is laid once, at the beginning, and not re-laid on every floor; the offices that laid it belong to the founding era, and their qualifications (eyewitness commission, confirmed inspiration) are by design unrepeatable. Their voice, however, is permanent: the foundation remains under the house, the apostles and prophets still govern the church through the Scriptures they left (recall Week 5's chain). Evangelists, shepherds (pastors), and teachers are the continuing offices: men who proclaim the completed word, oversee and feed congregations, and instruct, none of which requires new revelation, all of which requires the Book.

Now trace the purpose clause and its terminus, the question's center: the gifts were given “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4:12–13). Note that the equipping offices exist to put the saints to work, every member ministering, not a clergy performing for an audience. And note the “until”: the revelatory scaffolding runs to a destination, the unity of the faith, the one faith (4:5) fully delivered and held, the body arrived at maturity. The same movement as 1 Corinthians 13: infancy (“no longer children,” 4:14) to manhood; partial to complete. Ephesians 4 is the ecclesiology of which 1 Corinthians 13 is the chronology, and they date the same transition.

Answer the question's final clause positively: what has Christ provided for maturity today? The completed foundation (the apostles' and prophets' word in Scripture, 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:16–17); the continuing offices (evangelists to preach it, shepherds to guard and feed the flock with it, Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–3, teachers to ground each generation in it, 2 Timothy 2:2); and the working body itself, “joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (4:16). Nothing in the maturity toolkit is missing, and nothing in it is miraculous. A congregation with open Bibles, faithful preaching, qualified shepherds, working members, and truth spoken in love (4:15) possesses everything this passage says the grown-up church runs on.

Guard one modern misuse while the text is open: some fellowships claim restored “apostles and prophets” today, building entire movements on new offices and new revelations. Ephesians answers from its own architecture: foundations are not poured on the roof. The credentials of an apostle, having seen the risen Lord, commissioned by Him, bearing the confirming signs (1 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 12:12), are claimable by no one living, and Revelation 2:2 commends testing and exposing “those who call themselves apostles and are not.” The church honors the apostles and prophets not by replacing them but by building on them, which is to say, by opening their book.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Two groups in the gift list: revelatory offices (foundation) and continuing offices (equipping)
- Ephesians 2:20; 3:5: apostles and prophets as the once-laid foundation, permanent in Scripture
- The purpose clause: equipping the saints for ministry, every member working (4:12)
- The terminus: ‘until... the unity of the faith,’ maturity, paralleling 1 Corinthians 13’s chronology
- Christ’s complete maturity toolkit today: the word, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, the working body (4:16)
- Against modern ‘restored apostles’: credentials, Revelation 2:2, foundations not poured on the roof

Discussion Prompts

- Why does calling apostles and prophets the ‘foundation’ tell us something about the duration of their office?
- How does Ephesians 4:12 correct the idea that ministry is what paid professionals do while members watch?
- What would you say to someone whose church announces it is led by a modern apostle?

Question 8

Student Question:

A church “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine” is carried about by “human cunning” and “deceitful schemes” (Ephesians 4:14). In a world of religious media, viral teachers, and emotional appeals, how tossable are you? What anchors, in the word, in the congregation, in your habits, keep you steady, and which one needs strengthening?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul’s seasickness image deserves its full force: “no longer children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (4:14). The picture is a small boat in chop, no keel, no anchor, every gust determining its heading. And note Paul’s realism about the weather: the winds are not innocent; behind

them he names cunning (kubēia, dice-playing, trickery), craftiness, and schemes. False teaching is rarely an honest mistake looking for victims; it is marketed, and immaturity is the market. Scripture's gallery of the tossable: hearers with "itching ears" who accumulate teachers to suit their passions (2 Timothy 4:3-4); the "weak women... always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth" targeted by household infiltrators (2 Timothy 3:6-7); the Galatians "so quickly deserting" for a different gospel (Galatians 1:6); the bewitchable (Galatians 3:1).

Update the weather report, because the question sets the scene in our media world. Wind today travels at broadband speed: the algorithm feeds whatever provokes; religious celebrity substitutes charisma for credentials; the documentary or viral clip delivers a crisis of faith in forty minutes flat to a viewer who has never spent forty minutes in Leviticus; emotional appeal ('this made me cry, so it must be true') and tribal pressure ('our kind believes this now') do the work argument used to attempt. And novelty itself is a sail: the new reading, the secret the church never told you, the teacher who finally 'unlocks' everything, Athens made a religion of it (Acts 17:21). The honest question for each student: when did a feed, a friend, or a film last move my convictions further than a tested study of the text moved them? Tossability is measurable by exactly that comparison.

Then inventory the anchors, as the question directs, and let Scripture name them. The word, personally handled: the Bereans received eagerly and examined daily, and Luke calls that nobility (Acts 17:11); discernment comes "by constant practice" (Hebrews 5:14), no shortcut exists. The congregation: truth is corporately held, "the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15); shepherds exist precisely for wolf-weather (Acts 20:28-31); and the one-another life means my drift gets noticed (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25, recall Week 7). Habits: fixed reading, fixed assembly, fixed prayer, the keel below the waterline that no gust votes on; and the test-everything reflex the study will meet again in Week 12 (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1). Roots: Paul's other metaphor, "rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, as you were taught" (Colossians 2:6-8), against the same 'philosophy and empty deceit' winds.

End with the question's surgical edge: which anchor needs strengthening? Press for self-diagnosis by failure mode. If your convictions shift with your media diet, the word-anchor is light, set the Berean appointment. If you could drift for a month before anyone asked, the congregation-anchor is light, move from attender to known member, and give someone explicit permission to check your bearings. If your spiritual life has no fixed times, the habits-anchor is light, fix one this week. The stable Christian of Ephesians 4 is not the one who never feels wind but the one joined to the body, holding the apostles' word, with a keel the weather cannot reach, and stability, Paul says, is itself a form of maturity in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The seasickness image: keel-less boats and marketed winds (kubēia, craft, schemes)

- Scripture's tossable gallery: itching ears, perpetual learners, quick deserters (2 Timothy 4:3; Galatians 1:6)
- Modern wind at broadband speed: algorithms, celebrity, emotional and tribal pressure, novelty (Acts 17:21)
- The anchors: Berean word-handling, the congregation as pillar, shepherds in wolf-weather, fixed habits
- Test-everything as reflex (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1), rooted in Christ (Colossians 2:6–8)
- Self-diagnosis by failure mode: which anchor is light, and the specific reset

Discussion Prompts

- What was the last wind that actually moved you, a video, an article, a conversation, and what did you check it against?
- Why is a congregation harder to toss than an isolated Christian, and are you actually joined to yours?
- Which of your anchors is lightest right now, and what will you do about it before next Sunday?

Question 9

Student Question:

Many sincere believers today claim tongues, prophecy, and miracle-working as ongoing gifts. Drawing this study together, the purpose of the gifts (Hebrews 2:3–4), their transmission through apostles' hands (Acts 8:14–18), Paul's expiration notice (1 Corinthians 13:8–10), the completed faith (Jude 3), and the test of real tongues (Acts 2:6–11), how would you lovingly show a charismatic friend what Scripture teaches, and how do faith, hope, and love (13:13) answer the fear that cessation leaves the church powerless?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question gathers five weeks of study into one conversation, so begin by having the class assemble the case in order, each piece now familiar. Purpose: miraculous gifts existed to reveal and confirm the word while revelation was incomplete, God bearing witness (Hebrews 2:3–4; Mark 16:20, Week 7). Transmission: beyond the two Christ-administered baptisms in the Spirit, gifts came only through apostles' hands (Acts 8:14–18; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6, Week 7), a channel that closed with the apostolic age. Expiration: Paul stamped the gifts themselves, prophecy, tongues, knowledge, with cessation upon the arrival of the complete revelation (1 Corinthians 13:8–10, this week). Completion: the faith was once for all delivered (Jude 3); Scripture furnishes completely (2 Timothy 3:16–17, Week 5). Definition: biblical tongues were real languages, controlled and verifiable (Acts 2:6–11; 1 Corinthians 14:27–32, this week). Five lines, one conclusion: the miraculous era accomplished its purpose and closed by design, and modern

claims fail on purpose (nothing left to confirm), pedigree (no apostolic hands), prophecy (the expiration has matured), and phenotype (the practices do not match the gifts).

Now coach the conversation itself, because the question asks how, lovingly, and method decides whether truth gets a hearing. Begin with honest common ground: your charismatic friend loves God, prays expectantly, takes the Spirit seriously, and is often reacting against churches that seemed to have no life at all, commend all of that before differing with any of it. Ask before asserting: "Would you study what tongues were in Acts 2 with me?" "What was a miracle for, in the Bible's own words?" "Who, in Scripture, passed gifts to others, and how?" Let the friend read Acts 2:6–11, Acts 8:14–18, Hebrews 2:3–4, and 1 Corinthians 13:8–13 aloud and answer from the page; questions with open Bibles convert better than verdicts with raised voices (2 Timothy 2:24–25, the Lord's servant "able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness"). Never mock an experience; relocate it: the emotion is real, but emotion authenticates nothing (Proverbs 14:12; recall Week 3's 'better felt than told'), and God asks us to test everything, including our own experiences, by His word (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). And keep the friend, not the argument, as the goal: conversations like this are usually won over months, by a Christian whose life displays what his doctrine claims.

Then answer the fear the question names, because it is the real obstacle more often than the exegesis: 'if the gifts ceased, the church is powerless, and God is distant.' Paul's own conclusion refutes it: "so now faith, hope, and love abide" (13:13), abide is present-tense wealth, not consolation-prize language. Faith: the confirmed, completed word produces conviction the first century would envy, we hold the entire attested revelation (John 20:29–31). Hope: anchored "sure and steadfast" in the finished work of the reigning Christ (Hebrews 6:19). Love: "the greatest of these," the church's permanent supernatural mark, by this all people will know (John 13:34–35). Add what the coming weeks will detail: the Spirit Himself indwells every baptized believer (Acts 2:38–39; Week 9), bears His fruit (Week 10), intercedes for our prayers (Week 11), while God's providence still moves mountains in answer to prayer without a single human miracle-worker (James 5:16; Ephesians 3:20). The post-apostolic church is not the church unplugged; it is the church grown up, fully resourced, and decorated with the only gift that never ends.

Close the block with proportion, for your own students' formation: cessationism is a defensive wall, not a dwelling. A Christian can win every argument about 1 Corinthians 13:8 and still flunk 1 Corinthians 13:4. The final apologetic for the Spirit's reality in the church is not the absence of counterfeit gifts but the presence of authentic fruit, congregations where love is patient and kind, where the poor are served and the word is honored. Students should leave this lesson armed and warm: able to give the answer, and being the evidence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The assembled case: purpose, transmission, expiration, completion, definition, five lines, one conclusion

- Conversational method: common ground first, questions with open Bibles, experiences relocated not mocked
- 2 Timothy 2:24–25 and 1 Peter 3:15: gentleness as commanded strategy, the friend as the goal
- Answering the powerlessness fear: faith, hope, and love as present-tense wealth (13:13)
- The Spirit’s real ongoing work previewed: indwelling, fruit, intercession, providence (Weeks 9–11)
- Proportion: winning 13:8 while flunking 13:4, the fruit as the final apologetic

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the five lines of evidence would you open first with a charismatic friend, and why that one?
- What does your friend actually fear losing if cessation is true, and how does 13:13 answer it?
- How can our congregation be evidence of the Spirit’s work in ways no counterfeit can match?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this week’s passages, the love chapter’s expiration notice and Ephesians’ portrait of the maturing body. The gifts passed; faith, hope, and love abide; and the complete word now does what the partial gifts once did. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this truth, and one concrete way you will pursue the “still more excellent way” of love this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Bring the week to its intended landing: Paul did not write 1 Corinthians 13 so the church could win debates about verse 8; he wrote it so the church would walk the “still more excellent way” (12:31). The expiration notice on the gifts was always in service of a revaluation: the Corinthians were investing in assets scheduled for removal and neglecting the one that “never ends.” The capstone asks each student to make the same revaluation personally: now that I know what passed and what abides, where is my treasure actually invested, in being impressive, or in being loving; in spiritual experiences, or in faith, hope, and love?

Let the three abiding things become a self-audit, because each is concrete. Faith: trust in the completed word, does my week look like a person who believes God has spoken fully (reading, obeying, testing winds against it)? Hope: forward-leaning confidence in Christ’s return and promises, does my handling of money, suffering, and death look like a person with an anchored future (Hebrews 6:19; 1 Peter 3:15, the hope that provokes questions)? Love: the fifteen verbs of 13:4–7, which verb is weakest in me, and toward whom? The maturity this week kept

describing, the grown body, the adult Christian, is simply these three operating at full strength; nothing miraculous is on the maturity list, and nothing on the list is beyond any member of the class.

Hold out for the capstone's named specifics, in both of its parts. Formation: "Jesus is forming me by replacing my appetite for spiritual spectacle with contentment in His word"; "He is teaching me that my ranking of Christians, and of myself, has been by the wrong scale"; "He has shown me my speech aims to impress." Pursuit of love this week: one verb from 13:4-7 attached to one person and one situation, patience with the aging parent who repeats herself; kindness, in deed, toward the member everyone finds difficult; "keeps no record" applied to a ledger the student has maintained for years, perhaps burned this week, literally, in a written act of forgiveness. The excellent way is walked in steps exactly that size.

Then set the table for Week 9, because the study now turns a corner from polemics to possession. The class has spent four weeks learning what the Spirit's extraordinary works were and when they ceased; beginning next week, the study takes up what every baptized believer actually has: "repent and be baptized... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off" (Acts 2:38-39). The Spirit is not the church's memory; He is its present resident, the temple's occupant (1 Corinthians 6:19), the sanctifier, the intercessor. If these last weeks built the walls that keep error out, the next three furnish the house, and the students who have learned what the Spirit does not do today are now perfectly positioned to be astonished by what He does.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The expiration notice as revaluation: treasure moved from the passing to the abiding
- The three-part audit: faith in the completed word, anchored hope, the fifteen verbs of love
- Maturity's list contains nothing miraculous and nothing out of reach
- Named formation and one-verb, one-person, one-situation love assignments
- The study's corner: from what ceased to what every baptized believer possesses (Acts 2:38-39)
- Walls against error now complete; the furnished house, indwelling, fruit, intercession, ahead

Discussion Prompts

- If your spiritual investments were audited tonight, how much is in what passes and how much in what abides?
- Which verb of love will you practice this week, toward whom, and how will you know you did it?
- What are you most looking forward to learning about the Spirit's present work in the weeks ahead?