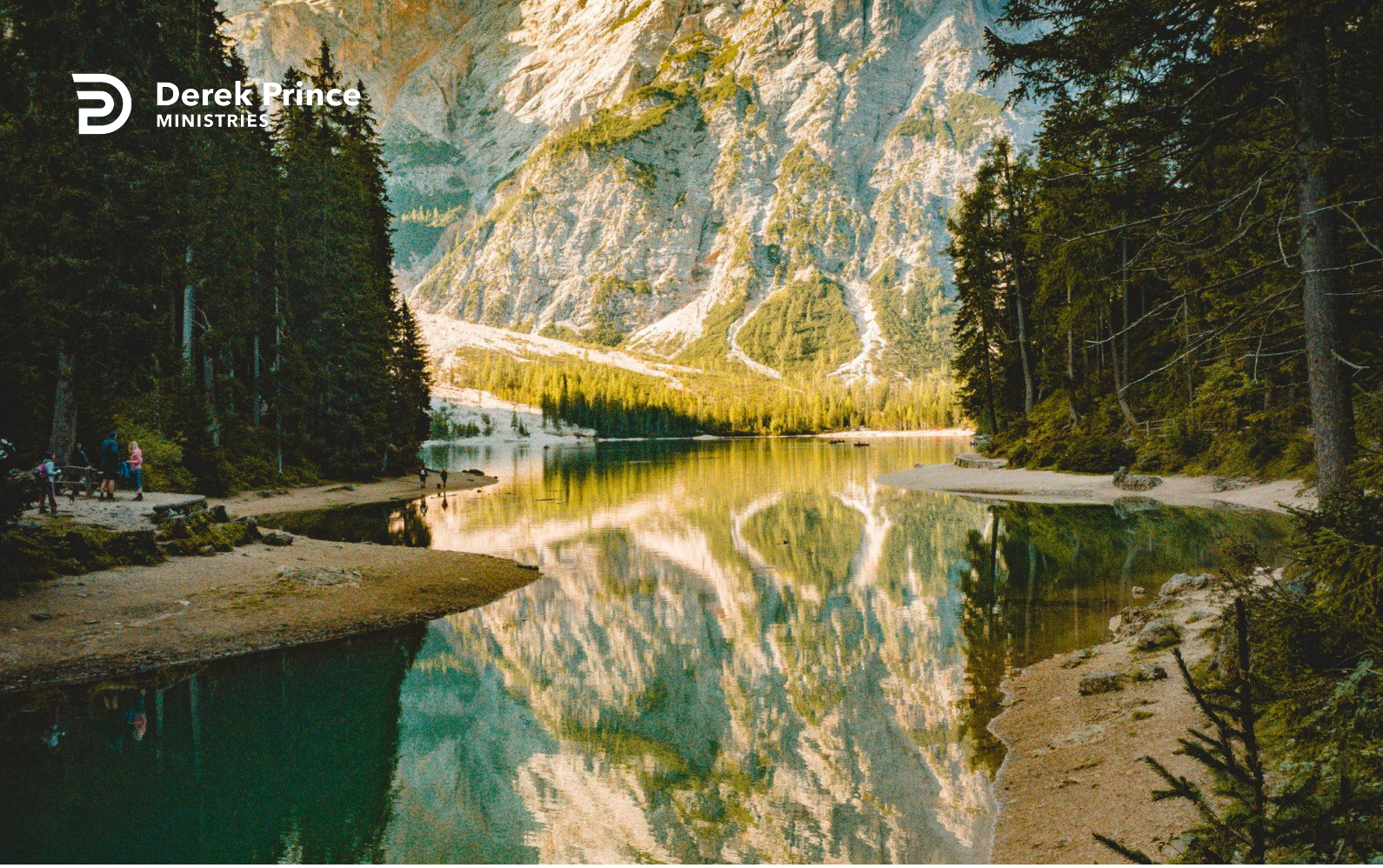

No Substitute for Love



The Love Of God (Day 30)
by Derek Prince

Dear friend,

Today I'm going to share with you a fact of tremendous importance and one that we must never allow ourselves to forget. And this is it: there is no substitute for love.

So let us turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 31, and read on into chapter 13 through verse 3. At the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul endorses the exercise of spiritual gifts. He says:

> "Eagerly desire the greater gifts. [That's really not an option. The Bible doesn't leave it open to us whether we desire spiritual gifts. It's a command. But Paul goes on to warn that, without something else, spiritual gifts in themselves cannot achieve the purpose of God. He calls it "the most excellent way" and it is love. Paul says:] And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." (NIV)

There are some very tremendous statements there that we need to give heed to. Paul goes on in the context of his teaching about spiritual gifts, and in the first three verses of chapter 13 he essentially covers the three main recognised areas of spiritual gifts – that is, gifts of utterance, gifts of revelation and gifts of power. And he says, "Even with all those gifts, if they are exercised without love, the result is simply that a person is a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." A lot of noise but nothing real inside.

He also speaks about the utmost kind of good deeds. He says, "If I give all I possess to the poor, and I surrender my body to the flames, I'm willing to die as a martyr, an agonising death, and I have not love, I gain nothing." That's really a tremendous statement. No matter what we may do in the realm of supernatural gifts or in the realm of self-sacrifice and giving ourselves, our substance, our very lives, all of it

without love is ineffective.

How earnestly we all need to take this to heart. I can confess that looking back over my own ministry there have been times when I've allowed myself to be diverted from the real issue – which is love. I've taught and exercised on spiritual gifts and yet at times my own life has been lacking in love. I have missed the real purpose of God at times. And I have to state frankly, as I look at the body of Christ, Christians worldwide, I think the greatest single deficiency is love. If we had this divine love we would not treat one another the way we so often do. We would not make accusations. We would not be critical. We would not be jealous. We would not tear one another down. We would build one another up. Love is never destructive. It's always positive; it's always edifying. That's why there is no substitute for love.

For reflection and prayer

There is no substitute for love.

Devotional

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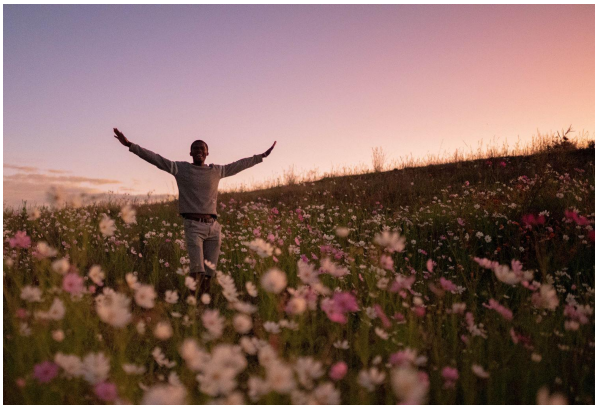

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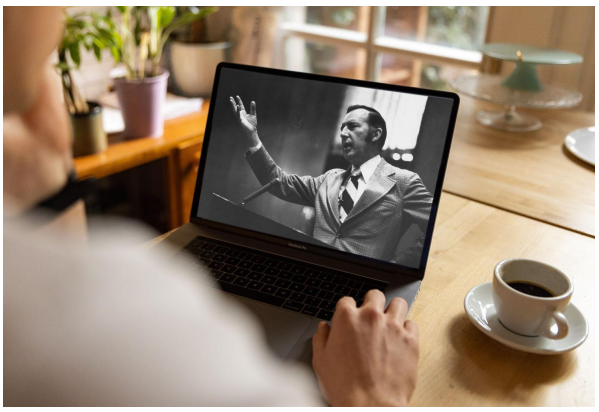

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