

The Greatness of Fire

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 • 1 Corinthians 13 • 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 | New Collective Church

Where This Fits in the Series

This is the finale of a thirteen-week series, and it is the payoff of a cliffhanger. Part 12 ended on 1 Corinthians 12:31, “*eagerly desire the greater gifts*”, and Pastor Mark deliberately stopped there. This week he picks up the second half of that verse, “*and yet I will show you the most excellent way*”, and spends the message in 1 Corinthians 13. Two things make this session different from a normal week. He opened with his own full series recap, which is a gift to you as a leader. And he closed with a commissioning. Treat this session as a sending, not a summary.

Sermon Arc and Key Moves

LEADER NOTE

This message is a capstone, so it moves quickly and assumes the earlier weeks. Your job is less to teach it and more to help the group feel the whole arc land. The five closing questions are where the session should end up.

The Recap He Gave Himself

He opened by defining fire once more as the presence, power, and purifying work of God, then walked the series: the Gift of Fire (the Spirit promised and given, we are now the temple), Fire Falls (we are the fire-falling place), Fire Fills (empty ordinary people), Fire Forms (Christlike character and the fruit of the Spirit), Fire Flows (in you and through you for the sake of others), the four ways to fan the flame (gospel, fellowship and breaking of bread, prayer, generosity), the Heart of Fire (filled with awe), the Spread of Fire, and the Gifts of Fire.

Move 1: You Are Part of It (1 Cor 12:27)

He paused on the magnitude of a holy God placing His Spirit inside unholy people. His pastoral aim was the person who has spent life believing they do not belong to anything significant. This is a direct continuation of Part 12's statement that no follower of Jesus can say I do not belong.

Move 2: You Are Not the All in All (1 Cor 12:29-30)

The rhetorical questions answer no, and he framed that as freeing rather than diminishing. Many people carry crushing pressure from believing everything depends on them. His line: it is not all you, it is not all dependent upon you. He is the head, I am not the head.

Move 3: Holy Ambition (1 Cor 12:31a)

A carefully balanced move. He named the belief that Christians should have no ambition, dreams, or drive, and answered it in two parts: you are not wrong, but you are not all right. Following Jesus does not mean abandoning ambition. It means redirecting it toward gifts that build other people up. He noted the Greek for greater can also render as higher.

Move 4: The Danger of Gift-Worship (1 Cor 12:31b)

The Corinthians had made gatherings a gift contest, with winners and honorable mentions and people left out. His warning for our era: gifts create platforms, platforms create publicity, and publicity can drag us away from the pure intention of the gift. It is very easy to start worshiping gifts rather than God.

Move 5: The Most Excellent Way (1 Cor 13:1-3)

He treated Acts 2 as arguably one of the greatest miracles in Scripture, then said even that without love is a resounding gong. Then prophecy, all mysteries, mountain-moving faith, and total generosity, each ending in nothing without love. He tied the boasting clause back to reward: a reward with people is temporary, a reward with God is eternal.

Move 6: The Overcorrection Warning

This is a two-part argument and both halves matter. He anticipated that someone would hear chapter 13 and conclude they should stop singing or stop giving, since without love it is nothing. He named that as the enemy's move, dragging us from one extreme to the other. The first extreme is performing religious duties without love. The second is quitting. The alternative to both is falling more deeply in love with Jesus so that the heart is genuinely transformed, and then praising, preaching, giving, and making disciples from that place.

Move 7: What Love Is (1 Cor 13:4-8a)

He defined patience as internal and external control in difficult circumstances. He noted proud renders literally as puffed up or inflamed. On always hopes he shared the catechism he works through with his son on Wednesdays before church: what is my hope in life and in death? Because I belong to Jesus. And on love never fails: it does not fall, collapse, bow down, or die.

LEADER NOTE

The best teaching detail in the message: the Greek word Paul uses for envy in 13:4 is the same word he used in 12:31 for eagerly desire. Pastor Mark said he only caught it rereading the Greek this week. Love does not eagerly desire what belongs to a neighbor; love eagerly desires the higher way. This resolves the apparent tension between chapter 12 and chapter 13 elegantly, and it is worth making sure your group catches it.

Move 8: A Picture, Not a Performance

Pastorally the most important moment in the message. A display of the Spirit is not only the performance of gifts. God's power on display is in the picture of love. He aimed this squarely at people who do not know their gift yet, or who have just come to faith. If Christ has saved you, you are already a living picture of His love, and a picture is worth more than all the sermons he could preach.

Move 9: Gifts End, You Don't (1 Cor 13:8b-12)

Completeness is not a what but a who. Jesus is coming, and when He does the gifts are no longer needed because He will make us as we should be. The childhood passage lands here: immaturity says mine, and he used his own toddler claiming his chair and his food as the illustration. There must come a season where it stops being about getting yours. The conclusion: your gift will come to an end but you will not, so find your identity in the One who gave it. He did not call you because you were gifted; He called you because He loved you.

Move 10: Both, Not Either (1 Cor 14:1)

Follow the way of love AND eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit. He was emphatic that it is both. He singled out prophecy because it builds others up through strengthening, encouraging, and comfort, and defined each: strengthening is developing another person through words and actions, encouraging is exhortation and challenge, comfort is consoling people in difficulty. His summary line: God's fire builds up, it doesn't burn down.

The Close: Five Questions and a Commissioning

He ended with five diagnostic questions about the people around us, then moved to commissioning. He acknowledged he could not lay hands on everyone and noted the power was never in a human hand but in

the mighty hand and outstretched arm of God. He then prayed in two directions: for those who do not know Jesus to step into relationship with Him, and for followers to be used as God sees fit.

Key Cross-References

LEADER NOTE

These support the message and give you somewhere to go if the conversation deepens.

- Matthew 22:37-40, the greatest commandment. Pastor Mark referenced it directly at the close: love God with everything, love your neighbor as yourself.
- Joel 2:28-32, the prophecy Peter quoted at Pentecost about dreaming dreams and seeing visions. Connects the holy ambition section back to Part 1.
- 1 John 4:7-12, God is love, and love comes from God. Reinforces that love is not a virtue we generate but a nature we receive.
- Galatians 5:22-23, the fruit of the Spirit begins with love. Ties the finale back to Part 4, Fire Forms.
- 1 Corinthians 12:31, the hinge verse. Part 12 ended on the first half; this message opens the second half.
- Ephesians 3:20-21, the NCC vision verse he has returned to across the series, including in Part 11.

Discussion Questions with Leader Notes

LEADER NOTE

Five sections plus the five closing questions. You will not get through everything, and that is fine. Section 4 is the most pastorally important for anyone who feels they have nothing to offer. Reserve real time for the five questions at the end, because that is where the whole series lands.

1. You Are Part of It, and You Are Not All of It

a. Where have you been carrying pressure that was never yours to carry, as if it all depended on you?

LEADER NOTE

This question surprises people. Many are quietly exhausted from believing they need every answer and every capability. The relief in this passage is real: you are not the head. Let people name the specific weight they have been carrying before moving on.

b. If you have ever felt like you do not belong to anything significant, what does it do to you to hear that you are part of the body of Jesus?

LEADER NOTE

This connects straight back to Part 12's paired statements. If your group was present for that week, name the connection. Some people in the room have carried a lifetime of feeling peripheral.

2. Holy Ambition Is Not Selfishness

a. What is a holy ambition you have been afraid to name out loud, because it felt like it might be selfish?

LEADER NOTE

Expect hesitation. Many believers have been taught that wanting anything is pride. The pastor's correction was two-sided and both halves matter: the instinct to avoid selfishness is right, but the conclusion that we should want nothing is wrong. Ambition redirected toward building others is exactly what Paul commands.

b. Where do you notice yourself wanting to be seen as gifted more than wanting to be useful?

LEADER NOTE

Handle gently. The platform-and-publicity warning applies to anyone who serves visibly, including you. Consider going first if the group is quiet.

3. The Most Excellent Way

LEADER NOTE

Make sure the overcorrection warning lands. Someone in your group will hear chapter 13 and conclude they should stop doing things. That is the failure mode the pastor named specifically. The answer is not to quit; it is to go deeper into love and then act from there.

a. Which description of love in verses 4 through 8 lands hardest on you right now?

LEADER NOTE

Keeps no record of wrongs tends to hit hardest. Not easily angered is a close second. Let people be specific rather than general. If someone names one, ask what it would cost them to actually live it this week.

b. Is there anything you have been doing out of duty rather than love? What would it look like to do that same thing from love instead of stopping altogether?

LEADER NOTE

The phrasing matters. Do not let the group land on stopping. The invitation is to keep serving while asking God to change the heart underneath it.

4. A Picture, Not a Performance

LEADER NOTE

The most freeing section in the message, and the one most likely to matter to a specific person in your room. If anyone in your group has been discouraged through this series because they still cannot name a gift, this is the answer. They do not have to perform. By God's grace they already are a picture of His love.

a. Where in your ordinary week are you already a picture of God's love, even if it has never felt like ministry?

LEADER NOTE

Push toward the mundane. Patience with a difficult coworker. Showing up for someone. Not retaliating. These are displays of the Spirit's power, and most people have never counted them as such.

b. What would change if you stopped obsessing over performance and simply asked God to make you a clearer picture of His love?

LEADER NOTE

A good place to let silence sit. For some people this reframes the whole series.

5. Gifts End. You Don't.

a. Where are you still in the me-and-mine season? What would maturing out of it actually look like?

LEADER NOTE

The toddler illustration makes this safe to admit. Everyone starts in me-and-mine and everyone still visits it. The question is whether we are moving. Watch for people who use this to be hard on themselves and redirect toward the next step rather than the failure.

b. God did not call you because you were gifted. He called you because He loved you. How does that land on you?

LEADER NOTE

For people whose sense of worth is tied to usefulness, this is the whole message. He found you before you had a gift, before you had the Spirit, when you had nothing to offer. Let this one breathe.

The Five Questions

LEADER NOTE

Do not rush these and do not skip them. They are how the pastor ended thirteen weeks, and they turn the entire series into something answerable. Read them slowly with a pause between each. Then let the group sit in silence before anyone speaks.

- Are the people around you stronger because you are around them?
- Are the people around you more encouraged because you are around them?
- Are the people around you more comforted and consoled because you are around them?
- Are people closer to Jesus because you are around them?
- Are people loving Him and loving others more because you are around them?

“Eventually it comes time for you to step into the season where the answer to those questions becomes yes. And God is looking for our yes.”

— Pastor Mark • Closing of the series

Application Options

LEADER NOTE

Present all four and have each person choose one aloud. Since this closes the series, frame the choice as a posture going forward rather than a task for one week.

- Answer the five questions honestly in writing, then act on the one that stung.
- Memorize 1 Corinthians 13:13.
- Build one person up this week through strengthening, encouraging, or comforting them.
- Say yes to the thing you have been avoiding, and tell someone you did it.

Closing Prayer and Commissioning

LEADER NOTE

Pastor Mark made this Sunday a commissioning. Your group session is the natural place to complete that. He was careful to say the power is not in a human hand but in the mighty hand and outstretched arm of God, which is the same hand motif he preached in Part 11 from Acts 3 and 4. If your group is comfortable, pray over each person by name and send them out. For many people this will be the most meaningful moment of the entire series.

- Thank God for what He has done across these thirteen weeks.
- Pray for anyone who does not yet know Jesus, that today would be the day.
- Pray for one another to be used by God as He sees fit, in the places you already are.
- Pray each person by name and send them out.

“The power is in the mighty hand and the outstretched arm of God, and His Spirit falling on us, filling us, forming us, and flowing in and through us.”

— Pastor Mark • The commissioning

Series Tracker — Complete

LEADER NOTE

Church on Fire, all thirteen parts. Worth noticing: from Part 6 through Part 11 the series is a clause-by-clause walk through Acts 2:42-47. Teaching, fellowship and breaking of bread, prayer, generosity, awe, and the Lord adding to their number. Pointing that out is a good way to help your group feel thirteen weeks as one message.

Part	Title / Focus	Core Scripture
Part 1	The Gift of Fire	Acts 2:1-41; John 14-16
Part 2	Fire Falls	Acts 1:4-5; Acts 2:1-4
Part 3	Fire Fills	Acts 2:1-4; Eph 5:18-20
Part 4	Fire Forms	1 Cor 6:7-20; Gal 5:13-26
Part 5	Fire Flows	Acts 2-28 (eight examples)
Part 6	Fan the Flame: The Gospel	2 Tim 1:5-14; Acts 2:42
Part 7	Fan the Flame: Fellowship and Breaking of Bread	Acts 2:42; Luke 24:13-35
Part 8	Fan the Flame: Prayer	Acts 2:42; Matt 6:9-13

Part 9	Fan the Flame: Generosity	Acts 2:42-45; 2 Cor 9:6-15
Part 10	The Heart of Fire	Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 145:1-3
Part 11	The Spread of Fire	Acts 2:38-47; Eph 3:20-21
Part 12	The Gifts of Fire	1 Corinthians 12
Part 13 ← FINALE	The Greatness of Fire	1 Cor 12:27-31; 1 Cor 13; 1 Cor 14:1-5

“God’s fire builds up. It doesn’t burn down.”

— Pastor Mark • The Greatness of Fire

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was drafted with AI assistance from the sermon transcript and Pastor Mark’s own message notes, then reviewed by a group leader for scriptural accuracy and faithfulness to the message before it was shared. Scripture quotations are NIV. It is a supplement to the sermon, not a replacement for it. If you spot an error or something that does not sound like the message you heard, please say so.

Leaders: please review this guide against the message before your group meets, and adjust anything that does not fit your group.