

1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

1 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.

2 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.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

(NIV)

Jasmine, a real person, but a made up name, and SOME made up situations, Jasmine worked at the local hospital. A hospital can be a busy place, a stressful place. People are sick. Because of their sickness, lives are on the line. Government and insurance companies try to run the hospital, saying what has to be done, and what cannot be done. Accrediting agencies were always coming around the hospital, judging what kind of job is done, and maybe even putting people's jobs on the line.

In such an environment employees are held to an exacting standard. Doctors, nurses, and the support staff have to perform, and not up to their own personal standards, but up to the standards of someone in Washington, or corporate headquarters, or some other place, someone they don't even know. In such an environment, when lives are on the line, when people are stressed, when people are judged, when performance is demanded it is easy to be rattled. It is easy to make a mistake. It is easy to get upset. It is easy to feel badly about yourself. At times it is easy to be grumpy, or short with others. Sometimes it the stress leads people to escape that stress in

unhealthy ways. Sometimes that stress leads people to be defensive to protect themselves.

When a person is upset, or grumpy, or short with others, when a person watches out for themselves rather than considering the effort of the team working on the health of others, well, that selfishness shows. But, everyone is required to perform. Everyone is judged. Everyone is stressed. And, sometime or other everyone fails, and it shows, and even makes the stress worse.

Anyway, Jasmine worked in this stressful atmosphere where everyone else had their bad moments, she did too. But, well, not quite the way that others did. She made mistakes, but Jasmine seemed to have a peace and inner joy that overcame the stress. When Jasmine made a mistake, she didn't try to hide it. She admitted the mistake and worked on it. When others were short with Jasmine, she didn't snap back. When others were down, she often checked on how they were doing and gave encouragement.

The Shift supervisor and a doctor were talking one day. 'You know, when Jasmine is at the desk, the whole floor works better. When she is gone, tempers seem to get short mistakes are made. 'She has a calming affect,' said the doctor. 'More than that,' answered the shift supervisor, 'it is like Jasmine cares. She looks after me like a sister, or a mom. I can trust her. But, having Jasmine around makes my job easier. And, when she's not here, things don't go so well.

One day there was a bad situation. Jasmine worked at the desk, but, the doctor who had commented about Jasmine's calming presence had a difficult case. The patient came to the hospital very ill. A decision had to be made quickly or the person would die. When the doctor chose what to do and began the treatment, the patient had an allergic reaction to some medicine.. Now, on top of the life-threatening illness there were complications. The patient's family didn't understand, and was asking questions, blaming the doctor. The shift supervisor was having trouble keeping up with the care needed by the patient, because the other staff were busy with lots of other patients. The doctor wanted more nurses. The supervisor was shorthanded. The patient was getting worse. The family was asking questions. The doctor hollered at the supervisor, 'Get me a nurse in here, and get me one now.' The supervisor responded, 'If you hadn't given that medicine, it wouldn't have been necessary. I'm trying to get you more time from a nurse, but others are sick too!' The family started asking, 'What did you do to our family member?' The truth is it got worse and it got tense. The patient was ill and the team was hurting. The supervisor was at the desk, dealing with the stress by talking to Jasmine when the doctor walked up. They stared at each other silently. They had worked together for years, and been friends, but the silence was deafening. . . .

Jasmine, had heard the discussion, and the trouble, and simple said, ' Is there something else I can do?' The shift supervisor told her, 'You're not a nurse. You don't know what's going on. What could YOU do?' Jasmine was hurt, but she didn't strike back and point out that the supervisor had sent someone home early that could have helped the situation. Jasmine took a deep breath and looked at both and said, 'First, I want you to know that I'm praying right now asking God to help all of us, and that patient. But, I also know both of you, and I trust you both. This is a tough situation, but that's what happens when people get sick and that patient is in bad shape. But, I know we can work together.' The patient still struggled, but somehow tempers eased, and the team worked together,

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The next day the doctor and the supervisor happened to pass the desk at the same time. Jasmine was there too. But, the patient was overcoming the allergic reaction and doing better. And, tempers had died down and things were a little more pleasant again. The shift supervisor said to Jasmine, 'I'm sorry I snapped at you. Thanks for your trusting words, almost loving words, Jasmine. How do you do it?'

'Well,' Jasmine replied. 'Let me tell you a story. A couple of years ago I was friends with another young lady. Her boyfriend was cute, and he started flirting with me. Then he asked me out. Now I knew I should discourage this, but, he was cute. I said yes. When we walked into Taco Bell laughing, who was there but my friend. I felt so bad. She looked at him. Then at me and burst into tears. Another friend of mine who was sitting with her and said to me, "you backstabber". But,' Jasmine told the doctor and supervisor, 'my friend said, "No, Jasmine and I go to church together. Jesus forgives me. Don't say that to her. I have to forgive her"' Then they walked out. I made the guy take me home, and I never went out with him again. Later, I went to my friend and apologized and she told me, "Jasmine, I've been forgiven before. The person who forgave me said, 'Jesus forgave me, I forgive you.' So, Jasmine, it's hard, but I'm forgiving you." So,' Jasmine said, 'that's just one example of God's love in my life. If he can forgive me, and love me even when I don't deserve it, I simply try to forgive and love others. If Jesus is willing to go and die to love me and save me, sometimes loving and forgiving will be hard, and unfair.'

Jasmine turned back to the computer screen. The shift supervisor looked at the doctor with tears in her eyes, and gave the doctor a hug.' They both thanked Jasmine. It is amazing what love can do. God's love not only saved the world through the dying and rising of Jesus. It spreads to others through us, and makes the whole world better.

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