

1 Corinthians 12

12:1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Paul starts this chapter talking about "Spiritual Gifts". As I have said previously, Paul is working his way through a list of questions and issues supplied by the Corinthian church. The NASB says "*regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us.*" Just by asking about Spiritual Gifts shows that the Corinthians were aware of them but they needed clarification on what they were and how to use them. Clarke defines "spiritual gifts" as "Gracious endowments, leading to miraculous results ... these all came by the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit."

In verse 2, Paul reminds them of their lives before Christ came into their lives. He says that before Christ, they were "influenced or led astray by idols". Paul doesn't want the Corinthians or us to bring what we had learned when we weren't Christians to influence our understanding of the Bible or in this case the Holy Spirit. If the Corinthians come in with preconceived ideas about idols, those ideas may influence their understanding of how the Holy Spirit works. In verse 3, Paul says that if someone curses Jesus, it is not from the Holy Spirit but if they yield their lives to Jesus then it IS from the Holy Spirit. Where have we heard that before? Read Matthew 16:13-17 says, *13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"*

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

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"If a religious experience does not honor Christ as Lord, then it is not from the Spirit. If it does, then the Holy Spirit may be behind the experience." (Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians)

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

As Paul begins to tell the Corinthians about the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, he starts at the beginning. He says that the Holy Spirit distributes these gifts and there a "different kinds" of

spiritual gifts. We don't decide which one or ones we get, the Holy Spirit does. These verses cover the Trinity. The one Holy Spirit distributes the gifts, there are different ways to serve the one Lord, Jesus and all of the work is done to the glory of the one God.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Verse 7 shows that God is in control. Paul is saying that not only does the Holy Spirit distribute the spiritual gifts but He does it in a way that ensures that the church has all of the required spiritual gifts. I absolutely believe that God puts us where we need to be to serve Him. We are here in this church today because God made it so.

“There are similarities and differences between talents and spiritual gifts. Both are gifts from God. Both grow in effectiveness with use. Both are intended to be used on behalf of others, not for selfish purposes.”

1 Peter 4:10 says, “*God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.*” (NLT)

In the next few verses, Paul lists nine spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit. The ones listed in these verses include:

- Message of wisdom
- Message of knowledge
- Faith
- Gifts of healing
- Miraculous powers
- Prophecy
- Distinguishing between spirits
- Speaking in different kinds of tongues
- Interpretation of tongues

Romans 12:3-8 lists the spiritual gifts as follows: prophecy, serving others (in a general sense), teaching, exhorting, generosity, leadership, and showing mercy.

In verse 11, Paul reiterates that the Spiritual Gifts are given only by the Holy Spirit according to God's will.

“To summarize the differences between spiritual gifts and talents: 1) A talent is the result of genetics and/or training, while a spiritual gift is the result of the power of the Holy Spirit. 2) A talent can be possessed by anyone, Christian or non-Christian, while spiritual gifts are only possessed by Christians. 3) While both talents and spiritual gifts should be used for God's glory and to minister to others, spiritual gifts are focused on these tasks, while talents can be used entirely for non-spiritual purposes..” (Gotquestions.org)

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by[c] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

In these verses, Paul uses the example of the human body to get his message of unity across to us and the Corinthians. He says that whether it is a human body or a church, both are made up a variety of parts all working together in unity for one purpose.

In verse 13, Paul says that it is our baptism by the Holy Spirit that ties us all together. It doesn't matter who we were before the baptism, we are all one after the baptism. Paul is talking about a baptism different than the one given by John the Baptist. John baptized for the repentance of sin which was an act of confession of sin in anticipation of the Messiah's coming but Jesus was the Messiah and He baptized with the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 3:11) Along with the baptism with Holy Spirit comes spiritual gifts. Some realize their spiritual gifts almost immediately but others may take years to understand them.

When I read verse 14, I think of the VBS theme this year, “We are wonderfully made”. The human body is put together with numerous body parts doing their jobs in unity. We as a church must do our jobs so that we function as one body, God's church. The church of Corinth was a mess because they were not working together to do God's will. There was discord in the church and a serious lack of unity.

15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

In the verses, Paul says “Don’t you think it would be strange if we were made up of one body part? There would be feet walking around, eyes sitting around with no way to get transport.” This sounds like something for a Dr. Seuss book. The human body is made up of complex systems of body parts all functioning to keep us alive and functioning the way that God intended.

“Here, Paul puts the question in the mouth of the one who feels excluded from the body. It is as if some of the Corinthian Christians were saying, “I don’t have this certain spiritual gift. I guess I’m not part of the body of Jesus Christ.” After all, hands and eyes seem more important and more “glamorous” than feet and ears. So Paul wants these Christians who feel excluded that they are indeed members of the body, and their sense that they are not, is just as foolish as the foot or the ear who feel excluded.” (Guzik)

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Paul points out in these verses, that no one body part is more important than any other. In order for the body to function as God intended, then all parts must be functioning together. If one body part doesn’t function correctly, you will end up at the doctor’s office or in the hospital.

Clarke on the less honorable parts: "seem to mean the principle viscera, such as heart, lungs, stomach, and intestinal canal. These, when compared with the arms and limbs, are comparatively weak; and some of them, considered in themselves, uncomely and less honorable; yet these are more essential to life than any of the others."

The body functions best when each body part or system runs along smoothly with no issues. Each one doing its job to serve the entire body. When an organ or part of an organ wants to do its own thing, this is usually called a “cancer” and needs to be taken care of as soon as possible. In verse 26, Paul says that *“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”* This becomes no more apparent to us than as we age. As we age some parts start to fail and cause problems with the whole body. The best we can be is when everything is working together.

As a church I believe that we do what it says in verse 26 pretty well. During sharing time in the worship service we share our blessings and prayer concerns. There was an old adage that said,

“If you share a problem with a friend it, is halved and if you tell a friend about a blessing, it is doubled.”

As I read these verses, Paul is saying “body” but I am thinking the “church”. No member is any more or less important than another. The best that we can function as a church is to have the body function in unity and harmony. Making it all about “me” by gossiping, personal agendas and egos are all examples of cancer in the body of believers. We were all put into this church for one purpose, to do God’s will and that is to reach as many people as possible for Christ.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of 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 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Love Is Indispensable

And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

In verse 27, Paul sums up this chapter by saying that being a part of the church which to me means you love God and God loves you and you love others, then you are important to God and His church. He goes onto list what he sees are the jobs associated with the Spiritual Gifts that he listed earlier.

Apostles
Prophets
Teachers
Miracles
gifts of healing
gifts of helping
gifts of guidance
gifts of different kinds of tongues.

In verse 29 and 30, Paul asks the most important question(s), “What gift(s) do you possess?” “Do we all have the same gifts?” No. To say it like John Kennedy, “Ask not what your church can do for you but ask what can you do to serve God in your church.”

I love the way that Paul said it to the Romans (12:3-8) “³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If

your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

So whatever gift the Holy Spirit gives you, do it for the glory of God and not your own glory. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says “*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*”

Consider doing a Spiritual Gifts survey.