



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: FOLLOWING CHRIST THROUGH CHAOS | •

7.31.22 | • 1 COR. 12:1-31, 14:1-12 •

MAIN POINT

God has given every Christian gifts with which to serve the body of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most fulfilling job you have ever had? What about it fulfilled you?

Is there a ministry you love participating in? Why do you like it so much?

How have you been able to use your abilities to serve the body of Christ?

God has given every member of the spiritual family at least one spiritual gift to serve others and build His Kingdom. These abilities are not based on our merit or worth

before God. Rather, they are evidences of God's grace to and love for us. Every one of us has different Spirit-given gifts and talents to be used as we live for the greater cause. Because of this, every member of the body of Christ is important and essential to its function.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11.

Why does God give His children spiritual gifts?

What words did Paul use instead of "gifts" in verses 5 and 6? How does this help you better understand the purpose of our spiritual gifts?

What makes a spiritual gift different than other talents or abilities that we may possess? What is an example of this difference in your life?

Because all gifts come from the Spirit of God (v. 4), every gift is useful to the body. Paul urges the Corinthian believers to not let their gifts divide them, but rather, to use them to strengthen their commitment and connection to the body of Christ. Just as we all come to the family of God with different backgrounds, we all have different gifts for the good of the church.

What spiritual gifts are listed in these verses?

Why is it important for believers to know which spiritual gifts they have?

How do we determine what our specific spiritual gifts are? What place do spiritual practices like the study of Scripture and prayer have in helping us determine what our individual gifts are?

Paul's purpose in these verses was not to give a complete list of all possible spiritual gifts, but rather, to emphasize the unity of the Spirit even among the great variety of gifts. The one Holy Spirit is active in many ways through the devoted service of God's people. The variety of gifts listed shows us the importance of diversity among the body. Knowing what gifts we have allows us to serve God in the way that He has called and created us to serve.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31.

How does comparing a church to a body relate to spiritual gifts?

Why is it important that different believers with different gifts come together in unity? What happens when they do not?

What are some of the reasons you hesitate to use your spiritual gifts?

Though every part of the human body is unique, every part is essential for the body to do what it was designed to do. In the body of Christ, all of the individual gifts in the lives of believers come together for the church to be built up. If we can't come together, embracing each other in unity in the church, then what reason will the rest of the world have to believe the message we tell them? For the church to function rightly, every believer must know and embrace who God has made him or her to be in Christ.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-12.

What comes to mind when you think about spiritual gifts like prophecy or speaking and interpreting tongues?›

Are your thoughts on these gifts based on experience, religious tradition, second-hand stories, or the Scriptures?

Many people today have a variety of opinions on the use and practice of “charismatic” gifts. The people in the church at Corinth continued to struggle with practicing spiritual gifts, particularly the more sensational gifts of prophecy and tongues. Paul writes to help them see the real purpose of these gifts. For Paul, the bottom line is the use of spiritual gifts must be joined with love and the purpose of building the church.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

When you reflect on your spiritual gifts, what impact does it have on your relationship with God?

Are you using the spiritual gifts God has given you? Is there a step you could take to serve the body in a greater way through those gifts?

What talents and abilities are represented in your group? How can we use these gifts together to build the church and serve our community?

In what ways can you encourage your spouse, your children or other brothers and sisters in Christ to use their own gifts?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for the way He has gifted every member of His church—both here at our church and throughout the world—to serve the Kingdom and each other. Pray that the people in your group would sacrificially use their individual gifts for the sake of others. Also pray that you would be a good steward of what He has given and not waste a single opportunity to use your gifts.

COMMENTARY

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-27

1 Cor. 12:1. Paul began with the expression now about the gifts of the Spirit. The terminology indicates that Paul responded to questions or issues raised by the Corinthians themselves. He did not reveal their precise concerns, but stated emphatically that he did not want them to be ignorant or unaware of this topic. Once again, Paul created a familial mood by addressing the Corinthians as brothers.

1 Cor. 12:2-3. Paul provided a central criterion for distinguishing the Holy Spirit's work from the experiences of pagan religion. He did this by setting up a contrast between the times when the Corinthians were pagans ... led astray to mute idols, and their Christian experience of speaking by the Spirit of God. The precise nature of this contrast is debated. Some interpreters argue that Paul contrasted the fact that pagans were led by idols, and Christians by the Holy Spirit. Others have argued that Paul specifically contrasted the extraordinary supernatural experiences of ecstatic speech in pagan religion with the supernatural work (especially tongues and prophecy) of the Holy Spirit in the church.

1 Cor. 12:4-6. Paul spoke of gifts in association with the Spirit, service in conjunction with the Lord Jesus, and working in association with God the Father. Diversity and unity coexist. There are different kinds of gifts, different kinds of service, and different kinds of working. Yet, each variety is associated with a person of the Trinity: the same Spirit; the same Lord; or the same God. The authorization by the triune God indicates the unity that exists within the great varieties.

The three terms—gifts, service, and working—relate closely to one another, but they are not synonymous. Each item is the source of the one that follows: service comes from gifts, and working from service. The term gifts appears frequently in this epistle with reference to the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. The gifts of the Spirit empower each Christian to function in the body of Christ. Service derives from terminology that Paul used frequently to describe a variety of ministerial activities occurring within the church. Working is an uncommon noun in the New Testament. Its verb form generally connotes effectual work. Thus, it may be better to translate the noun as “results” or “effects” rather than as “working.” Although humans perform services in the church, only God the Father brings about the results of the gifts that are used in service.

1 Cor. 12:7. Paul elaborated on the themes of unity, diversity, and distribution, first stating that God gives a manifestation of the Spirit to each person. The Holy Spirit is the down payment or guarantee of every believer’s future inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). So all believers receive the Spirit. Paul did not speak only of the Spirit’s indwelling presence here, but of the manifestation of the Spirit. This terminology indicates that every believer has some display of the Holy Spirit’s presence in his or her life. Also, the manifestation of the Spirit has a particular goal: the common good (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10). The gifts of the Spirit are not principally for the edification of the individuals who receive them, but for the good of all believers.

1 Cor. 12:8-10. Paul next listed several manifestations of the Spirit’s gifts. He mentioned the Spirit four times in these verses to remind the Corinthians that all of these gifts come from one divine Source: the Holy Spirit. But the list indicates that the same or one Spirit manifests His presence with great variety. Comparisons with other lists of the Spirit’s manifestations (Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11) reveal that this catalogue is only a sampling that probably corresponded to the gifts which Paul knew the Corinthian church manifested.

1 Corinthians 12:11. This verse summarizes the main point of the previous section and is a bridge to Paul's analogy of the church as a body. All gifts come from the same Source, the Spirit. Thus all spiritual gifts need to be respected and appreciated by the church. Additionally, each member's Christian service is not merely a matter of personal effort or individual acquisition of a gift. The Holy Spirit is the One who distributes gifts to each as He wills. We are to receive the Spirit's gifts gratefully, not scramble for ones we judge to be more impressive than others.

12:12-13. The apostle issued three statements which set up the basic structure of his analogy. First, the human body is a unit. It is one body, even though it has many parts. Second, just as one human body has many parts, so it is with the body of Christ. Paul often called the church "the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4). Here he pointed to the unity in diversity that exists in the church as Christ's body. Third, Paul explained how Christ's body resembles the human body. To emphasize the diversity within the church, he mentioned racial and social diversity first; Jews, Greeks, slave, and free all contribute to the church. No matter what had previously separated these people, they all had been joined together in one body by means of the one Spirit.

12:14-17. Paul turned next to human body imagery to illustrate the importance of proper regard for all parts of Christ's body. After repeating the motif of 12:12, the body has not one part but many, he presented two scenarios that conveyed his outlook on the disharmonies in the Corinthian church. First, he imagined parts of the body thinking too lowly of themselves. A foot may say to itself that it does not belong to the body because it is not a hand. Even so, even if it thinks this way about itself, it does not cease to be part of the body. The same would be true of an ear that felt it did not belong to the body because it was not an eye.

12:18-20. The foolishness of these scenarios indicates that God has arranged the parts of the human body according to His divine wisdom. He made them just as He wanted them to be—their composition being designed to fulfill His purposes—and God's wisdom in so doing should not be questioned. This divine coordination of diverse parts is so essential to the function of a body that Paul asked a final question: "If every part of the body were one part—all eyes, all ears, all feet—where would the body be?" Clearly, there would be no body. To drive home this point, Paul repeated the theme of this section: human beings have one body, but that body needs its many parts. Every part is important in its own right.

12:21–24a. Paul then presented scenarios in which the body parts questioned the value of others. Paul insisted it would be inconceivable for an eye to tell a hand, “I don’t need you!” The same inconceivability would apply to the head speaking that way to the feet. Common sense demands that the opposite is true. The eyes need the hands, and the head needs the feet. The parts of the body which appear to be weaker are actually indispensable.

12:24b–27. Paul contended that God himself had given greater honor to the members of the body that lacked obvious honor. He did this for the purpose of making sure that there would be no division in the body and that all parts should have equal concern for each other. The interdependence of all parts evidences this design. If one part suffers from pain or disease, then every part suffers with it. Most people have experienced how things as small as toothaches and ingrown toenails can wreak havoc on their bodies. The appendix may be small and have no apparent function, but when it suffers, it jeopardizes the life of the entire body.

12:28. This second list of gifts includes four that were not included in the first list in verses 8–10. Moreover, Paul approached this list in terms of the Christians serving rather than in terms of the spiritual gifts. Apostles were those commissioned as delegates with a message. Some Bible students limit this gift to those who had seen the risen Christ; others include in it our missionary calling today. Prophets reveal truth from God. Teachers serve to instruct the congregation in the Scriptures. The gift of helping encompasses a wide variety of services to the church. In Paul’s writings it often refers to helping the poor and the sick. The gift of managing refers not merely to administrative details, but more broadly to giving wise leadership to the church.

12:29–30. Each question in these verses anticipates the answer “no.” Paul had proved the necessity of all gifts for the church. An even greater point was that diversity must result in unity.

12:31. Though all gifts are important, Paul designated that some are greater gifts. We have seen this emphasis in Paul’s enumerating various gifts in 12:28. The key for Paul was proclamation. Gifts that enhanced the clear explanation of the gospel were to be desired over others. However, Paul was driving toward an even more significant consideration. There was an even better way—the way of love, as he showed in the poetic 13th chapter.

