



1 Corinthians 12

INTRODUCTION:

- True / False: *God has given spiritual gifts to all people, not just to believers.*
 - Define what “spiritual gifts” are, according to how it’s used in Scripture (1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 are key chapters about spiritual gifts) -
- Does God give His people gifts of direct prophecy / the working of miracles / speaking in tongues / interpretation of tongues?
- What is the “Pentecost phenomenon” and why is it important to understand the context and duration of that event?
- Why are Pentecostal / charismatic churches / church bodies the fastest growing branches of Christianity?

The Greatest Spiritual Gift:

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans, you were deceived and somehow led away to mute idols. **3** Therefore I am informing you that no one speaking by God’s Spirit says, “A curse be upon Jesus,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

- Why, might you guess, would this messy congregation have had questions about spiritual gifts? What sort of problems did this church have?
- Explain the doctrine of total depravity:
 - How does that fit with the false doctrine of decision theology?
 - According to Scripture (v.3), faith itself is a _____.
- What, therefore, according to God (through His servant Paul here) is the greatest spiritual gift a person could ever receive?
 - Explain why:
- Evaluate: *All my loved ones have died suddenly and tragically. All my earthly possessions have gone up in smoke. I’m penniless, I have no friends left, I’m sick and I can’t work, I live in a cardboard box and its falling apart—but—I believe in Jesus! I’m on top of the world!!*
 - If saving faith is truly that valuable and powerful, then why do we so easily (and so often) take it for granted?

The Variety of Gifts:

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

4 There are various kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. **5** There are different kinds of ministries, and yet the same Lord. **6** There are various kinds of activity, but the same God, who produces all of them in everyone.

7 Each person is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. **8** To one person a message of wisdom is given by the Spirit; to another, a message of knowledge, as the same Spirit provides it; **9** by the same Spirit, faith is given to someone else; and to another, the same Spirit gives healing gifts. **10** Another is given powers to do miracles; another, the gift of prophecy; another, the evaluating of spirits; someone else, different kinds of tongues; and another, the interpretation of tongues. **11** One and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them to each one individually as he desires.

- What's the common denominator (v.4-6) when it comes to spiritual gifts, and why is that important / practical to know?
- Agree / Disagree: *There is proof in these verses that spiritual gifts are only given to believers.*
- Agree / Disagree: *God does EVERYTHING with a clear purpose in mind.*
 - What is His purpose behind handing out spiritual gifts to His people? (v.7)
 - Define "common good":
 - Why might the Corinthians have needed that reminder?

- Agree / Disagree: *Paul is referring to the Trinity in verses 4-6.*
- If he is referring to the Trinity in those verses, then what does that teach us?
 - Explain the phrase "*opera ad extra sunt indivisa et communia*":
 - How does that square with the Father as Creator / the Son as Redeemer / the Spirit as Sanctifier?
- Agree / Disagree: *Every believer, including the newly baptized infant, has spiritual gifts. (If you agree, then prove it: from these verses:)*
- Define what the following gifts are / look like / function as:
 1. Wisdom:
 2. Knowledge:
 3. Faith:
 4. Healing gifts:
 5. Miraculous powers:
 6. Prophecy:
 7. Evaluating the spirits:
 8. Tongues:
 9. Interpretation of tongues:
- Is there any significance in the number listed? (do you think it's an exhaustive list?) What about the order they are listed in here?

- Agree / Disagree: *Some gifts are better than others.*
 - If you disagree, why does Paul say what he does in verse 31?
- Romans 12 also discusses spiritual gifts. Read **Romans 12:6-8**. What can we learn by comparing that list with what we have here in Corinthians?
 - Is the gift of “prophecy” the same in both lists (*aka preaching*) or not?
- Agree / Disagree: *Our churches would be doing so much better if God would only give us some of those overtly supernatural gifts.*
 - Why does God seem to prefer to hide His supernatural gifts / His supernatural powers / His miracles in ways that make them appear ordinary to people? Examples?
 - What does verse 11 tell us?

The Body of Christ:

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we all were baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free people, and we were all caused to drink one Spirit. 14 Furthermore, the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,” it does not on that account cease to be part of the

body. 16 If the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not part of the body,” it does not on that account cease to be 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 now God has arranged the members in the body, each and every one of them, as he desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But as it is, there are many members, yet one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need for you,” or again the head to the feet, “I have no need for you.” 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are much more necessary. 23 As for the parts of the body we consider less honorable, these we provide with more honor. We treat our unpresentable parts with more modesty, 24 whereas our presentable parts have no such need. But God put the body together in a way that gave more honor to the parts that lack it. 25 He did it so that there might not be any division in the body, but that the members might all have the same concern for one another. 26 So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

- Why did they (and why do we) need to be reminded / taught that in Christ we / the Church - is ONE Body?

- “Church” in what sense here?

- How does this apply to congregational life then?

- The NIV translation is wonky in the end of verse 13 (*we were all given the one Spirit to drink*) and the EHV, while bringing out the passive tense of the verb, did not really improve it much.

How does one “drink” in a passive way? A plant drinks in a passive way. What do we call that? Propose a better / more clear translation:

- This is a beautiful way of describing what?
- When we are baptized, according to this verse here, what is actually happening?
- How might an evangelical Christian who believes baptism is merely symbolic interpret this verse?
- The feet and the ears are complaining that they are not hands and eyes. What does *that* look like in a congregation?
- Agree / Disagree: *In our modern times, they are trying hard to convince us that we are all identical, and therefore interchangeable.*
 - Can you point to examples of this?
 - Agree / Disagree: *Christians are actually the only ones who love, promote, understand, and practice true diversity.*
- Describe the attitude Paul is rebuking in verse 21:
- What, practically speaking, is Paul talking about in verses 22-24?
- Who might the following people **be** in a congregation?
 - the “weaker”
 - the “less honorable”
 - the “unpresentable”
- How are we to treat those people?
- Agree / Disagree: *You will only find this attitude in the church.*
- Agree / Disagree: *People who get no respect out there in the world will be respected and loved in the church.*
- What does Paul encourage us to aim for in verses 25-26?
- Respond: *You Christians are all a bunch of socialists.*
- Respond: *You Christians are a basket of deplorables.*
 - In the atheistic worldview who are the only ones that matter, and why?
 - Does that explain some things we are currently seeing in our society?

Offices, Roles, & Gifts:

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

27 You are the body of Christ, and individually you are members of it. 28 And God appointed in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then miracles, healing gifts, helpful acts, leadership abilities, kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all miracle workers? 30 Do all have healing gifts? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But eagerly seek the greater gifts.

And now, I am going to show you a more excellent way.

- Agree / Disagree: *Some roles in the church are more important than others.*

- If you agree (even partially) then how does that square with what Paul had just taught us in the previous verses?

- Why would he put the Apostles in the number 1 position, and the prophets in second place?

- Agree / Disagree: *Paul was tooting his own horn here.*

- Who are the “teachers” and why do they get put in third place above all the rest?
- Agree / Disagree: *Since we don’t have the offices of prophets or apostles anymore, Paul is telling us that the pastoral office is the most important role there is nowadays.*

- What does he mean when he encourages us to “*eagerly seek the greater gifts*”?
- Agree / Disagree: *Most Christians are not putting their spiritual gifts to work and that is why the church is struggling and dying out in our country.*
- There’s a formatting error in the last half of verse 31. It clearly goes with the next chapter where Paul is going to teach us about love. The chapter divisions showed up first in the 1,200’s AD and the verse divisions in the 1,500’s. Clearly some mistakes were made. We’ll start with that introduction next time.

CONCLUSION:

- Bundle up this chapter - what is Paul encouraging us to pursue in our congregational lives here?

CLOSING PRAYER: