

## 1 Corinthians 12

**Introduction:** Perhaps the biggest problem in the Corinthian Church was *disunity*. This disunity came out in any number of ways, but these were mostly symptoms of one core fault: The church in Corinth as a group did not value each member's place within the church. Paul takes on this problem of disunity by comparing the church to a body, specifically, the body of Christ. He explains that the body is composed of people who all have differing spiritual gifts.

**God builds a church out of various parts; the parts are the people using their various spiritual gifts.**

- I. 12:1-11 We should appreciate the Spirit's role in distributing the gifts.
- II. 12:12-27 We should appreciate how the body of Christ functions as a result of the gifts.
- III. 12:28-31 We should appreciate the importance of each individual's gifts.

- I. 12:1-11 We should appreciate the Spirit's role in distributing the gifts.
  - A. 12:3 Those who deny Christ do so in rebellion against the Spirit of God. And those who acknowledge Christ's deity (for that is what "Lord" means in this context) do so in agreement with the Holy Spirit.
  - B. 12:4-6 This is a nice statement pointing to the Trinity. Even God is a complex unity.
  - C. 12:7, 11 Notice the **each one** in verses 7 & 11. The Bible is clear that every Christian has received at least one spiritual gift. Our responsibility is to use the gift(s) we have for the good of the whole church.

**First Peter 4:10 NKJV** *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

- D. 12:8-10 These verses give us some sample spiritual gifts.
- E. 12:11 The Holy Spirit decides on our gift(s). This is one of the ways God exercises His sovereignty or rule over us. Here are several important points.
  - i. Gifts are not distributed based on merit.
  - ii. Being more or less gifted should not be equated with being more or less spiritual or more or less important in God's eyes.
  - iii. Exercising the gifts we have is a point of obedience.
  - iv. Since the Holy Spirit decides on our gifts, to exercise them is to work together with God in precisely the way He desire to use us. It is to fulfill God's plan for our lives.

- II. 12:12-27 We should appreciate how the body of Christ functions as a result of the gifts.
- A. 12:12-14 A healthy church contains both unity and diversity. Our differences are important, but it's equally important that we learn to work together as one team – with each person fulfilling his or her responsibilities.
- B. We need to avoid two dangerous pitfalls for the body to work as it should. (vv. 15-25)
- i. 12:15-17 The thought that "I don't fit in" is not only wrong but harmful.
- Many people fall for this one. The tricky thing about it is that some people can make this sound a lot like humility. It can sound very self-effacing. "I just don't fit in. Different people can do different things, but I'm not like them. I'm different. I just don't fit in." In fact, the problem may be caused by wanting to be like someone else. Maybe I'm a foot, but I don't like being a foot. I want to be a hand. What I need to realize is that being a foot is the best possible thing for me to be, because that's what God made me. I'm going to be happier at the bottom of a leg than at the end of an arm.
- ii. 12:21-22 The thought that "You don't fit in" is not only wrong but harmful.
- Often people don't appreciate other members of the body. We don't immediately see their function or why they are important. This is especially true of the weaker members of the body. But look at v.22. The weaker members are necessary. Each part is needed. Do you know any weaker members of the body of Christ? Do you have them in your church? Each one of them is necessary, whether we know why or not.
- C. 12:23-24 Every member of the body is important, though some are more visible than others. This is part of the complex unity exists within the body.
- D. 12:25 The diversity of gifts within the body should never lead to division, and won't, as long as we each care for one another.
- E. 12:26-27 The body is connected, so no member functions in isolation.

Illustration: Whatever I do to my body impacts every other part in some way.

When one member suffers the whole body is affected.

If I stub my toe, bump my head or hit my thumb with a hammer, the rest of the body cannot go on as if that didn't happen. When I stub my toe, the first result is that my whole body is hindered from whatever it was going to do.

But let's say I'm eating something. It's not just my mouth that benefits. That's only where the initial impact is felt, but sooner or later the whole body gets some advantage from what I eat. Or disadvantage depending on what it was.

III. 12:28-31 We should appreciate the importance of each individual's gifts.

- A. Here again are some sample gifts.
- B. The point being made here is that we don't all have the same gifts.
- C. The gifts help us to see how we and others fit in within the larger picture of the church.

Let's pray:

Father we pray that you would help us discover the exact niche that you have designed us to fill within Your church, the body of Christ. We believe that our backgrounds and our gifts have perfectly combined to make us who we are and, more importantly, who you intend us to be. Help each one of us to fulfill that purpose that you have ordained for us.

Also Father, we pray for those people within our churches that don't yet know where they belong. We pray that you would show them their gifts, show them their place and show them how you intend to use them in the church. And Lord, help us to appreciate those weaker members: the ones that are needy, the ones that are still very immature. And help us to help them find their perfect place. And build us up Lord, so that the whole body of Christ will be built up as a result and Jesus would get all the glory.  
Amen.