



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MICHIGAN
CLARK HALL

HOLINESS IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

07

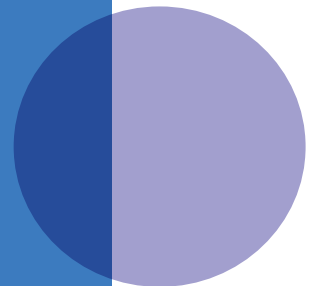
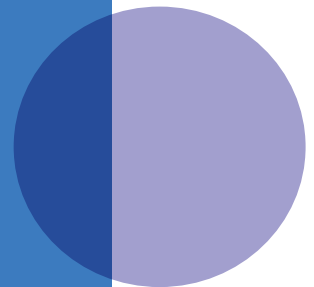
WEEK 07

Holiness in Spiritual Gifts

In 12:1-11, Paul reframes spiritual gifts or abilities as being less important than one's loyalty to Christ. Starting in verse 12, Paul gives another important framing for gifts: their place in the larger church. He does this by describing the church as a body with many members. There is unity and diversity.

In this week's passage, Paul emphasizes the unity of the church that comes from the fact that "all were baptized by one Spirit" (verse 13). There is some debate as to whether this verse refers to the receiving of the Holy Spirit at conversion (also called the indwelling of the Spirit) or water baptism in the name of the Spirit (along with the Father and the Son). It is a difficult issue to settle, but it is clear that Paul believes the followers of Jesus in Corinth share this one Spirit. There is no indication that some believers have been baptized by the Spirit while others are still waiting for a "second blessing." To divide the church into two groups, one with the Spirit and the other without, would completely defeat Paul's point about unity. Paul teaches that everyone who is in Christ has the Spirit (Romans 8:9-11).

Paul's goal is to dispel any tendency to divide the church based on gifting. The Corinthians are very good at creating divisions of rank and superiority. Giftedness is just one more way to do so, but Paul rejects this approach. If we are unified by one Spirit, who distributes abilities as He sees fit, then there is no reason to treat people as more significant because of their gifts. In Paul's metaphor, this would be like one body part looking down on another because they do different functions (verse 21). Rather, if we truly value the health of the whole church, then we should celebrate and cherish what each member brings to the body—even if that member looks and functions very differently from us. This applies not only to different abilities but to every different kind of person in the church (verse 13).



Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
- 02 Galatians 3:26-29
- 03 Colossians 1:18-24
- 04 Ephesians 4:16
- 05 John 7:37-39
- 06 Philippians 2:1-4
- 07 Romans 12:6-8



UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE BODY

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

Discussion Guide

WARM UP

What was your favorite team sport when you were younger? And now?

What are the different responsibilities of team members? (For example, in football—offensive tackle vs. running back.)

How does each individual fulfilling their assigned roles inspire and unite the team?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31

Read the passage aloud. How does Paul draw a parallel between the body of Christ and team sports?

List various roles and gifts essential to the health of a local church. How is the church affected when one or more of those roles is missing?

Do verses 14-21 make you think of the toy, Mr. Potato Head?

Remember the reason for Paul's letter was division in the body (1:11; 3:3). Note verses 24b-26, "...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.” Do you think there was quarreling and strife among them regarding spiritual gifts?*

What command does Paul specifically give them in verse 25 that should be preeminent in every church? How do we accomplish this?

APPLICATION

Identify at least one thing you can do to promote unity within your church. How might the expression of your gifts convey concern for and edify others?

How might you demonstrate that another person’s interests are more important than your own (Philippians 2:1-11)?

THINK

Humility is the lynch pin of unity.

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group. Pray for others in your group and their use of the gifts God has given them.

