



YOUR INDISPENSABLE ROLE IN THE CHURCH

OPENING COMMENT

Right on the heels of emphasizing that individual gifting is normative and distinct based on God's good pleasure (12:1-11), Paul seeks to show how this reality will play out. Distinction, when left to sinful hearts and minds, is a source of envy, pride, and ultimately division. Instead, Paul advocates for the beauty and strength found in a body unified in the work of the Spirit and distinct in individual contributions.

READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

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 it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be



weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. Try and summarize each of the following sections in one sentence: verses 12-13, then 14 - 20, then 21 - 26, and finally 27 - 31.
2. What is the unity that the body shares? (vs. 13)
3. Who arranged the body? (vs. 18)
4. What is the purpose of this specific composition? (vs. 25)
5. Based on Paul's ordering of the gifts listed in verse 28, what are the higher gifts the Corinthians should desire?
6. How would you characterize the disposition of the ear to the eye in verse 16?
7. How would you characterize the disposition of the eye to the hand in verse 21?

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. How does finding unity in the work and source of the Spirit aid in navigating diverse gifting?
2. The ear is envious of the eye (verse 16) and the eye is condescending to the hand (verse 21), which are two common extremes in many churches throughout history. What lie/sin is behind these extremes?
3. How does understanding gifting as purposed and given by God (verse 18) address the lies/sin we believe about our gifting and its value? What other sins/lies does this truth expose?
4. Verse 26 outlines God's purpose in having the body function in unity with diverse gifting. In this sinful world this reality is seemingly unattainable. What might we do in our own lives/life groups to move Central toward this goal of suffering together and rejoicing when one is honoured?



5. The questions in verse 29 and 30 are rhetorical and Paul assumes the answer is “No” to all of them (this is more clear in the original language). Yet, Paul suggests that each should desire the higher gifts (apostle, prophet, teacher). How should we navigate this tension in light of all we learn in this passage?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Exodus 31:1-11, 35:30-36:38 - God gifted the craftsmen for the building of the Tabernacle.
2. Acts 6:1-7 - Apostles recognize their need to focus on ministering the word and prayer, so they look for others gifted to meet the need that is presented.
3. Romans 12:3-8 - Paul uses the same body metaphor to get the point across.
4. 1 Corinthians 12 -14 - Paul outlining the source, purpose, and appropriate use of the gifts given.
5. 1 Peter 4:10-11 - gifts used to serve one another.

CONCLUSION

It is incredibly helpful to see the craftsmen of the Tabernacle (Exodus 31) as gifted by the spirit because it gives us a great picture of the people of God reflecting the purposes of God. Moses was called to lead the people out of Egypt and provide leadership, yet he was not gifted or qualified to build the dwelling place of God, that glorious honour fell to the “ordinary” craftsmen. In a similar circumstance, Paul is again down playing the individual gifting and focusing on something much grander. His emphasis is on the corporate building of the body through individual gifting. Instead of having one member envious of another’s gifting, Paul wants the church to see each as beautiful and contributing the health and growth of the church and celebrate and suffer together.

SHARE & PRAY



LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

