

1 Corinthians 12

“Gifts of the Spirit for the Body of Christ”

<p>Relate Use these opening questions meant to begin conversations around the theme of the passage</p> <p>(https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/white-elephant.html)</p>	<p>Ever wonder how we got the game “White Elephant” that we play at Christmas? <i>“White (albino) elephants were regarded as holy in ancient times in Thailand and other Asian countries. Keeping a white elephant was a very expensive undertaking, since the owner had to provide the elephant with special food and provide access for people who wanted to worship it. If a Thai King became dissatisfied with a subordinate, he would give him a white elephant. The gift would, in most cases, ruin the recipient.”</i> (www.phrases.org.uk)</p> <p>Although we gift funny gifts as a joke, the king was not joking when he gave the gift to a subject.</p> <p>What was the oddest gift you have ever received? What is the most useful gift you have ever received?</p>
<p>Theme of Passage</p>	<p><i>The Spirit has given each of us gifts to be used for the building the Body of Christ. Each gift is unique but has a special use.</i></p>
<p>New Content for this passage. Provide the context as a way of introduction.</p> <p>(NIV)</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 12: 1-11</p> <p>Background</p> <p>1 Corinthians 1:16 sets up the issue that Paul is going to address in his letter. He alludes to it in the Thanksgiving, but lays it out clearly here.</p> <p><i>“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,^[a] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”</i></p> <p>“Divisions among you ‘ will be the topic that keeps building on itself as Paul progresses through the letter.</p> <p>Divisions Paul addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is Paul or Apollos better? Is sexual immorality permissible? Should people marry? Can they eat food sacrificed to idols? How should they partake of the Lord’s supper? <p>All of these issues were creating division and several were creating a ranking of importance amongst the group. If you were baptized by Paul are you more “holy” than one baptized by Apollos? If I have money and can bring great things to the supper feast, shouldn’t I show it off and indulge in front of others?</p>

Read Passage

Ask for a volunteer to read 1Corinthians 12:1-3

Sampley, J. Paul
"1 Corinthians" *The New Interpreter's Bible*
X:940-945. Ed. Leander Keck et al. Nashville: Adingdon, 1995.

Read Passage

Ask for a volunteer to read 1Corinthians 12:4-6

This is creating great disturbance for Paul. Have you ever seen status or class show it's self in the church? What became the marker of division? Was it someone with large amounts of money threaten to leave the church if they didn't get the decision they desired? Was a deacon's opinion seen as more valid because of their position? **What division have you seen show itself in the church?**

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

- 12:1-14:40 is the longest address of an issue that Paul gives in this letter. The other issues addressed are a set up to this large issue that Paul will take time to lay out.
- Paul first addresses the issue, but the Greek word has two different translations in scriptures today. Some translations, like NIV and NRSV, translate the opening as "Now about spiritual gifts", and others address it "Now about "spiritual people". Spiritual gifts honors the overarching topic of these chapters and harkens us back to the Thanksgiving at the front of the letter where Paul says they have every "gift" that they need.
- Spiritual persons (literal translation of word) connects to the other topics where Paul addresses "those who are spiritual". This might also might connect us to the original letter written by the Corinthians to Paul asking his advice about "*persons who are making elitist claims on the basis of what the might credit as special and unusually mature Spirit connections.*" (Sampley, 941)
- Paul begins by taking them back to the very beginning of their faith journey. **What were they before? (*pagans*)**
- **Why is it important for Paul to begin with who they used to be?** Paul wants to remind them who they were so they can see the places they are slipping back into their old ways of life. Division is not the way of the Spirit led people of God.
- Paul uses the phrase "Jesus be cursed." This is not a common phrase but a shock phrase because they wouldn't have ever proclaimed that. It would make them think about if their actions and attitudes are proclaiming this even if their mouth is not.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

- The earlier divisions were most likely culminated around socioeconomic status. The issue at hand shifts to the way they see the Holy Spirit working around them in each other's lives.
- **What are some gifts or abilities that are seen as important in the church? Why are those gifts seen as significant or more important?**

<https://socratic.org/questions/why-did-the-removal-of-wolves-affect-the-entire-yellowstone-ecosystem>

Read Passage
Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

- **In these verses, what are the differences?** (kinds of gifts, kinds of service, kinds of working)
- **What does this tell us about the church?** (we need the diversity that the Spirit gives us to use.)
- **In these verses what are the same?** (Same Spirit, Same Lord, and Same God at work)
- Although the initial question from the Corinthians is about gifts, Paul is expanding this thought to reach beyond to our service and work. Paul sees our service and work in the same category as our gifts. They are all given to us by God to use. **How might this impact how we view the ways in which people serve or our professions?** These are all given to us by God and have a purpose.
- If we are not using our gift, doing our part in service, or doing the work God called us, we are not contributing to the Body of Christ and to the building of the Kingdom.
- In the early 1900's there was a great effort to eradicate the grey wolf from the 48 states. They killed livestock and were feared. In the years that followed, conservationists started seeing the effects of removing one animal from the land.
 - *“Wolves feed on elk, and without the wolves, the elk population exploded. The elk fed on young aspen trees, so the park had very few young aspen trees. Without the predation of wolves, the elk remained in one place and fed on vegetation by the rivers, which had tremendous effects. With significantly less vegetation, the riverbanks began to erode and the rivers widened. The temperature of the river warmed because there was no shade cooling the river, so the abundance and distribution of fish species changed. Birds that nested by the river no longer had a riverbank to build their nests on. Beavers used willow trees on the banks of the river for their dams, but there were no more willow trees by the river because of the elk, so the beavers disappeared.”(socratic.org)*

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

- **Out of this list of gifts, which are the ones we celebrate or uphold in the church?** Hint: these aren't usually the gifts we think of when we talk about gifts.
- **Which ones of these would concern or frighten us if someone started using them in the church?**
- We might even question if we are at a Baptist church if we saw some of these gifts in use. These are gifts given by the Spirit.
- If you want to, you might ask why we don't celebrate these gifts in Baptist churches. This could be a rabbit hole of discussion.
- **Speaking in Tongues or glossolalia:**

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- It is mentioned last here probably because it was the issue that was strongest. It may have been seen as the most important gift of the Spirit since it was the gift the church saw at Pentecost. In every list of gifts, tongues is listed last (12:10, 28, 30; 14:26; 13:1, 8) probably listed by inverted priority by the Corinthians. (Sampley, 944)
- “Paul thinks of glossolalia as the Spirit-inspired utterance that is ‘talking with God’ (14:2) that upbuilds the individual (14:4), but that without interpretation is not understandable or edifying to others. (14:5)” (Sampley, 944)

- **What do these verses tell us about the Gifts of the Spirit?**
 - They are (7) given for the benefit of others
 - Are given as the Spirit chooses.
- If they are given for the sake of others, we cannot boast about our gifts. They are not to boost our status and position as the Corinthians were doing.
- They are given as the Spirit determines so we can’t change gifts or look down at our gift. It is not a punishment, but given as a useful tool for the benefit of the Body of Christ.
- **How does it change how you see the Gift God has given to you? Are you using it to build up the body of Christ?** We need it. Even if you don’t yet feel confident in it, we need what the Spirit has given to you to use.

Paul starts out the letter in 1 Corinthians 1:7 by writing, “Therefore you do not lack ANY spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” It isn’t that we have all the gifts in and of ourselves, but together in the body, the Spirit has given us all we need in the gifts he has given to us collectively.

Apply

- What are your gifts that the Spirit has given to you?
- If you are unsure of your Spiritual Gifts or how to name them, check out
 - <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/gifts-survey/> (online)
 - <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service> (paper copy)
- How are you using them?
- Do see a Gift that the Spirit has given someone else that they aren’t using? Would you pray about how you can encourage that person to use their gift?

Pray

Holy Spirit, we desire to be a people not divided by our differences, but joined together through your Spirit who gives good and right gifts to your people. Show us how to use these gifts for the growth of your body and for your Kingdom sake. Amen.

