

Week #1

In the church today, it seems that the topic of the Holy Spirit and gifts can fall along two lines of thought of either a strong focus upon one specific gift (tongues) or there is an avoidance of the topic altogether. In the Corinthian church it appears that there were those who presumed or claimed to be speaking by “inspiration” who “cursed” Jesus. I think what Paul is attempting to do is give us some tools for discernment. If we want to know what is and is not of the Spirit, listen to what is being said. One’s attitudes and beliefs about God (Jesus, the Holy Spirit) will be expressed through the words which one speaks. We can rest assured that the Holy Spirit will never prompt one to speak evil regarding the Godhead. On the contrary, to self-declare, “Jesus Christ is Lord” can only be prompted by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1-13

“Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”

Questions to Consider/Discussion

- 1) What do you know and/or believe about Spiritual gifts (v1)?
- 2) What is there about gifts of the Spirit that interest or concern you?
- 3) In what ways are you rejecting powerless, lifeless, mute idols and seeking to discover the new life of Christ?
- 4) “Jesus is Lord” is one of the earliest confessions of the church. What are the implications of that statement to our life? What does it mean to practically live out “Jesus is Lord” everyday?

Week #2

Spiritual gifts can be a controversial topic, if for no other reason, the abuse and one-sidedness surrounding tongues. The passage below is filled with both unity and diversity surrounding the topic. Notices the use of the words “different,” “same,” and the involvement of God the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit. The word for gifts is “pneumatikó” and does clearly convey the idea of a special and unique endowment separate from one’s natural talent or ability. Service and working can refer one’s natural abilities and/or training.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Questions to Consider/Discussion

- 1) “Administration” refers to specific (‘supernatural’) gifts given by the Spirit for the spiritual functioning of the “Church” (the Body of Christ): prophecy, word of knowledge, wisdom. Have you ever experienced one of more of these “supernatural” gifts, either by receiving or by being a channel?
- 2) We all have natural talents or specific training that “the Lord” can use. What natural abilities have you seen God use spiritually in your life through the Church?
- 3) What abilities or training do you have that you are willing to offer to God to help the church fulfill its mission?
- 4) Is there a stirring (desire) within you for God to use you in His work in the world? If so, where? What causes our hesitation?

Week 3

An evangelical model of the Christian faith focuses on “a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” While that is true, I wonder if we’ve taken the “personal” aspect too literally and almost treat the faith as a private matter. Paul challenges that thinking with the Corinthians when he said, “the Spirit is given for the **common good.**” As the body of Christ, it would be helpful for us to understand that “the Spirit is not given exclusively **to** us but **for** others.”

1 Cor. 12:7-11

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Questions to Consider/Discussion

- 1) Upon first reading of this list, what is your immediate reaction to the Spirit’s activity and gifts? Excitement or skepticism? Why?
- 2) Part of our growth in the faith is accepting and believing (sometimes wrestling with) what God’s Word says about the Father, Son or Holy Spirit and what the Words says about us. What do these verses convey about us and God’s gifts?
- 3) It is easy to believe that gifts like these ceased to operate after a certain period, such as the days of the Apostles as in the Book of Acts. What might we do to be open to new and even supernatural gifts God wants to work through us?
- 4) Discuss the implications of the statement: “for the common good.”

Week 4

The body is a miraculous thing – it is a magnificent engineering marvel. Scripture teaches that God “knitted us together in our mother’s womb.” As believers you are a vital part of a glorious whole uniquely brought together through baptism into a mutual bond called the CHURCH – the Body of Christ (“holy catholic church).” Together in the local church, we become the visible embodiment and representation of Christ in the world that we might declare the glories of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

1 Cor. 12.12-14

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 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. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Questions to Consider/Discussion

- 1) Given what scripture teaches us, why is nurturing an environment of belonging and connectedness vital to the local church?
- 2) Why is there a reluctance among many to “not to want to get involved” if every person is important to the whole (Body).
- 3) Autoimmune diseases occur when the immune system turns against itself and attacks our bodies. In what ways can/do members of the Body of Christ hurt, injure or attack itself?
- 4) Salvation and the Holy Spirit break down all the potential dividing walls and unites us together as the church. In what ways do you see unity being promoted among us? Where do you see potential divisions? How can you help mend potential divisions?

Week 5

What body part would you willing give up if required? Someone recently had the pinky-toe, and the adjacent toe amputated (on both feet). The person commented on how their balance was thrown off by the loss of the smallest appendages of the foot. Individual pride among some members in the Body of Christ was causing them to look upon others' gifts as dispensable and less important than another's gift. Paul refutes that flawed thinking. Be reminded through this study that your partnership in the local church is vital to the health and vitality of the whole – the Body of Christ is incomplete without you.

1 Cor. 12:15-26

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. 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. 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? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 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!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 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, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Questions to Consider/Discussion

- 1) Has someone you know lost a body part (appendage or organ)? How did the loss impact their normal functioning?
- 2) Brainstorm together on how (in a spiritual sense) each of the senses mentioned in the text could be beneficial to the health of the Church – the body of Christ today? What might be some examples of different functions or roles these senses could play in the Church?
- 3) In the Church, what gifts do you think need more honor? What can you do personally to see that those individuals receive appropriate thanks?
- 4) If God places the gifts in the body as He desires them, how can our refusal to offer our gift hurt the common good of the church?
- 5) When someone believes they do not need to be a part of the "body of Christ" what are they saying about themselves? What are they saying about others in the body of Christ?

Week 6

God is beyond space and time; the future is as the past to God. Part of our growth in the faith is discerning what, in regard to what God has done in and for us, has been accomplished for us and what promises has yet to be fulfilled. Our text is an example: "NOW you are the body of Christ." God in his grace has given us our unique place in this metaphysical presence of God in the world right now. He gives us a list of gifts in order of their foundational importance from the beginning of Jesus building his Church. Not only are we given gifts, but we are also encouraged to desire "greater gifts" and yet there is the most profound way for all the gifts to be used: Love (1 Cor. 13).

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 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. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

Questions to Consider/Discussion

- 1) Discuss the implications of verse 27 (Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it), as it relates to what God has already accomplished ("now"), our position ("a part of it"), and our response to this truth.
- 2) These are not "natural" talents and/or abilities but unique endowments of the Holy Spirit that are given for the building up of the church. Can you identify these gifts at work in our church or in your experience?
- 3) It might seem unnatural to desire "the greater gifts." What are the greater gifts and why would God want us to desire the greater gifts?
- 4) What endowment from God would you desire?