

**Men's Sunday Night**  
**The Book of 1 Corinthians**  
**Christian Conduct**  
**Lesson 11 - 1 Corinthians 12**  
**“How the Body Works (Part 1)”**

This chapter opens the discussion on spiritual gifts, and in this day when churches and denominations are emphasizing the work of the Spirit, we need to know what God has to say on this subject. However, we must study this chapter in the light of the problems in the Corinthian church. There were divisions, immorality, stunted spiritual growth, and confusion in the assembly. Here in chapter 12, Paul explains the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ as He gives spiritual gifts to the members.

Division was a major problem in the church at Corinth. Each group followed its leader, exercised its gifts selfishly, and cared little for the health or ministry of the whole body. The Christians at Corinth had received an abundance of spiritual gifts, but they were lacking in spiritual grace. Keep in mind that Christian gifts are not necessarily a mark of Christian character or spiritual maturity. These Corinthian believers were carnal, yet they exercised wonderful and miraculous gifts.

Paul now lists the spiritual gifts and shows that they are given for the benefit of the whole church, and not for the private enjoyment of the individual Christians. We must distinguish between: 1. The Spiritual gift, which is the Spirit Himself, received at salvation; 2. Spiritual gifts, which are ministries to the church through the Spirit, and not just natural abilities or talents; 3. Spiritual offices, which are positions of trust in the local church, as discussed in 1 Peter 4:10; 4. Spiritual graces, which are the fruit of the Spirit in Christian conduct. Paul makes it very clear that each Christian has at least one spiritual gift. Not all Christians have spiritual offices, but all Christians should manifest the graces of the Spirit, which are far more important than miraculous gifts.

It is important that we realize our relationship to one another in the church. Yes, there are many denominations today, but all true Christians, indwelt by the Spirit, are members of His body. There can be unity even where there is not uniformity. Christ never prayed for uniformity in His church, but for the same spiritual unity that exists between Him and His Father (John 17:20-23). We should likewise pray for spiritual unity and do all we can to guard it and extend it.

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. Pray and answer the following questions:**

The Corinthian church was facing several problems that were about to rip the church apart. One of the most serious problems was the issue of spiritual gifts. No gift, or ability from God should ever be abused or cause for division. The gifts of God's Spirit were being so abused by the Corinthian believers that the church was about to be torn apart.

Charismatic renewal has brought the subject of spiritual gifts to center stage. There are many conflicting opinions about the role of gifts in the church today. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? How should they be used in public worship? What should be done about certain controversial gifts that seem divisive? In this chapter Paul deals with similar situations in the church at Corinth and offers answers to these questions.

1. Christians must be careful not to follow false teachers. How can a person avoid being deceived by false teachers?
2. What particular problem in the Corinthian church may have led Paul to offer the "test" in verse 3?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts (12:7)? How have you been able to use your gifts for this purpose?
4. In verses 8-10, what spiritual gifts did Paul describe?
5. What more do we learn about the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts in verses 8-11?
6. If you do not know what your spiritual gift is, what can you do to find out?

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-18. Pray and answer the following questions:**

Because we're all part of the body, everyone has a function and a role to play. Because God has placed us where it pleases Him, it's not up to us to try to change our position, but to rest in the place God has us. If, growing tired of being at the bottom of the body, in a dark, unseen, smelly shoe, my big toe climbed up and planted himself on my kneecap, not only would I look weird, but it would definitely affect the way I walk. So too, although our fleshly tendency is to want to be seen, Paul tells us the Lord has planted each of us where we need to be and where we'll function most effectively.

7. In what way are Christians like a human body?
  
8. What lessons are there in seeing the church as a human body?
  
9. What part do you serve in the body of Christ?

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:19-31. Pray and answer the following questions:**

This passage gives us one of the most meaningful descriptions of the church in all of Scripture. It is also one of the most meaningful messages on the church that can be preached. The purpose of the passage is to stress the unity of the church. The church is said to be a body, a body of many parts or members. It is compared to the human body throughout the whole passage.

10. Why shouldn't all Christians perform the same function?
  
11. Why might certain Believers feel inferior to others in the body? How does Paul encourage these people?

12. In what practical ways have you seen the whole body either suffer or rejoice with one member?

### **Are Some Jobs More Important Than Others?**

All legitimate work matters to God. God Himself is a worker. In fact, human occupations find their origin in His work to create the world. Work is a gift from Him to meet the needs of people and the creation. God creates people to carry out specific kinds of work. God uniquely designs each of us, preparing us for different kinds of tasks. He distributes skills, abilities, interests, and personalities among us so we can carry out His work in the world. That work includes “spiritual” tasks, but also extends to health, education, agriculture, business, law, communication, and so on.

God cares more about character and conduct than occupational status. Paul’s teaching in this passage is more about gifts, not vocations. At the time Paul wrote this, there were very few if any “professional” clergy in the church. Paul himself was a tentmaker along with his friends Aquila and Priscilla. God may assign rank among the spiritual gifts, but there is no indication that He looks at vocations that way. Whatever we do, may we have the heart to do it with excellence, for His glory, honor and praise. (Colossians 3:17)

### **Life Application**

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.