

## Follow the Spirit by Using His Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Growing up I played several different sports. The sport that I enjoyed the most was football. I began playing in fourth grade and played all the way through my senior year. And I liked every part of it. Of course I had blast playing on Friday nights in front of the crowd cheering us on. But I even enjoyed practice. It was another opportunity to strap on the pads and play a game that I loved.

My Junior and Senior year we had approximately 40 guys on our team. I would say that each person on that team was important. Each guy on the team had a part to play to help our team become better. There are so many different components to a good football team. You'll have some guys that aren't very fast, but they're bigger than most other guys and hopefully stronger too. Then you'll have other guys that aren't very big, maybe even thin as a rail, but they ran. They've got incredible speed that helps in other areas of the game.

Each guy is essential, because each guy on the team has a certain set of skills that when put in the proper place helps the team be successful.

In the same way, no, in a far more significant way, each believer in the church is essential because the Holy Spirit has gifted every believer to serve within the body of Christ. If you have placed your faith in Jesus and you would say that Cornerstone Bible Church is your church (you're committed here); you are an essential part of this team. The Holy Spirit has given you specific abilities and talents that when put into use in the proper place help this body of believers to be healthy and helps this church advance the kingdom of God.

My prayer for Cornerstone is that we would be used by God to impact this northeast corner of Ohio with the gospel. That lives would be changed as they come in contact with people who love Jesus and have no greater desire than to go wherever His Spirit would lead them to go. But that takes all of us doing our part as a body of believers. It's not just me doing my part or you, as an individual, doing your part. It takes all of us linking together and saying here I am God, send me, use me. I'm placing my life into your hands because I trust you, and I want to be used by you in whatever way is best.

One of the clearest ways to be used by God is to **Follow the Holy Spirit by Using His Gifts** that he has given to you. This morning we're going to be looking at 1 Corinthians 12, and the verses that we're going to be looking at make two strong arguments; <sup>1</sup>Every Christian is Part of the Body of Christ, that <sup>2</sup>Every Part of the Body is needed.

So if you would read along with me as I want to dive into scripture by reading verses 12-13 as we walk through that first point.

## READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-13

**Every Christian is part of the one Body of Christ.** There are a lot of different members; this is referring to people within the church. And these many members are all different; these are people with different backgrounds, different ethnicities, different talents and abilities, different socioeconomic statuses. But through faith in Christ all of these believers are placed into the one body and all have an equal standing before God.

I find it interesting that has the Apostle Paul writes verse 12 he says though there are many members, and then goes on to say that there is only one body, he says, “so it is with Christ.” As I’m reading this and I realize that Paul is talking about the church, I would have thought that he would have said, *so it is with the church*. But he doesn’t. And you have to wonder why does that.

The reason is because the church cannot be separated even in the slightest way from Jesus Christ Himself. The church is the body of Christ. The church and Jesus are joined together. Does anyone know what Jesus said to Saul in Acts 9 while Saul was breathing threats and prepared to murder those within the church? Jesus didn’t say, Saul why are you persecuting the church? No. Jesus said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” When you come to Christ through faith, you are now eternally joined to Him along with every other believer that exists. It is one body with Jesus as the head of that body.

## READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

There are two things that are talked about here. <sup>1</sup>How the body is formed and then <sup>2</sup>each member is filled.<sup>1</sup>

**The Body’s Formation.** The church is formed as believers are baptized by Christ with the Holy Spirit. This is not talking about water baptism. Water baptism is an outward, physical ordinance given to believers to submit themselves in obedience to Christ’s commands. Water baptism plays no part in conversion, but is a testimony to the church and to the world of the life-change that has taken place inwardly.

But baptism in the Holy Spirit refers to the activity of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Christian life when He gives us new spiritual life (in salvation) and cleanses us and gives a clear break from the power and love of sin (the initial stage of sanctification). This is completely a work of God. The word baptize is used in the New Testament to refer to immersion. And just as one can be immersed in water, so is a believer when they place their faith in Jesus, they are completely immersed spiritually in the body of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur Commentary. pg. 311-314

The moment of salvation, the Lord not only placed you into His body, but He also placed the Holy Spirit in us.

**The Body is Filled.** It says that, “all were made to drink of one Spirit.” When we trust in Christ, God fills us with His Spirit and there is an invitation for all to partake in this blessing from God. Jesus said in John 7,

37 “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

There is an invitation from Jesus that, whoever is lacking, that whoever is weary of doing life on their own, that whoever has their eyes opened to their need of a Savior is welcome to come to Him and drink. And that whoever believes in Jesus will be filled with the Spirit of the living God. That is the reality of all of those who have called upon the name of the Lord.

And as we talked several weeks ago, this is one of the greatest advantages that we have as a Christian that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Don’t ever forget that. Remind yourself of that often, that He has filled you, and that you are a part of the body of Christ.

As we continue on, what I need you to see next is really important. Verses 12-13 give you an understanding of what you need to know about the body of Christ and what I hope verses 14-26 will do, is give you the motivation you need to be active within this body. Because...

### **Every Part of the Body is Needed.**

Before I read, I need to say this, the Corinthian church, was a divided church. These believers had been given spiritual gifts, and God had given them to be a blessing to the body and to unify the body. But these spiritual gifts were actually tearing the church apart. You see, God gives these different abilities within the church to build it up. And there is a variety of gifts; to some God enables to be incredibly generous, to others He gives the ability to teach, to particular people the skill to lead. And we could go on and on talking the gifts. Whether it is the gift of mercy, or speaking in tongues, or prophecy. There many gifts that God has given throughout the history of the church and He still continues to give in order for the church to make progress in advancing His Kingdom.

But my point this morning isn’t to talk about each particular gift but to focus on the fact that gifts are given and they are meant to unify the body and to build it up. But the Corinthian church was missing the point on that.

They had a group of people on one side that believed that their gifts weren't good enough, and then they had a group of people on the other side that had an overinflated view of themselves. They didn't believe they needed anyone else because their particular abilities were amazing. Let's look at both sides of that divide. Beginning in verse 14, Paul addresses those with a low opinion of themselves.

### **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-17**

Here you've got a group of people that are unhappy with the gifts that God has given them. They're envious as they look around themselves, as it seems everyone wanted a gift that someone else had. It's so easy to fall in this comparison trap where we look around us and believe, if I only had that skill, then I would be useful. But in what setting is that really true?

Think about a hospital for a minute. What is one of the most prominent positions in that building? I've never worked in the hospital, but from estimation, I would say a surgeon plays a fairly significant role within that organization. But what would a hospital look like if surgeons were the only people that were employed at a hospital? No ER doctors, no nurses or medical assistants, no physical therapists, no dieticians, no one to run the books and do some accounting, no one hired to do some maintenance, or to do some janitorial work. If you only hired one set of skills because that seems most significant, the whole organization would come tumbling down pretty quickly.

It's the same thing within the church; the body could not possibly function if it were all the same part. (Verse 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?" As a group of believers, we will operate more effectively with every member having different ministries to serve within the church. For this is the way that God has set it up.

### **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:18-19**

God has arranged members perfectly within the body to be what He needs them to be. He arranges people with particular gifts within the church so that the church can have maximum impact for His glory. If you find yourself on this side of the division, where you don't really see that you've got a lot to offer or you think that church is doing just fine without you serving, can I encourage you to reconsider.

There are no useless parts of the body. You are needed. You may not know exactly where you fit yet. But that's OK. Start by making a commitment to the church, saying I'm all in, I'm all here for the long haul, where can I serve? Maybe serve in a particular ministry for six months, and evaluate whether this is the area in the church that God has enabled to serve. Maybe you even begin a new ministry that church hasn't even thought of yet. I don't know.

And don't give up if you fail the first time you set out to serve. I remember being in Michigan serving at a small church and one of the first times that I had an opportunity to preach. I had studied hard reading through Scripture, reading through commentaries, spending time in prayer and then came the Sunday morning that I was going to preach.

Things in that church were done in the same way that they're done here where kids were involved in the beginning part of the service and then when it came time for the sermon the kids were dismissed. The only thing that is different is that the kids would go down to their program in the basement of the church and the same that would play the piano in our service would go down stairs and lead the children in singing a few more songs.

Well, I got to preach and all I had with me was a one-page outline. I figured that all I had to do was study a lot and then once I came in front of everyone to preach, the words would just come to me. They did come to me... for about 5 minutes. After those 5 minutes I had exhausted every bit of information that was in my head. So I closed in prayer. Someone had to run down stairs and grab our piano player so we could have a closing song.

It was a disaster. After that I had some guys in the Youth Group who started calling Lightning Luke.

Getting started may have some difficulties. You may experience some bumps along the way. But please, don't be disobedient with how God has gift you. Don't deny God the right to use you in the way that He intends within His body. God has gifted every believer differently and all are valuable within the body.

*But as we turn back to 1 Corinthians, we look at the other side of the division where certain members have too high a view of themselves. They didn't see everyone as valuable and that's a disastrous viewpoint.*

### **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-26**

There's probably no greater insult amongst a group of people that are supposed to be united, than "I don't need you." That's not heroic or it's not commendable. But you've got a few prominent and very gifted people within the Corinthian church that were self-sufficient and believed they could carry on the ministry all on their own, or at the very least with a few of their close friends. They over estimated their importance and underestimated that of other believers.

They carried with them this individualist idea of, "I can do it all." And individualism is appealing to the natural person. We feel good about ourselves when we can accomplish a task without anyone else's help or instruction. But this independent, self-sufficient, "I can do it all" attitude is from the devil. God has made us for Himself, but He has also made us for each other. There is NO do-it-all Christian, for we all

have weaknesses. That's to our benefit. It causes us to humble ourselves, and reach across the isle to say, "I need you!"

If anyone could have lived independently and accomplish an amazing ministry all on their own, wouldn't it have been Jesus? He is the incarnate Son of God and had no need of other men in the ways that the rest of us need each other. Yet before His public ministry began when He was thirty years old, He lived with and helped support His family. Then the next three years of His life were spent in almost companionship with the twelve men that were His disciples.<sup>2</sup>

Like I said, there are no do-it-all Christians, and Jesus demonstrated that. Each one is valuable and each one has a part to play. The gifts that we all have ought to draw us in together.

Would you take some time this week to think through how you are serving within the body of Christ or how you could be serving? For every part is important. As we start draw to a close, let me illustrate the importance of every part with a story.

### **Conclusion:**

Many of you know that before moving to Middlefield, we lived in Michigan. There was a family that we knew there that would usually have a puzzle out on a particular table in their house. The parents along with their teenage children enjoyed taking through out their week putting it together. They would each work on it few minutes here and then a few minutes there whenever they got the chance. They rarely put a puzzle together in one sitting. But sometimes these puzzles would take a *long* time to put together. Not because it would become too difficult or they just ran out of time.

No. It was because they had a couple of teenagers who enjoyed being the person to put the last piece in place. What would happen is one of the sons would swipe a piece without anyone noticing and they would do it long before the puzzle was getting close to being finished. Then the family would get done with this 1,000 piece and you've got this one person holding the family back from completing this task that's been in process for weeks.

One piece is a big deal. You need all the pieces of the puzzle in order for it to be finished. It's the same way with the church. We need every member of the body of Christ committed and actively using their gifts to advance the Kingdom of God. I believe the Bible is clear on the fact that every believer has been gifted by the Holy Spirit, but it is up to you as to whether or not you will manage that gift well.

There are a number of statistics out there regarding how active people are serving within the church. The statics are not good. I heard a researcher say that only about 20-40% of those who proclaim to be Christians are using their gifts. That means,

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur Commentary. Pg. 318

that the vast majority of church going people across the United States withholds their gifts and do not serve in any capacity within the church. That's really sad, because if you are a Christian you're called to ministry. There's a calling upon your life to serve the body of Christ. Christian, God has gifted you in such a way that you are a necessary part of a body, a necessary part of Cornerstone Bible Church. Those gifts are the way you are to love and serve others as you love and serve Christ.

I believe that as each one of us use the gifts that God has given us that we will, by the grace of God, have impact. That there will be life change that takes place right here within in this church, whether it be in the children's ministry, men's or women's ministry, student ministry, small groups, or ministries that even begun yet. But also there will be transformation that extends beyond this room into Middlefield, Burton, Chardon and our surrounding region. Because when the Holy Spirit is leading and God's people are following, not withholding anything, God begins to do remarkable things.

So would you pray with me towards that end? I pray that lives within this church and within this region would be changed by the gospel. That people would love Jesus. That they would follow after Jesus with an all-out passion. But in order for that to happen it's going to take all of us, as a body of believers using our gifts for the good other people and for the glory of God! Follow the Holy Spirit by using the gifts that he has given you.