CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 — The Gifts of the Spirit and the Body of Christ

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 begins one of the most important sections of Paul's letter.

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 all deal with one subject:

Spiritual gifts.

The Corinthians had written to Paul with questions about these gifts.

The church in Corinth was richly gifted.

Paul said in Chapter 1 that they did not lack any spiritual gift.

But their gifts had become a source of pride and division.

Some gifts, especially speaking in tongues, were seen as signs of being more spiritual.

Those who had these gifts felt superior.

Those who did not felt left out, or even wondered whether they belonged.

Paul answers with one of the most beautiful pictures in the Bible.

The church is the body of Christ.

A body has many parts.

Each part is different.

Each part has its own job.

But all the parts belong to one body.

The foot cannot say, **"I am not part of the body."**

The eye cannot say to the hand, **"I don't need you."**

In fact, the parts that seem weakest are the most necessary.

Paul also shows that every gift comes from the same source.

The same Spirit.

The same Lord.

The same God.

Gifts are not trophies to be shown off.

They are tools given **"for the common good."**

And at the end of the chapter, Paul points to something even greater than gifts:

“A still more excellent way.”

That way is love, which he will describe in Chapter 13.

The chapter moves through five movements:

- Spiritual Gifts and the Spirit's Work (verses 1–3).
- The Same Spirit, Many Gifts (verses 4–11).
- Unity in the Body of Christ (verses 12–20).
- All Members Are Needed (verses 21–26).
- God's Appointed Ministries (verses 27–31).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 12 is:

The one Spirit gives different gifts to every believer for the good of the whole church, so that the many members, each needed and honored, may serve together as one body in Christ.

I. CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Corinthians 12:1 — “I Do Not Want You to Be Ignorant”

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant.”

Paul begins a new topic from the Corinthians' letter.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts.”

The Greek word can mean **spiritual gifts** or **spiritual things**, and it can also refer to **spiritual people.**

The Corinthians wanted to be known as spiritual.

They were fascinated by gifts that seemed dramatic and impressive.

But Paul says:

“I do not want you to be ignorant.”

The Corinthians thought they knew a lot about spiritual things.

In reality, they had much to learn.

Paul is about to correct their thinking about what it means to be truly spiritual.

Cross References

Romans 12:6

> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

Romans 11:25

> I do not want you to be unaware of this secret truth, brothers and sisters, so that you will not think you are wiser than you are: part of Israel has been hardened until the full number of Gentiles has come in.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who have fallen asleep in death, so that you will not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts must be understood according to God's word, not according to human ideas.

Key Truth

Being fascinated with spiritual things is not the same as understanding them.

II. LED ASTRAY TO MUTE IDOLS

1 Corinthians 12:2 — When You Were Gentiles

“You know that when you were Gentiles, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.”

Paul reminds them of their past.

“When you were Gentiles.”

Before they knew Christ, they worshiped idols.

“You were led astray to mute idols.”

The idols were **mute.**

They could not speak.

They could not hear.

They could not help.

“However you were led.”

In pagan worship, people were sometimes swept away by wild excitement, frenzy, and strange experiences.

They thought these experiences proved they were in touch with the gods.

Paul is warning them.

Powerful spiritual experiences are not automatically from God.

The Corinthians had once been carried away by false spiritual experiences.

They needed to be careful not to judge spiritual gifts by how dramatic they seemed.

Cross References

Psalm 115:5

> They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see.

Habakkuk 2:18

> What good is an idol carved by a craftsman? What good is a metal image that teaches lies? The one who made it trusts in his own creation—a god that cannot even speak!

1 Thessalonians 1:9

> For people everywhere are telling how you welcomed us, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

Spiritual Principle

Not every powerful spiritual experience comes from God.

Key Truth

Idols are silent.

The living God speaks.

III. “JESUS IS LORD”

1 Corinthians 12:3 — The Test of the Spirit

“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”

Paul gives the most basic test of true spiritual activity.

What does it say about Jesus?

“No one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed.’”

Bible students are not sure exactly where this phrase came from.

It may have been said by unbelievers who opposed Christ.

It may have been said by someone claiming to speak in a spiritual trance.

Either way, Paul's point is clear.

The Holy Spirit would never lead anyone to curse Jesus.

“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

Anyone can say the words.

But to confess from the heart that Jesus is Lord requires the work of the Holy Spirit.

This was the earliest Christian confession.

In a world where people said, **“Caesar is Lord,”** Christians said, **“Jesus is Lord.”**

This verse also means something very important for the Corinthians.

Every true believer has the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is not only for those with dramatic gifts.

Cross References

Romans 10:9

> If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 John 4:2

> This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit that declares that Jesus Christ has come in a human body is from God.

Philippians 2:11

> and every tongue will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Spiritual Principle

The true test of the Spirit is whether Jesus is honored as Lord.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every believer who truly confesses Jesus as Lord has the Holy Spirit.

IV. DIFFERENT GIFTS, THE SAME SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 12:4 — Variety and Unity

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

Paul now begins to explain the variety of gifts.

“There are different kinds of gifts.”

The word Paul uses for **gifts** comes from the word for **grace.**

These are grace gifts.

They are given freely.

No one earns them.

“But the same Spirit.”

Every gift comes from the same source.

The Holy Spirit is the giver.

So no one can boast about his gift.

And no one should look down on another's gift.

They all come from the same Spirit.

Cross References

Romans 12:6

> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

Ephesians 4:11

> Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

1 Peter 4:10

> Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Spiritual Principle

Every spiritual gift is a gift of grace from the same Spirit.

Key Truth

A gift is not a reward.

It is grace.

V. DIFFERENT MINISTRIES, THE SAME LORD

1 Corinthians 12:5 — Ways of Serving

"There are different kinds of ministries, but the same Lord."

Paul adds a second description.

"There are different kinds of ministries."

The word means **service.**

Gifts are given to be used in serving others.

"But the same Lord."

Every way of serving is done for the same Lord—Jesus Christ.

Some serve by teaching.

Some serve by helping.

Some serve by leading.

Some serve quietly behind the scenes.

But all serve the same Master.

Cross References

Romans 12:7

> If your gift is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach.

Ephesians 4:11

> Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

Ephesians 4:12

> Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.

Spiritual Principle

Every gift is meant for service, and every servant serves the same Lord.

VI. DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, THE SAME GOD

1 Corinthians 12:6 — God Works in All

“And there are different kinds of activities, but it is the same God who works all things in all people.”

Paul adds a third description.

“There are different kinds of activities.”

The word means **workings** or the results of power.

“But it is the same God who works all things in all people.”

God is the One working through every gift.

Notice something beautiful in verses 4 through 6.

The same Spirit.

The same Lord.

The same God.

Paul mentions the Spirit, the Son, and the Father.

The one God, in three Persons, is at work in the gifts of the church.

The unity of God is the foundation for the unity of the church.

Cross References

Ephesians 1:11

> In Him we have also received an inheritance. We were chosen ahead of time according to the plan of God, who works out everything to fit His purpose and will.

Philippians 2:13

> For it is God who is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

Ephesians 4:6

> There is one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

Spiritual Principle

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together in the gifts of the church.

Key Truth

The variety in the church reflects the variety in God.

The unity in the church reflects the unity of God.

VII. FOR THE COMMON GOOD

1 Corinthians 12:7 — To Each One

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

This verse gives two key truths.

First, every believer has a gift.

“To each one is given.”

Not just the leaders.

Not just the gifted speakers.

Every believer has been given some way in which the Spirit shows Himself.

Second, gifts are for others.

“For the common good.”

Gifts are not given to make us look important.

They are given to help the whole church.

The Corinthians were using their gifts to show off.

Paul reminds them that gifts are meant to serve.

Cross References

1 Peter 4:10

> Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Romans 12:6

> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

Ephesians 4:12

> Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer has a gift, and every gift is for the good of others.

Application

What gift has God given you?

How are you using it to serve others?

VIII. WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

1 Corinthians 12:8 — The Word of Wisdom and Knowledge

“For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit,”

Paul now gives examples of the Spirit's gifts.

The word of wisdom.

This is the Spirit-given ability to speak wisely, applying God's truth to real situations.

The word of knowledge.

This is the Spirit-given ability to understand and explain God's truth.

Notice again:

“Through the Spirit” and “by the same Spirit.”

Paul keeps repeating that every gift comes from the same source.

Remember that the Corinthians were proud of their wisdom and knowledge.

Paul reminds them that even these are gifts, not achievements.

Cross References

Isaiah 11:2

> The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and of respect for the LORD.

Colossians 2:3

> In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

James 1:5

> If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God, who gives generously to everyone without finding fault, and He will give it to you.

Spiritual Principle

True wisdom and knowledge are gifts from God's Spirit.

IX. FAITH AND HEALING

1 Corinthians 12:9 — By the Same Spirit

“to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit,”

Faith.

Every believer has saving faith.

But Paul is speaking here of a special gift of faith.

This is an unusual confidence in God to do great things.

It is the kind of faith that trusts God for the impossible.

Gifts of healing.

Notice that Paul says **gifts**, plural.

God may heal in different ways and at different times.

In the New Testament, the apostles and others healed the sick in Jesus' name.

Healing is always God's work, not the healer's power.

Cross References

James 5:15

> The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

Mark 16:18

> they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them. They will place their hands on the sick, and the sick will get well.

Acts 3:6

> But Peter said, “I don't have silver or gold, but I give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!”

Spiritual Principle

God is able to do far more than we can imagine, and He works through His people to show His power and care.

X. MIRACLES, PROPHECY, TONGUES

1 Corinthians 12:10 — More Gifts of the Spirit

“to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”

Paul continues the list.

The working of miracles.

Acts of God's power beyond the natural.

Prophecy.

Speaking a message from God to build up, encourage, and comfort the church.

Discerning of spirits.

The ability to tell whether a message or activity comes from God, from the human spirit, or from evil spirits.

Various kinds of tongues.

Speaking in languages the speaker has not learned.

The interpretation of tongues.

The ability to explain what was spoken in tongues so the church can understand.

Notice that Paul puts tongues and interpretation **last.**

The Corinthians placed tongues first.

Paul does not despise tongues, but he gently shows they are not the most important gift.

Cross References

Acts 2:4

> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability.

1 John 4:1

> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit. Instead, test the spirits to see whether they come from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Acts 19:6

> When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other languages and prophesied.

Spiritual Principle

Every gift has a place, but no gift should be exalted above others for show.

Key Truth

Churches today differ on whether some of these gifts continue as they did in the early church.

But all agree that every gift must be used in love and for the good of others.

XI. AS HE WILLS

1 Corinthians 12:11 — One and the Same Spirit

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

Paul sums up the list.

“One and the same Spirit works all these things.”

All these different gifts come from one Spirit.

“Distributing to each one individually.”

The Spirit gives gifts personally to each believer.

“As He wills.”

The Spirit decides who receives which gift.

We do not choose our gifts.

We cannot demand a certain gift.

This means no one can boast about having a certain gift.

And no one should feel inferior for not having it.

The Spirit gives as He pleases, and He makes no mistakes.

Notice also that the Spirit **wills.**

The Holy Spirit is not just a force or power.

He is a Person who makes choices.

Cross References

Romans 12:6

> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

Hebrews 2:4

> God also confirmed it with signs, wonders, many kinds of miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit that He handed out as He chose.

John 3:8

> The wind blows wherever it wants. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone born of the Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit chooses which gifts each believer receives.

Application

Be content with the gift God has given you.

Use it faithfully, and rejoice in the gifts of others.

XII. ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

1 Corinthians 12:12 — So Also Is Christ

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ.”

Now Paul introduces his great picture.

“The body is one and has many members.”

A human body is one body.

But it has many parts.

Hands, feet, eyes, ears, heart, lungs.

Each one is different.

But together they make one body.

“So also is Christ.”

Notice that Paul does not say, **“So also is the church.”**

He says, **“So also is Christ.”**

The church is so closely joined to Christ that it is called His body.

He is the head.

Believers are the members.

Cross References

Romans 12:4

> Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

Romans 12:5

> In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.

Ephesians 4:16

> From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Spiritual Principle

The church is one body made up of many different members, joined together in Christ.

Key Truth

Unity does not mean being the same.

It means many different parts working together.

XIII. BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:13 — One Spirit

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

How did believers become part of this body?

“In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

When a person comes to Christ, the Holy Spirit places them into the body of Christ.

Notice the word **“all.”**

Every believer has experienced this.

Not just a special few.

“Whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free.”

The body of Christ breaks down every wall.

Race does not divide it.

Social class does not divide it.

“And we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Every believer has received the same Spirit, like drinking from the same fountain.

The Spirit is not the property of one group in the church.

He lives in all.

Cross References

Galatians 3:28

> There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female. You are all one in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 4:5

> There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

Colossians 3:11

> In this new life, there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner, uncivilized person, slave, or free person. Christ is all, and He is in all.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer has received the Spirit and been placed into the one body of Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Spirit does not create first-class and second-class Christians.

XIV. NOT ONE MEMBER, BUT MANY

1 Corinthians 12:14 — The Need for Variety

“For the body is not one member, but many.”

This is a simple statement.

But it is very important.

“The body is not one member, but many.”

A body made of only one part would not be a body.

Variety is not a problem.

It is part of God's design.

The Corinthians wanted everyone to have the same impressive gift.

But God never intended that.

He made the church with many different members on purpose.

Cross References

Romans 12:4

> Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

Ephesians 4:16

> From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 1:23

> The church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

Spiritual Principle

Diversity in the church is God's design, not a mistake.

XV. IF THE FOOT SHOULD SAY

1 Corinthians 12:15 — “I Am Not a Hand”

“If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,” it does not stop being part of the body.”

Paul now pictures the body parts talking.

The foot says, “I am not a hand.”

The foot compares itself to the hand.

The hand seems more useful, more skilled, more noticed.

So the foot feels it does not belong.

Paul says:

“It does not stop being part of the body.”

This speaks to believers who feel inferior.

Some in Corinth did not have the impressive gifts.

They felt left out.

They wondered whether they even belonged.

Paul says your feelings do not change the truth.

You belong.

Cross References

Romans 12:4

> Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

Ephesians 4:16

> From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:25

> So stop telling lies. Each of you must speak the truth to your neighbor, because we are all parts of the same body.

Spiritual Principle

Comparing ourselves to others leads us to doubt our place in the body.

Application

Stop comparing your gift with someone else's.

You are part of the body because God placed you there.

XVI. IF THE EAR SHOULD SAY

1 Corinthians 12:16 — “I Am Not an Eye”

“And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not part of the body,” it does not stop being part of the body.”

Paul repeats the point with another example.

The ear says, “I am not an eye.”

The eye seems more important, more beautiful, more central.

But the ear is just as much a part of the body.

Paul repeats it because the feeling of not belonging is so common.

Many believers think, **“My gift doesn't matter.”**

“I'm not needed.”

“Others are more important.”

God says, **“You belong.”**

Cross References

Romans 12:4

> Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

Ephesians 4:16

> From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

1 Corinthians 12:21

> 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.”

Spiritual Principle

Your place in the body does not depend on how important your gift seems.

Key Truth

Feeling unimportant does not make you unimportant.

XVII. IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EYE

1 Corinthians 12:17 — Where Would the Hearing Be?

“If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the sense of smell?”

Paul now uses humor.

Imagine a body that was nothing but one giant eye.

It could see.

But it could not hear.

It could not smell.

It could not walk or speak.

It would be a strange and useless body.

The same is true of the church.

If everyone had the same gift, the church could not function.

The Corinthians wanted everyone to speak in tongues.

But a church of only tongues would be like a body made only of tongues.

God's design needs variety.

Cross References

Psalm 94:9

> Does the One who made the ear not hear? Does the One who formed the eye not see?

Ephesians 4:16

> From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Romans 12:4

> Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

Spiritual Principle

The church needs every kind of gift to function as God designed.

XVIII. JUST AS HE PLEASED

1 Corinthians 12:18 — God Placed Each One

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”

Here is the answer to every feeling of inferiority and every attitude of pride.

“God has set the members.”

God placed each part where He wanted it.

“Each one of them.”

Not one part is there by accident.

“Just as He pleased.”

God was pleased to put you where you are.

If you feel unimportant, remember that God placed you there on purpose.

If you feel superior, remember that you did not choose your place.

God did.

Cross References

Psalm 139:14

> I praise You because You made me in an amazing and wonderful way. Your works are wonderful, and I know it very well.

Ephesians 1:11

> In Him we have also received an inheritance. We were chosen ahead of time according to the plan of God, who works out everything to fit His purpose and will.

Romans 9:21

> Doesn't the potter have the right to make from the same lump of clay one pot for special use and another for ordinary use?

Spiritual Principle

God has placed every believer in the body exactly where He wants them.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Your place in the church is not an accident; it is an appointment.

XIX. WHERE WOULD THE BODY BE?

1 Corinthians 12:19 — All One Member

“And if they were all one member, where would the body be?”

Paul asks another simple question.

If every part were the same, there would be no body at all.

Just a pile of identical parts.

A body needs different parts working together.

The church is the same.

Sameness does not make unity.

Different gifts, working together in love, make the body.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:16

> From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Romans 12:4

> Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

1 Corinthians 12:14

> For the body is not made up of one part, but of many.

Spiritual Principle

Without variety, there would be no body.

XX. MANY MEMBERS, ONE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:20 — The Balance

“But now there are many members, yet one body.”

Paul sums up the first half of his picture.

“Many members.”

Variety.

“Yet one body.”

Unity.

This is God's design for His church.

Not uniformity.

Not division.

Unity in diversity.

Cross References

Romans 12:5

> In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.

Ephesians 4:4

> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

Colossians 3:15

> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since you were called to peace as members of one body. And be thankful.

Spiritual Principle

God's church is many members joined as one body.

Key Truth

The church is not a crowd of individuals.

It is a body.

XXI. “I HAVE NO NEED OF YOU”

1 Corinthians 12:21 — The Eye and the Hand

“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.””

Now Paul turns to those who feel superior.

The eye says to the hand, “I have no need of you.”

The head says to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

The eye and the head seem important and impressive.

They might think they could get along without the hand and the feet.

But they cannot.

The eye can see something, but it cannot pick it up.

The head can decide where to go, but it cannot get there without feet.

Some in Corinth looked down on those with less visible gifts.

Paul says they need them.

Cross References

Romans 12:5

> In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.

Ephesians 4:16

> From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Genesis 2:18

> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

Spiritual Principle

No believer can say to another, “I don't need you.”

Spiritual Warning

Pride makes us think we can do without others.

God made us to need each other.

XXII. THE WEAKER PARTS

1 Corinthians 12:22 — Indispensable

“On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable.”

Paul makes a surprising statement.

“The parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable.”

Think of the body.

The heart, the lungs, the brain, and other vital organs are hidden and delicate.

They seem weak.

But you cannot live without them.

The same is true in the church.

The quiet prayer warrior.

The faithful helper.

The one who serves behind the scenes.

These may seem weak or unimportant.

But the church cannot live without them.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 12:9

> But He told me, “My grace is all you need, because My power works best in weakness.” So I will gladly brag even more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power can rest on me.

Isaiah 40:29

> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

1 Corinthians 1:27

> But God chose the things the world thinks are foolish to shame the wise. God chose the things the world thinks are weak to shame the strong.

Spiritual Principle

The members who seem weakest are often the most necessary.

Application

Thank God for the quiet servants in your church.

Tell them how much they matter.

XXIII. GREATER HONOR

1 Corinthians 12:23 — Treated with Modesty

“And those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we give greater honor; and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty.”

Paul continues his picture.

Some parts of the body we consider less honorable.

So we cover them with clothing.

We give them special care and modesty.

In the same way, the church should give special honor and care to those members who might seem less important.

Instead of overlooking them, we should take extra care of them.

Cross References

1 Peter 3:7

> In the same way, husbands, live with your wives with understanding. Treat them with honor as the more delicate partner and as those who share with you the gift of life. Then nothing will stand in the way of your prayers.

1 Timothy 2:9

> In the same way, I want women to dress modestly and sensibly, with decency. Their beauty should not come from fancy hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes,

Genesis 3:7

> Then their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Spiritual Principle

The church should give special care and honor to those who are easily overlooked.

XXIV. GOD ARRANGED THE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:24 — Honor to the Part That Lacked It

“But our presentable parts have no need of it. Instead, God has so arranged the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,”

Paul explains God's purpose.

“Our presentable parts have no need of it.”

The parts of the body that are already attractive do not need special attention.

“God has so arranged the body.”

God Himself designed the body this way.

“Giving greater honor to the part that lacked it.”

God's way is to lift up the lowly.

He honors those the world overlooks.

This is how God works in His kingdom.

And this is how His church should work too.

Cross References

James 2:5

> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Hasn't God chosen people who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?

Luke 14:10

> But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, “Friend, move up to a better place.” Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests.

1 Peter 5:5

> In the same way, you who are younger, submit to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Spiritual Principle

God gives greater honor to those the world overlooks.

Key Truth

In God's kingdom, the last are often first.

XXV. THE SAME CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

1 Corinthians 12:25 — No Division in the Body

“so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”

Paul explains why God arranged the body this way.

“So that there may be no division in the body.”

The Corinthians were divided.

Over leaders.

Over food.

Over wealth.

Over gifts.

God's design was meant to prevent this.

“But that the members may have the same care for one another.”

In a healthy body, every part cares for every other part.

The hand protects the eye.

The feet carry the whole body.

The church should be like this.

Cross References

John 17:21

> I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.

Philippians 2:2

> Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, and being one in spirit and purpose.

Romans 12:10

> Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Spiritual Principle

God designed the church for mutual care, not division.

Application

Who in your church needs your care this week?

XXVI. SUFFERING AND REJOICING TOGETHER

1 Corinthians 12:26 — All the Members

“If one member suffers, all the members suffer together; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice together.”

Paul describes how a healthy body works.

“If one member suffers, all the members suffer together.”

When you stub your toe, your whole body feels it.

You do not say, **“That's just my toe's problem.”**

In the church, when one believer suffers, the whole church should feel it.

“If one member is honored, all the members rejoice together.”

When one part of the body is honored, the whole body shares the joy.

In the church, when one believer is blessed, the others should rejoice, not be jealous.

This is real fellowship.

Shared pain.

Shared joy.

Cross References

Romans 12:15

> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Hebrews 13:3

> Remember those in prison as if you were in prison with them. Remember those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Galatians 6:2

> Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Spiritual Principle

In the body of Christ, we share both suffering and joy.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A healthy church weeps together and rejoices together.

XXVII. YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 12:27 — Individually Members

“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.”

Paul now applies the picture directly.

“Now you are the body of Christ.”

This is not just a nice illustration.

It is a spiritual reality.

The church in Corinth, with all its problems, was the body of Christ.

“And individually members of it.”

Each believer is a member.

Each one has a place.

Each one belongs.

The church is both **together** and **individual.**

We are one body, and we are each important members.

Cross References

Romans 12:5

> In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.

Ephesians 1:23

> The church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 5:30

> because we are parts of His body.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer is a member of Christ's body, with a place and a purpose.

Key Truth

You are not just going to church.

You are part of the church.

XXVIII. GOD HAS APPOINTED

1 Corinthians 12:28 — First, Second, Third

"And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and various kinds of tongues."

Paul now lists ministries and gifts God has placed in the church.

Notice that he numbers the first three.

First apostles.

Those sent by Christ to lay the foundation of the church.

Second prophets.

Those who spoke God's message to the church.

Third teachers.

Those who explain and apply God's word.

These three focus on the word of God.

They come first because the church is built on God's truth.

Then Paul lists other gifts.

Miracles and **gifts of healings.**

Helps—those who assist and support others.

Administrations—those who guide and organize, like a pilot steering a ship.

Various kinds of tongues.

Once again, tongues come last.

Notice also that **helps** and **administrations** are listed among the gifts of the Spirit.

Quiet, practical service is a spiritual gift too.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:11

> Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

Romans 12:7

> If your gift is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach.

Ephesians 2:20

> You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

Spiritual Principle

God has appointed different ministries in the church, with the ministry of His word at the foundation.

Key Truth

Helping and organizing are spiritual gifts.

Behind-the-scenes service is God's work too.

XXIX. ARE ALL APOSTLES?

1 Corinthians 12:29 — Not Everyone Has the Same Gift

“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?”

Paul asks a series of questions.

Each one expects the answer **“No.”**

Are all apostles? No.

Are all prophets? No.

Are all teachers? No.

Do all work miracles? No.

God does not give every gift to every believer.

This is His design.

No believer should expect to have every gift.

And no believer should demand that others have the same gift as he does.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:11

> Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

Romans 12:4

> Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

James 3:1

> My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Spiritual Principle

God gives different gifts to different believers, and no one has them all.

XXX. DO ALL SPEAK WITH TONGUES?

1 Corinthians 12:30 — Not All Gifts for All

“Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”

Paul continues his questions.

Do all have gifts of healing? No.

Do all speak with tongues? No.

Do all interpret? No.

This was especially important in Corinth.

Some believed that speaking in tongues was the sign of being truly spiritual.

They expected everyone to do it.

Paul says no.

Not every believer speaks in tongues.

And that does not make anyone less spiritual.

The Spirit gives as He wills.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:26

> What then, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a song, a teaching, a revelation, a message in another language, or an interpretation. Everything must be done to build up the church.

Mark 16:17

> These signs will go with those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons, and they will speak in new languages.

Acts 10:46

> For they heard them speaking in other languages and praising God. Then Peter said,

Spiritual Principle

No single gift is the test of whether a person is truly spiritual.

Key Truth

The mark of the Spirit's presence is confessing Jesus as Lord, not having a certain gift.

XXXI. A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY

1 Corinthians 12:31 — Desire the Greater Gifts

“But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you a still more excellent way.”

Paul ends the chapter with two statements.

“But earnestly desire the greater gifts.”

Some gifts do more to build up the church.

In Chapter 14, Paul will explain that gifts like prophecy, which build up others through understandable words, are greater than tongues without interpretation.

The church should eagerly desire gifts that help others most.

Then Paul turns to something even more important:

“And yet I will show you a still more excellent way.”

What could be better than the greatest gifts?

Love.

In Chapter 13, Paul will describe it.

Gifts without love are nothing.

Love is the way all gifts must be used.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:1

> Follow the way of love, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:12

> It is the same with you. Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, try to excel in the gifts that build up the church.

Colossians 3:14

> And over all these, put on love, which ties everything together in perfect unity.

Spiritual Principle

Love is the more excellent way that makes every gift worthwhile.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Gifts are the tools; love is the way they must be used.

XXXII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 12

1. The Spirit Gives Diverse Gifts

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

Principle:

Every ability or gift in the church comes from the Holy Spirit for the good of all, not for personal glory.

2. Unity in Diversity

“There are many members, yet one body.”

Principle:

Just as a body has many parts with different functions, so the church thrives when every believer plays their role.

3. No One Is Unnecessary

“The parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable.”

Principle:

Even the weakest or least visible members are vital, and God gives them honor.

4. Shared Suffering and Joy

“If one member suffers, all the members suffer together.”

Principle:

When one believer suffers, all suffer; when one is honored, all rejoice.

5. God Appoints Ministries

“God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.”

Principle:

Apostles, prophets, teachers, and others serve by divine appointment.

6. The More Excellent Way

“I will show you a still more excellent way.”

Principle:

Spiritual gifts are important, but love is the greatest foundation for all ministry.

XXXIII. THE GIFTS LISTED IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12

Paul names many gifts in this chapter.

Gifts of Speaking and Understanding

- The word of wisdom.
- The word of knowledge.
- Prophecy.
- Teaching.
- Discerning of spirits.

Gifts of Power

- Faith.
- Gifts of healing.
- The working of miracles.

Gifts of Tongues

- Various kinds of tongues.
- The interpretation of tongues.

Gifts of Service and Leadership

- Apostles.
- Helps.
- Administrations.

Other Lists

Paul gives other lists of gifts in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, and Peter mentions gifts in 1 Peter 4.

No single list includes every gift.

A Note on Gifts Today

Faithful churches differ on whether gifts such as tongues, prophecy, and healing continue in the same way today as in the early church.

All agree that every gift comes from the Spirit, must honor Jesus as Lord, and must be used in love to build up the church.

Key Truth

Every gift comes from the same Spirit, serves the same Lord, and is empowered by the same God.

XXXIV. LESSONS FROM THE HUMAN BODY

Paul's picture of the body teaches many lessons.

The Body Is One

All the parts belong to one body.

The Body Has Many Parts

Variety is God's design.

Every Part Belongs

The foot is still part of the body, even if it is not a hand.

Every Part Is Needed

The eye cannot say to the hand, **“I have no need of you.”**

The Weakest Parts Are Vital

Hidden, delicate parts are necessary for life.

God Arranged the Body

God placed every part just as He pleased.

The Parts Care for Each Other

When one part hurts, the whole body hurts.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The body works best when every part does its job and cares for every other part.

XXXV. TWO WRONG ATTITUDES

Paul's picture corrects two opposite problems in the church.

Feeling Inferior

“Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body.”

Some believers think their gift does not matter.

They compare themselves to others and feel left out.

God's answer: **You belong, and you are needed.**

Feeling Superior

“I have no need of you.”

Some believers think their gift makes them more important.

They look down on others.

God's answer: **You need every part, and the weakest are indispensable.**

Key Truth

Both pride and self-pity forget that God placed every member in the body just as He pleased.

XXXVI. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 12 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Is Lord

“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus Is the One We Serve

“There are different kinds of ministries, but the same Lord.”

The Church Is the Body of Christ

“Now you are the body of Christ.”

Jesus Unites His People

Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, are one body in Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Spirit's greatest work is to lead people to confess Jesus as Lord and to join them together as His body.

XXXVII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did Paul write about spiritual gifts?

The Corinthians had asked about them.

Their gifts had become a source of pride and division.

Some gifts, especially tongues, were seen as signs of being more spiritual.

Question 2

How can we tell whether something is from the Holy Spirit?

The Spirit always leads people to honor Jesus as Lord.

He would never lead anyone to curse Jesus.

Question 3

Does every believer have the Holy Spirit?

Yes.

No one can truly say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Spirit.

All believers were baptized by one Spirit into one body.

Question 4

Does every believer have a spiritual gift?

Yes.

“To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit.”

Question 5

What are spiritual gifts for?

They are given **“for the common good.”**

They are meant to serve others and build up the church, not to bring glory to ourselves.

Question 6

Who decides which gifts a person receives?

The Holy Spirit.

He gives to each one **“as He wills.”**

Question 7

What do verses 4–6 teach about God?

The Spirit, the Lord, and God are all at work in the gifts.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together.

Question 8

Why does Paul compare the church to a body?

A body is one, yet it has many different parts.

Each part is needed.

This shows how the church should work together in unity.

Question 9

What should a believer do who feels his gift is unimportant?

Remember that God placed him in the body just as He pleased.

He belongs, and he is needed.

Question 10

What should a believer do who feels his gift makes him superior?

Remember that he cannot say to anyone, **“I have no need of you.”**

The weaker parts are indispensable.

Question 11

Do all believers speak in tongues?

No.

Paul's questions in verses 29–30 show that not every believer has the same gift.

No single gift proves that someone is truly spiritual.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 12 change about the way Christians live today?

1 Corinthians 12 should cause believers to live:

- Confessing Jesus as Lord.
- Discovering and using their gifts.
- Serving for the good of others.
- Content with the gifts God has given.
- Valuing every member of the church.
- Honoring those who are easily overlooked.
- Suffering and rejoicing with one another.
- Seeking the more excellent way of love.

XXXVIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 12 asks several important questions.

Do I Confess Jesus as Lord?

Is He truly Lord of my life?

What Gift Has God Given Me?

Am I using it for the good of others?

Am I Comparing Myself to Others?

Do I feel left out because I do not have someone else's gift?

Do I Look Down on Anyone?

Is there someone I treat as if I do not need them?

Do I Honor the Overlooked?

Who in my church needs encouragement and honor?

Do I Feel the Pain of Others?

Am I weeping with those who weep?

Do I Rejoice When Others Are Blessed?

Or am I jealous?

Am I Walking in the Way of Love?

Is love guiding how I use my gifts?

XXXIX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Every Member Matters”

In many churches, a few people do most of the work.

Others sit and watch.

Some think, **“I don't have anything to offer.”**

Others think, **“They need me more than I need them.”**

But Paul's picture changes everything.

The church is a body.

And in a body, every member matters.

The one who preaches and the one who prays.

The one who leads and the one who helps.

The one who is seen and the one who is hidden.

All are placed by God.

All are needed.

All are honored.

This creates a powerful principle.

No believer is too small to matter.

No believer is too important to need others.

Principle:

God has placed you in the body on purpose, and the body needs you.

XL. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 was written to a church rich in gifts but poor in unity.

Some were proud of their gifts.

Some felt they had nothing to offer.

Some looked down on others.

And the body of Christ was being torn apart.

Paul reminded them of the truth.

Every believer has the Spirit.

Every believer has a gift.

Every gift comes from the same God.

Every member belongs to the same body.

And every member is needed.

1 Corinthians 12 therefore reminds us:

Never use your gift to show off.

Never think your gift doesn't matter.

Never say to another believer, **“I don't need you.”**

Never forget the overlooked members of the body.

Never use any gift without love.

The church does not need a few gifted stars.

It needs:

Every member serving.

Every gift used for the common good.

Every person honored.

And love guiding everything.

The same Spirit still calls us:

Tell people that Jesus is Lord.

Tell people that the Spirit gives gifts to every believer.

Tell people that there is a place for them in the body of Christ.

Tell people that in Christ, they belong.

And as you serve:

Use your gift.

Honor others.

Share their burdens and joys.

Walk in love.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit.

Thank You that by Your Spirit we can confess that Jesus is Lord.

Thank You that You have given gifts to every believer.

Thank You that the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God are at work in all of us.

Thank You that You have placed us in the body of Christ just as You pleased.

Thank You that we belong to one another.

Forgive us when we have used our gifts to draw attention to ourselves.

Forgive us when we have compared ourselves to others and felt we did not matter.

Forgive us when we have looked down on others and acted as if we did not need them.

Forgive us when we have overlooked the quiet members of Your body.

Help us discover the gifts You have given us.

Help us use them faithfully for the good of others.

Help us honor those who are easily forgotten.

Teach us to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Make Your church one body, united in love.

And show us the still more excellent way of love, so that every gift we use brings glory to You.

“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.” — 1 Corinthians 12:27

Central Truth

The one Spirit gives different gifts to every believer for the good of the whole church, so that the many members, each needed and honored, may serve together as one body in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12 in One Sentence

Paul teaches that the one Spirit gives a variety of gifts to every believer for the common good, that the church is one body in Christ with many members who all belong and are all needed, and that even the greatest gifts must be used in the still more excellent way of love.