

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
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## ***Unifying, Edifying Giftedness*** **1 Corinthians 12:19-31**

Keywords: church, body, edification, gifts, Spiritual gifts, unity, body of Christ

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: Too often the spiritual gifts are misunderstood by believers, often out of pride. Gifts become all about the people who have the gifts rather than the people who are to be served by those gifts. As a result we dishonor the Spirit who gives them, and dishonor those we are called to serve—our brothers and sisters in Christ. In this message Pastor Henry seeks to drive home two primary goals behind the giving of gifts to the church by the Holy Spirit: unity and edification.

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Turn your bibles to 1 Corinthians 12 again. We continue today our study of Spiritual Gifts.
  - 1. There is the serious problem of elitism.
  - 2. Those who are calling themselves the “spirituals.”
  - 3. Exalting themselves above the rest of the church.
  - 4. Teaching a dual concept of Christianity (the haves and have-nots; the spiritual and unspiritual; the wise and the foolish).
  - 5. The result is that the church is breaking into factions. It is very possible that some of the ones calling themselves “spiritual” are leading these various groups and are creating divisions in the church.
  - 6. There is strong intimidation taking place; for since those people are the spiritual ones, who are the rest to be questioning their actions or words.
- B. Paul has been addressing this issue throughout 1 Corinthians but here in 12-14 he goes at it with strong words and pulls no punches.
- C. It is so critical that you understand this beloved. It is because of this problem in the church that Paul is going into such detail. As you read these words you must keep in mind the context of why and why he is writing.
  - 1. This extended attention to the gifts given to Christians by God is not a positive time of instruction. It is a negative one correcting grave error.
  - 2. It seeks to bring us to one of the key purposes of the church.

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- D. Last time I spoke we looked at 12:7-18. It was there that my key point was that there is **value in every believer**.
1. I challenged you to consider how you are using your gifts for the purpose of building up this body of believers. I hope that you are trying to give that careful thought.
  2. I showed you **three aspects related to these gifts** given by the Spirit.
    - a. *The diversity of the gifts* (8-10).
      - (1) No gift or mix of gifts are the same.
      - (2) The means that not one of you here is expendable. Each of you has a purpose and you need to be seeking to fulfill that purpose.
    - b. *The unity of the source* (11).
      - (1) Although there is a massive amount of diversity in the gifts, it should not create division or chaos.
      - (2) The reason is that it all comes from only one place, the Holy Spirit.
      - (3) Therefore, there is no place for vying for supremacy in the church through your gift, rather, all of us need to be thinking about how our gift can work in cooperation with the others in the church.
    - c. *The value of diversity* (12-18).
      - (1) Here Paul uses our own body to show us how silly it is to exalt one gifted person over another. And how tragic it would be to have only one gift or another.
      - (2) Our body functions in perfect unity, each part needing the other part.
      - (3) No part is useless. In the same way, no part of TBC is useless.
- E. And this gives us a good transition into today's study.
- F. **Read with me 1 Corinthians 12:19-31.**

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## ***Propositional Statement***

In this passage we will learn **three important truths related to unity and diversity**: Paul makes three points in these verses to show that though there is much diversity in the gifts of the church, the whole purpose is two-fold—unity and edification (remind them what this means).

## **II. Spiritual Gifts Create Unity and Edification.**

### *A. The Gifts Show Interdependence (19-24a).*

1. This comes out clearly in verse 19.
  - a. Paul is using the human body still to help this struggling church understand that every member of their church is valuable and critical.
  - b. Essentially the point he is making here is that without variety of body parts there is no body. Therefore without a variety of spiritual gifts, there is no church.
    - (1) Now listen to that again: without a variety of spiritual gifts, there is no church.
    - (2) This is a direct challenge to those Christians who might find that associating with a church is optional.
      - (a) They wrongly think that they can serve God on their own.
      - (b) But in reality they have only fallen into one of the many snares of Satan. They separate themselves from the rest of the church and think that no ill will befall them.
      - (c) But this is not a biblical option. It is not optional.
    - (3) It is as optional as having a heart or lungs or a spinal column by itself.

Without realizing it, the person who sees little value in becoming intimately connected to a local church is actually mocking God.

Strong words, right? But I believe they are true words, allow me to explain:

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Over and over in this chapter Paul has clearly shown that though there are many gifts in the church, and therefore many gifted people in the church, all of these gifts are sovereignly given by God.

vss 4-6.

vss. 8-9 (show the constant connection of the gift with a *preposition* + Spirit).

vs. 11.

vs. 18.

vs. 24.

Yet, when we separate from the church and we go our own way, we declare to both man and God, that we believe we know better. God's purpose and plan is not important to us.

So let it be known today that without the variety of members there is no church. There is no such thing, beloved, as independence, rather, the Bible teaches interdependence.

Paul builds on this in the next verses:

2. Verses 20-21 shows clearly that without the Body the individual members cannot function properly.
  - a. Yes there are many body members, meaning many individual Christians. And yes each of them have been uniquely gifted. And yes, some of them have been very much gifted.
  - b. But regardless of those facts, each member of the body of Christ must understand that they need the rest of the body.
  - c. It is not clear from the context who is saying this. It could be the "spirituals" or those who are sick of them. But either way, they are needed.
    - (1) Imagine the hurt that is put on a person when another looks at them and declares, "I don't need you."
    - (2) This is pride, arrogance of a major kind. The attitude again is one where a person for whom Christ has died for, and the Spirit has gifted is set aside by a man or woman as unimportant!

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- (3) We may not think much about our bodies, but most of us are bright enough to realize that we need are bodies and are reluctant to part with any part of it.
- (4) We may appreciate some parts because of their obvious value, such as eyes and ears, but wait until you have laryngitis on your wedding day and you will come to appreciate the value of vocal chords!
- (5) How many have played through injuries to their knees or some other joint in High School, all in the name of toughness, only to regret it years later because of the constant pain they were now in.
- (6) Yet in the church it happens over and over again. And Paul is saying, stop destroying one another in the name of individualism. Stop ripping one another down by ignoring one another's value and purpose in the church.

## **The Value of The Hand**

We work our fingers by remote control. Of course, in one sense, we work all of our moving body parts by remote control - the control center is our brain. However, the fingers are special, because there are no muscles inside the fingers. The muscles which bend the finger joints are located in the palm and up in the mid forearm, and are connected to the finger bones by tendons, which pull on and move the fingers like the strings of a marionette.

The thumb is controlled by 9 individual muscles, which are controlled by all 3 major hand nerves. And moves in such a complex fashion that there are 6 separate descriptive terms just for particular directions of movement of one thumb joint - the basal joint, at the base of the thumb.

(<http://www.eatonhand.com/hw/facts.htm>)

You can imagine what it would be like for the fingers to say to the forearm muscles, "I don't need you." Or the thumb telling the nerves that it can function quite nicely on its own thank you.

- d. And whenever a person begins to separate from a church I challenge you to show me one of them who thrives.
  - (1) None do, unless they are not true Christians.
  - (2) The believer outside of a regular interaction in a church is destined to fail or struggle.

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- (3) Some of you know the troubles you endured looking for a church. You attended many, but never settled for awhile, and it began to catch up to you.

What about you? Are you guilty of this sin that Paul speaks of? Look around and ask yourself if you have thought that you could live without another member here? Perhaps you have ignored that person with less education or less social skills or the other way around.

Or perhaps you are thinking right now that you would never do that. Let me offer each of you a simple test that only requires some thought and honesty. There are those who have a great theology in their head, but a poor theology in their lives. If you have said in your mind “No, I believe that all believers are valuable and necessary for the health of the church.” Then I praise you. But now I ask you this, “How are you showing this in your life?” “How much time are you investing in the various members here?” “Does your life show the theology of your lips?”

3. Paul builds on these points and moves the focus to those people in the church who seem to be less honorable (22-24a).
  - a. His point is simple. There are always parts of our bodies that we spend a lot of time on.
    - (1) Few women put make-up on their Achilles tendons, but all of them need that tendon to move the foot.
    - (2) Few men think about the lining of their stomach, until they get to be my age and discover chronic heartburn.
    - (3) We spend a lot of time on the external parts of our body and see great need legs and arms. But we can live without them.
    - (4) But how often do you think about what is behind the rib cage? Out of sight and out of mind, but there is those organs that are quietly functioning and keeping you alive. Your heart, lungs and liver. All of which are needed for life.
  - b. In the church this is often true as well.
    - (1) You all see the preacher and the teachers. The elders are evident to all. There are those gifted in singing.
    - (2) But every church is kept healthy by the others who often function in relative obscurity.

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- (a) Those with the gift of service, who clean up, prepare rooms, set up tables and chairs.
    - (b) Those with the gift of faith who are given to prayer.
    - (c) Those with the gift of administration who quietly keep things balanced and functioning properly before the government.
    - (d) Those with the gift of giving who sacrificially support the various needs of the church.
  - c. Verse 23-24a shows us that we need to be seeking to give abundant honor to those behind the scenes.
    - (1) We cannot take these people for granted. And we cannot just assume that they will always be there.
    - (2) We also need to understand that though it is easy to give honor to those gifted in obvious ways, they are not the ones who need to be given it.
    - (3) Rather, we need to actively find ways to give honor to those who do such important work but of the type that has no honor attached to it.
  - 4. Let me sum this up with three “nots” regarding spiritual gifts.
    - a. They are not for the pleasure of the user.
    - b. They are not to be held back.
    - c. They are not to be compared.
- B. *The Gifts Show Ministry to One Another (24b-26).*
  - 1. There are those who seem to always want to focus the honor and attention upon the ones gifted in obvious ways. An example is the pastor of a church. Churches begin to wrongly think that they need to keep him happy and pour honor upon him.
    - a. Verse 24b shows that God has actually designed the gifts that seem less important as being more honorable. Just like the lungs and heart are far more honorable than the face that we spend so much time on.

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- b. This means that no one here is lacking in the true sense of the word.
  - (1) Those who have prominence in their giftedness are already given honor.
  - (2) And those God has made to be less prominent have been divinely granted an even greater honor by God.
  - (3) No matter how big your gift is when it comes down to “ability” it is all balanced out by the gracious and sovereign hand of God.
- 2. Verse 25-26 shows this in a different way.
  - a. Paul has beat to death the great importance of every member. He has shown that those who seem the least important are granted greater honor by God.
  - b. So his conclusion is simple, stop all this in-fighting and minister to one another. See each other and critical and live it out in practical ways.
    - (1) There are those of you who have told me that you pray for me throughout the sermon.
    - (2) That is ministry! I need people doing that! And they need me and others to teach them.
    - (3) Turn to Ephesians 6:18-22 to see this in a very clear way.
      - (a) Paul needs their prayers.
      - (b) He needs the service of Tychicus
      - (c) And the church needed Paul’s teaching and the ministry of Tychicus.
  - c. In the same way, just as when your body suffers when a part is sick, so too the church suffers when one of their own is spiritually suffering.
    - (1) We need to learn to reach out to all who are part of MDF. We need to see that their struggles are not their own....they are the church’s struggles.



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- (2) And when we see honor given to one in the church we must all learn to rejoice, for we are intimately connected to one another.
3. I can tell you from experience, I need these people or I can't function.
  - a. I need John Anderson to care for this building. Mike Strickland to care for the grounds. I need Judy to do a myriad of things big and small. Bruce to oversee many ministries and David to lead our music. Matt Miller to oversee the many teachers and helpers for the children and Pam Papenfuss to prepare packages to suffering Christians. Karen Fantl to keep our finances and faithful men and women who give so that we actually have finances.
  - b. Every time a member leaves our church there is loss. At times their thinking was centered upon themselves and not the well-being of the Church.
- C. *The Gifts Have Priorities But Not Preeminence (27-31).*
  1. I want to talk more about these verses than time will allow today.
  2. The reason is simply due to the fact that there are some important questions that must be asked and answered regarding these verses.
    - a. Questions like what does he mean "apostle?" Is there a gift of apostleship? Is this only talking about the 12 apostles?
    - b. What about "Prophets?" What is meant by that term? Is it referring to those who gave prophecies or does it also mean those who are preachers? Are these Old Testament prophets or New Testament prophets, or is there even a difference?
    - c. It appears that he is giving ranks of importance. If this is correct, why would he do this after just talking about how all are important in the church?

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. Paul says some very important things in verse 27 (read).
- B. He looks at that local church in Corinth and says that it is Christ's body.

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1. Notice the importance on the local church. Each local church is a visible expression of the body of Christ. In a sense each local church is a miniature of the one universal Church.
  2. He doesn't say to them that they are, as a group, a part of the one universal body of Christ. No, they, by themselves, as a group, are Christ's body there in Corinth.
  3. And each person in that church is an important member of that body. All are needed and each one is either helping or harming that body by how they use their gifts.
- C. But he having given this brief listing of gifted people in the church he ends it with these rhetorical questions (29-30). The answers are all "no."
1. His point here is most important.
  2. All of them would agree that none of them had all these gifts. Therefore, Paul simply is showing that it is wrong for any of them to think that because they have one or two of these gifts that they are somehow more important than others.
  3. All of these gifts are good and necessary. All of them are given by the Spirit.
  4. Therefore rejoice in the diversity of gifts in the church. Exalt one another in the church because of each person's uniqueness to the life and health of the church.
  5. And lastly, keep these gifts and their various purposes in proper perspective. I say the same to each of you.
- D. Let me end by one last time restating two primary goals of spiritual gifts:
1. They are to produce unity within the church.
  2. They are to bring about edification of the church.

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## Small Group Questions

- How have you discovered the value and necessity of other believers in your life?
- Where are areas that you can invest in the lives of other believers at MDF? Are there things that hinder this that can be changed?