

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 CORINTHIANS 12

One day, a lady in the grocery store bumped into the pastor of the church her family had started to attend.

Betty loved the pastor's church and was so thankful for the impact its members were having on her life. As she complimented the pastor on his wonderful church, she blurted out, "Oh, Pastor Tom, I just love your body."

Oops! Of course, she was referring to "the Body of Christ," but that's not how it was heard by the bystanders. It made for an embarrassing moment.

The NT speaks of the Church metaphorically as "the body of Christ." At His Incarnation, God's Son clothed himself in a human body to touch, and help, and heal.

Today, Jesus carries on through another body, the Church. Just as our spirit and mind interact with our surroundings through our body; likewise the Church is the means by which Jesus interacts with a needy world. We are the hands, feet, and mouth of Jesus!

1 Corinthians 12 teaches us that *the Spirit of Christ* works through *the Body of Christ*. And as His Body, our job is to cooperate with His Spirit. I hope people look at our church and say, "Lord, I just love Your body!"

Chapter 12 is divided into two parts... Verses 1-11 discusses our gifts - verses 12-31 our place. Chapter 12 is all about using our gifts and finding our place.

Verse 1, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant...” The Holy Spirit was active in the church at Corinth. Spiritual gifts were *commonplace*, but they weren't always coupled with *common sense*. There was ignorance in this church over the proper *use* of spiritual gifts. And as a result, the gifts were being *abused* and *misused*.

It's sad, but today there's still much ignorance among Christians over spiritual gifts. God intends for His gifts to unite us. Instead, they sometimes lead to schism.

When it comes to spiritual gifts, folks tend to gravitate toward two extremes: **charismania** or **charisphobia**.

I grew up in a church dominated by **charisphobia**.

The supernatural gifts of the Spirit were explained away as having passed with the apostles. We were erroneously taught that the compilation of the NT made spiritual gifts obsolete. Yet that's not in the Bible.

Nowhere does Scripture suggest that healings, and miracles, and tongues, *and the like* have passed away. Rather, these are gifts every Christian should seek.

Our old church was afraid of the “*charismata*” or spiritual gifts. But I soon found other churches that were dominated by them. This is **charismania**.

It's possible to be so enamored with the *gifts* you neglect the *Giver*. This was the church at Corinth.

The Corinthian believers were thrilled with supernatural displays of God's power, but they failed to apply that power to holy and godly and united living.

Here's where the church needs a balance... We need the power of God's spiritual gifts, but we also need the knowledge to use that power effectively.

Some churches are like a fireplace with no fire. They're empty and cold. There's orthodoxy, but no life... Other churches are a fire without a fireplace. A preoccupation with these gifts burns out of control...

We need the fire in the fireplace. We need *the fire of God's Spirit* but within *the fireplace of God's Word*. We want to see believers warmed - not burned.

It's been said, "As a dove climbs on two wings, likewise the Holy Spirit lifts the church on both the gifts of the Spirit and the graces (i.e. fruits) of the Spirit."

Verse 2, "You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led."

Apparently, the Corinthians were particularly enamored with the vocal gifts - prophecy, tongues, and interpretation. *And for a good reason!*

The Corinthians had lived their whole life serving mute idols - *gods with no voice*. They served chunks of stone or wood that were unable to speak - dumb gods.

Now they had embraced an audible God. The Christian God had a voice. The Holy Spirit spoke to them and through them. *No wonder they got carried away?*

Yet Paul warns, "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." Every time you hear a preacher say, "Thus saith the Lord"

don't assume what comes next is from the Lord. It may or may not be.

It reminds me of the fisherman who cut a hole in the ice. He baited his hook and was about to drop his bait when he heard a voice, “No fish are under this ice.”

He moved a few feet away and cut another hole. Again he was about to lower his hook when he heard the voice again, “There are no fish under this ice.”

He looked up to heaven and shouted, “Lord, is that you?” The voice spoke, “No, it's the ice rink manager.”

We need to test the voices to make sure they're from God. Do they harmonize with God's Word - *both the written Word, the Bible, and the living Word, Jesus?*

This is why Paul says no one speaking by the Spirit will ever speak ill of Jesus. The Holy Spirit moves upon a person's heart to submit to the Lordship of Jesus, and proclaim their allegiance - not deny His authority.

When we study spiritual gifts remember miracles can be counterfeited. The pagan priests in Egypt were able to duplicate Moses' miracles... up to a point...

The end-times Antichrist will work “lying wonders...” Mormons claim to speak in tongues... The gifts of the Holy Spirit build up the Body of Christ - they're good - that's why Satan does his best to copy them.

Verse 4, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who

works all in all." In my opinion, in this verse, Paul categorizes three types of spiritual gifts...

The first he calls **"gifts"** - which are the **motivations of the Spirit** listed in Romans 12. They're basic motivations for service that the Spirit births in us at conversion. They color and shape our life and ministry.

The second type of spiritual gift he calls **"ministries."** These are **men or ministers** supernaturally called individuals who serve the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4 lists **"apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher."**

The third type of spiritual gift is called **"activities."** The Greek term is **"energeo"** or **"energies."** Verse 7 refers to these gifts as **"manifestations of the Spirit."** These are spontaneous allocations of spiritual ability.

Paul lists nine **"activities"** in verses 7-10... **"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one..."**

Realize spiritual gifts are not *natural abilities that we're born with* - nor are they *learned skills, we cultivate through practice*. These gifts are evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in and through my life.

Once an old lumberjack was told he needed to purchase a chainsaw. He was told, **"You'll chop four times more wood with a chainsaw than with an ax."**

But after several outings with his new chainsaw, the lumberjack was chopping less wood. In frustration, he returned it to the hardware store. The clerk was surprised. *He cranked the saw to troubleshoot the problem.* As soon as he

did, the lumberjack had a strange look... He asked the clerk, "*what's that noise?*"

Spiritual manifestations and gifts are like power tools.

The Holy Spirit revs up supernatural, spiritual capacities that enable us to *do more* and *do better* for God. These spiritual gifts are available to believers.

And notice their outcome... Paul says they're "**for the profit of all...**" When a Christian receives a spiritual gift, it's not to lift him up, but it's to benefit the whole body.

This is vital. As we study spiritual gifts, know why God gives them!... For *the pride of a few*? No! For *the promotion of the special*? No! Paul is emphatic. Spiritual gifts are given by God for "**the profit of all!**"

In verses 8-11, Paul lists nine manifestations of the Holy Spirit. He organizes them in three sets of three...

Gifts of wisdom: the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and the discerning of spirits... **Gifts of wonder:** faith, healings, and miracles... and **Gifts of worship:** prophecy, tongues, and interpretation...

And the list of gifts begins in verse 8... "**For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit...**"

Knowledge is *information*. Wisdom is *application*. And we need both! **A word of wisdom or knowledge** is just that - a word - not a whole book, just a bit or portion. Suddenly, in a perplexing situation, the Lord gives you a piece of the puzzle. Perhaps, it's not all the information you would like, but it's

enough to make sense of your situation and know what course to take.

“A word” is like a flash of genius. Bible teacher, Harold Horton, describes these words of wisdom and knowledge as “divinely granted flashes of revelation.” It’s an insight that rolls across the screen of your mind. It’s information you could’ve never known apart from God’s Spirit.

Verse 9, “to another faith by the same Spirit...”

It’s been said, “Nobody ever crosses a canyon in two steps. At times you need to take a leap of faith.”

And *the gift of faith* is that leap.

It’s a special faith given to you by the Holy Spirit that enables you to rise up under duress and be bold for God. This is lion’s den faith - this is giant-slaying faith - or water-walking faith - or mountain-moving faith!

“To another gifts of healings by the same Spirit...”

Realize that ultimately, God will heal all our sickness. When we arrive in heaven, we’ll receive perfect health.

On earth, there are times when God doesn’t heal. *We all die at some point!*... Most commonly, when God does heal, it’s through natural processes. He’s designed our bodies with amazing rejuvenating capacities... God also heals medicinally - he uses doctors. The marvels of modern medicine are no less a miracle from God...

But on occasion, God also heals supernaturally...

There is a gift of healing. God can and does use individuals within the church to lay hands on the sick and pray for their recovery. *We've seen these miracles.*

I'll never forget one lady suffering from serious heart disease and facing major surgery. She asked if we'd come by her house and pray for her, which we did.

The next day she called the church. After her pre-op exam, her doctor told her the problem was gone. He canceled her surgery. *We praised the Lord! Is there a doctor in the house? Yes, His name is Jesus!*

And notice the double plural here... It's the "gifts of healings." Apparently, there're different types of "healings" - physical, and mental, and emotional...

There's also different "gifts" - or ways of mediating God's healing. Certainly, through intercessory prayer or through physical touch like the laying on of hands.

Verse 10 continues the list. "To another the working of miracles..." If you believe Genesis 1:1, "God created the heavens and the earth..." then you should be able to believe in miracles. If God created space, time, and matter, and the laws governing nature, then He can suspend or override those laws when He desires!

I never validated the story, but I once heard Pastor Chuck tell of a girl who didn't have gas money to get to church. She really wanted to come so she took the garden hose, filled up her tank with water, and asked God to turn the water into gasoline. When she finished praying, she drove her car to

Calvary Chapel. God responded to her simple faith. *Did that actually happen? I don't know. **But I believe it could have!***

Billy Graham once wrote, "As we approach the end of the age, I believe we will see a dramatic recurrence of signs and wonders which will demonstrate the power of God to a skeptical world. Just as the powers of Satan are being unleashed with greater intensity, so I believe God will allow signs and wonders to be performed." We all should be open to the miraculous!

"To another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues..." In Chapter 14, we'll discuss *prophecy, tongues,* and *interpretation* in-depth.

Here, Paul also mentions, "*discerning of spirits.*"

We teach our kids to read - to *recognize and understand words, sentences, and paragraphs.* But for kids to survive in this crazy world of ours, they also have to be able to *read between the lines.* Not everyone is honest and straightforward. Kids need discernment that goes beyond what is simply seen.

This is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: "*discerning of spirits.*" A false prophet comes as "a wolf in sheep's clothing." Satan appears as an "angel of light." The gift of discernment enables us to see behind the disguise.

Verse 11, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." You or I don't get to pick the gift we want. You can't say, "*Oh, I'd*

like healing... How cool would it be to simply touch and heal folks.” It doesn't work that way.

It's God's Spirit that chooses what gifts to distribute to each person. Spiritual gifts are ours to use, but they remain God's gifts. He is the power behind them.

Thus, when we exercise them we need to rely on the Spirit's direction. The Spirit is sovereign over His gifts.

In fact, the Greek word translated "*spiritual gifts*" back in verse 1 of Chapter 12 is "*pneumatikos*," which means, "*things belonging to the Spirit.*"

This is why I don't believe a spiritual gift is something that you or I carry around in our back pocket and whip it out whenever we want to show it off... The gifts of the Spirit don't work "*on demand*"... They are God's gifts...

They are administered by the sovereign Holy Spirit.

Now that Paul has introduced us to the gifts, from here on, he describes how they operate in church life.

How they exist for "*the profit of all.*" *We need to know and use our gift, but we also need to find our place.*

Verse 12, "*For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.*"

If you're an adult of average size, here's what you accomplish every 24 hours: "Your heart beats 103,689 times - your blood travels 168,000,000 miles - you breathe 23,040 times - you inhale 438 cubic feet of air - you eat 3.5 pounds of food (more or less) - you drink 2.9 quarts of liquid - you lose

7/8 pound of waste - you speak 4,800 words - you move 750 muscles - your nails grow .000046 inches - your hair grows .017 inches - and you use 7,000,000 brain cells."

No wonder you feel exhausted at the end of the day!

Your body is a miracle of engineering. It consists of several trillion cells and ten major organs working in precise synchronization with one another.

The human body is an amazing blend of *unity and diversity* and so is the Body of Christ. We all are many members, but we should function as one body.

Look at the people in this room - *we're different folks, from divergent backgrounds with varied gifts and diverse callings* - yet God puts us together in one Body.

And He wants us to function and work in harmony.

In the next 14 verses, from 14 to 27, Paul describes the interconnectedness of the Body of Christ.

And realize, this emphasis - the Church as an integrated whole - was revolutionary to the ancients.

When you visit the ruins of Corinth, a must-see is the Archaeological Museum. There's an exhibit of terra-cotta, or clay-baked figurines, fashioned as body parts.

In the display cases, you find legs, hands, eyes, ears, female breasts, even genitalia, and internal organs...

The city of Corinth had a Temple dedicated to Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. So when a person became ill, they made a replica of the diseased or broken body part and offered it as a sacrifice to Asclepius in hopes of healing.

Thousands of such body parts have been found in the ruins of the ancient city.

This is strange to us, but it was in keeping with the notions of healing in the ancient world. Body parts were considered isolated - separated from each other.

If an organ or appendage was diseased, the ailment was assumed to be confined to that particular part.

Few people understood the inter-connectedness of the human body. Pagans isolated the body's members, instead of viewing the body's health holistically.

In contrast, Paul believed in a Creator, a Designer, who's His imprint on all that He touches - *even our human body*. God made us one body with multiple connected members. And the health of our bodies is determined by the cooperation of its members. He built our bodies in a way that illustrates the Body of Christ.

Verse 13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

We all have a common spiritual starting point. Every believer is born into God's family by the same Spirit.

Here's where we need to clear up some confusion...

Non-Pentecostals often point out from verse 13 that Paul uses Spirit-baptism synonymously with Christian conversion - *and they're right*. When we're saved, we are baptized or initiated into the body of Christ... But then they conclude that

in the NT, Spirit-baptism **always** refers to conversion - *which it doesn't*.

Realize, Non-Pentecostals believe you receive everything relating to the Spirit at conversion - *there's no empowerment subsequent to salvation* - thus, they insist you're baptized with the Spirit at conversion.

They don't believe in a **second blessing**. But this is an error based on a misunderstanding of verse 13...

The term "**baptized**" is like the English term "**watch**." It's a word with multiple meanings. A person can *wear a watch*, or he can *stand watch*, or *can be watchful*...

Likewise, the word "**baptism**" has multiple meanings. It can mean "*to initiate or make part of*" - like what we say of a rookie quarterback, taking his first sack, "*Well, he got his baptism.*" But the word "**baptize**" can also mean "*to engulf, or immerse*" - as in water baptism.

Now whenever **Paul** uses the term "**baptism**" it refers to *conversion*. Romans 6 says by faith we are baptized into Christ. We're united spiritually into the life of Jesus. I now share in all that He is and has accomplished.

But when **John** or **Luke** or **Jesus** or **Peter** use the term "**baptism**," it speaks of *immersion*, **not conversion**.

In Acts, Luke describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on people who were already believers, with the phrases "*filled with the Spirit*" or "*baptized in the Spirit*."

Thus, throughout the NT, the same word "**baptize**" is used to denote two separate experiences. **There is an initiation into**

Christ that's called *baptism*. But there's also a *saturation with Christ* that's also called *baptism*.

Thus, there is spiritual empowerment available to Christians after they believe. The Holy Spirit wants to fill us up. Don't let anyone rob you of this baptism.

But here, Paul is speaking of our initiation into Christ. When I convert to Jesus, I'm made part of His Body.

Spiritual baptism is like a merger.

A smaller company gets gobbled up by a larger corporation. The smaller outfit still does business - but now it's under new leadership with a new mission and new resources and new partners. We're no longer a "*mom and pop*." We're now part of Christ's church!

Verse 14, *For, in fact, the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?"*

One of the hindrances to harmony in the church is jealousy. We can refuse to accept our place. If we can't play the position we might want; we take our bat and ball and head home. We refuse to submit our individual desires and ambitions for the greater good.

This is why at church you have to leave your agenda at the door. Church is not about *any one of us individually*, it's about *the whole of us*. Don't expect to serve on your terms. The Spirit dictates our calling.

It's like your foot getting tired of its role. It grumbles, *"Man, it's hot and smelly in this sock. Dr. Shoals is my only friend. I have to bear the ever-increasing weight of everyone else in the Body! I'm tired of being treated like a heel. My sole is weary. I'm the one who's always toeing the line. I keep putting my best foot forward and nobody ever notices me. I've had enough, I'm putting my foot down!... People even think I'm corny!"*

Or imagine your ear complaining, *"I'm tired of getting waxed. If someone pierces me one more time, I'm outta ear!"* *What if the members of your body got tired of playing their role, and competed with each other?*

You'd become spastic. You wouldn't accomplish much. And the same would happen to the Body of Christ. If all of its members had their own agenda and refused to cooperate with one another, the Body of Christ would be uncoordinated and crippled.

Verse 17, *"If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased."* If you told your Little League team everyone could play whatever position they wanted, you would end up with ten pitchers and maybe a shortstop.

Everybody wants the glamor positions. But you'd have a lousy team. *The same is true with the church.*

Here Paul paints a grotesque image - what if the whole body were an eye! A big eyeball rolling around. *We'd all be blue!*

We could see, but with no feet or hands - *we couldn't go anywhere or do anything.*

And this is what becomes of many churches - they turn into one big *"I" - "I want this" or "I deserve that."*

Some churches suffer from *I-strain!* We need to be the Body - led by the Holy Spirit - not our own ego.

Paul adds in verse 19, *"And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body."*

Remember the Body of Christ is a blend of *unity and diversity* - to stress one above the other is a mistake.

We need a healthy balance of both.

On the one hand, *to over-stress our unity robs us of our diversity...* Several years ago I read of a major scientific breakthrough in Scotland. For the first time, scientists cloned a sheep. They named her Dolly.

I remember reading that and thinking, *"That's no big deal, the church has been cloning sheep for centuries."*

Often the church strips Christians of their individuality in the name of discipleship. We conform them - not into the image of Christ, but into our image.

Here's a poem, *"Be what I want - no more, no less - because I am right and no one else. Think what I think, do only what I do, then and only then, can I fellowship with you."*

That's the attitude we have to avoid.

Let's *not over-stress our unity*, but neither should we *over-stress our diversity*, and thus hinder our unity.

At times, the health of the Body needs me to *express my individuality*, but at other times our corporate health is best served by me *suppressing my individuality*.

There're Christians who never settle in and become part of a church because they're unwilling to swap their own personal agenda for the goals of the group. *They insist on their own thing, and miss out on a God thing!*

Unity and diversity need to be balanced with maturity!

Remember the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for *"the profit of all."* This should be our motivation.

Verse 21 says it best, *"And 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."* Certainly, we all have a unique place in the Body. We all need each other!

One day, the ship's *captain* and *chief engineer* were arguing over who's job was most vital. They decided to swap places to prove their point. The engineer came to the bridge. The captain went to the engine room.

An hour later, the captain appeared on deck covered with oil and grease and waving a monkey wrench. He shouted to the engineer, *"Chief, you need to get down there. I can't make her go!..."* The engineer shouted back, *"Of course you can't because I just ran her aground."* *Both men realized they needed each other!*

You have gifts that can bless and benefit me, and I, in turn, have gifts that can bless and benefit you - we too, need to recognize that we need each other!

At the close of WW2, entertainer Jimmy Durante was invited by Ed Sullivan to a veteran's hospital to cheer up some wounded soldiers. Durante had a radio show scheduled that night, but he said he would try to squeeze in one short routine. Sullivan was shocked when that short routine turned into a couple of hours.

Later, Sullivan asked Jimmy why he had stayed...

Durante pointed to two soldiers sitting side-by-side on the front row. Both men had lost an arm in the war, and they did they're clapping with their two remaining hands. It so moved Durante he couldn't leave. And this is what moves the Spirit of God to move upon us.

Spiritually speaking, we are all disabled in some way. Where I'm weak you can make me strong, and where you're weak I can be strong for you. God wants us to see we're better for Him together than we are apart!

Did you hear about the big controversy at the *First Church of the Hand Tools*? It was a real donny-brook.

Some of the members complained about Brother Hammer. "You're too forceful. You're always pounding home your points and nailing the rest of us."

Hammer pointed to Brother Screwdriver, "Hey, I'm no worse than him. He's always going around in circles."

This angered the Screwdriver, "What about Brother Plane, all his work is on the surface, he has no depth."

Brother Plane shouted at Brother Tape Measure, "You're so judgmental. You're always measuring people, sizing them up. You always think you're right."

Brother Tape Measure then turned and snapped angrily at his Brother Sandpaper, "Well, look at him. He's so rough and gritty, he's always rubbing people the wrong way. Why don't you all go back into the box!"

That's when the Master Carpenter arrived. Jesus put on His carpenter's apron and went to work building a pulpit from which the Word of God could be preached.

He used the hammer, the screwdriver, the plane, the tape measure, the sandpaper, and all the other tools, each in the *right way*, and at just the *right time*.

Finally, Brother Saw saw *it!* He rose up and informed the others, "Brothers, we're all tools of equal importance in the hands of the Lord." *And so are we!*

Verse 22, "No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor..."

For example... There's a valve leading into your stomach that normally closes keeping the harmful acids in your stomach where they belong... But when that valve weakens, those acids can float back up into your esophagus. The result is called "esophageal reflux," or in layman's terms, "*major league heartburn!*"

And speaking from experience, this is no laughing matter! It amazes me that the weakening of one tiny piece of human flesh can create such intense pain.

It's a reminder that every member of our body plays a pivotal role. You may be a tiny valve, but if you fail to do your part correctly the whole body is affected.

There are parts of the Body of Christ that like that stomach valve *serve* but are never *seen*. No one thinks of the unseen members until there's a problem.

If a nursery worker fails to show up, or the sound man sleeps in, or the cleaners miss a week - suddenly everyone realizes how vital their role happens to be.

Some might say, *I have the glamor job* - I get to teach God's Word from week to week - but if everyone else didn't do their job, I'd never be able to do mine.

Verse 23 teaches us to make sure the people behind the scenes don't have to breakdown to be appreciated. The Church should go out of its way to give honor to those members who might end up getting overlook.

Verse 23 ends, **“And our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need.”** The service the pastor performs is conspicuous.

But not so for the folks who serve behind the scenes. A pastor gets plenty of recognition. The church's shows of appreciation should be for unseen servants.

“But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” Division is less likely if honor is divided equally among all its members.

Verse 26, “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” If I accidentally pound my thumb with a hammer, it won’t just cause a swollen thumb - my entire body will throb. When one member of the body hurts; then the whole body is in pain.

Just as the human body is interconnected, so is the Body of Christ. It’s been said, “Real fellowship doubles our joys and divides our grief.” The church ought to be either *praying for each other* or *rejoicing with each other*. We need to share with each other both our pains and our joys. It’s part of Christians living side-by-side.

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.” Verses 8-11 provided us a list of spiritual gifts. Here Paul mentions two additional gifts - “helps” and “administrations.”

The gift of “helps” is a supernatural knack for assisting someone without making them feel like you're taking over. I've had people help me in a way that only highlighted *their competencies* and *my inadequacies*.

A person with this spiritual gift can assist someone else, in a way that brings out the best in that person.

And the gift of “administrations” belongs to the person who can help organize and manage ministry.

Business mogul Andrew Carnegie use to brag, “Take away our factories, our trade, our avenues of transportation, our

money - leave us with nothing but our organization and in four years we could reestablish ourselves.” His greatest resource was his organization.

Spirit-inspired organization is also a powerful and needed tool in the Body of Christ. Actually, seldom does a church need *more* organization, but what every church needs is *better* organization. It’s been said, “We need men and women with the courage to dream, the ability to organize, and the faith to execute.”

Verse 29, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Paul is emphasizing the diversity within the Body. We all have different gifts and callings.

I have no doubt the most frustrating experience in the world is trying to be something you're not. Feel forced to function in someone else's calling, or try to mimic their gift, and you're destined for misery.

We need to find *our* place and use *our* gifts. When we do God will bless us in ways we never dreamed.

But notice here, Paul's last two rhetorical questions: “Do all speak with tongues?” and “Do all interpret?”

The obvious answer to both questions is the same as it is to the previous five questions, “No.” This is why I disagree with Pentecostals who believe that everyone filled or baptized with the Spirit will speak in tongues.

Tongues is a wonderful way to *praise God* and *pray to God*. (We’ll talk about it in Chapter 14). And every believer in Jesus

should be open to speaking in tongues - but Paul is crystal clear, not everyone will!

In some Charismatic and Pentecostal circles, the gift of tongues is worn like a badge of honor - it separates the spiritual *haves* from the *have-nots*. If you don't speak in tongues, you're treated as spiritually inferior.

This is sad! We're going to learn later in the letter that the gift of tongues is actually the least of the gifts.

Paul concludes Chapter 12, "But earnestly desire the best gifts." Of course, this begs the question, "What are the best gifts?" I believe the best spiritual gift is whatever it is you happen to need at that point in time.

If I'm about to make a huge decision, then the best gift is a word of knowledge or wisdom... If I'm interacting with a person I don't know, it could be the gift of discernment... If I'm afraid, I need a gift of faith... If I'm sick, the best gift would be gifts of healings.

Yet there's one commodity more important than even the best gifts. Paul concludes, "And yet I show you a more excellent way..." Which leads us to Chapter 13...

For sandwiched between these two great chapters on the life in the Body of Christ and spiritual gifts is "The Love Chapter" - for the greatest gift of all is love!

Here's the surest way to know you've been filled with the Holy Spirit! You can speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if you have not love, you're just a clanging cymbal... Next week we'll start with love...