

1 Corinthians Part Two

Lesson #13, Chapter 12:12-31

Please read Chapter 12 again as you prepare to study the rest of the chapter. Remember that the Lord is One who gives insight into His Word.

1. Summarize the contents of verses 1-11.
2. What illustration is used to teach a spiritual principle in verse 12? The NAS, ESV, AND NKJV all use the word *members* in these verses. What does it mean as it's used here?
3. What is the connection between Paul's example of the *body/members* and *Christ*? See verses 12-13.
4. Why is verse 14 essential to understand when it comes to this discussion about spiritual gifts?
5. In verses 15-16 Paul uses his *body/members* illustration to great effect. What attitude is he trying to correct with this method?
6. Think of two spiritual gifts and insert them in verses 15-17 instead of "body" or the parts mentioned. What point does Paul desire to make in these verses? And how does our little substitution exercise bring his point into focus?
7. Just in case anyone is still inclined toward discontentment, what do we learn in verse 18?

8. How should a proper understanding of verse 18 help us function efficiently, properly, and with joy in the body of Christ? See also Is. 29:16; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 2:10.

9. Explain the logic of verse 19 when applied to the distribution of spiritual gifts in the body.

10. The illustration of the body and its many members is a perfect one in explaining the variety of gifts and talents within the church, the one body of Christ. What principle do we glean about our relationship to one another in verse 21?

11. How can we cultivate that sense of dependence and appreciation for the other members of Christ?

12. What surprising spiritual principle(s) do we learn about in verses 22-25?

13. Why don't the "honorable" members have need of honor?

14. What kinds of gifts might be considered "weaker" or "less honorable"? See Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:11.

15. What kinds of gifts might be considered "honorable"? See verses 28-30.

16. Why did the Corinthian church need to be reminded *again* of these important truths? See 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-9; 12:1, 4-7, 11.

17. What's the purpose of the distribution of gifts within the body according to verse 25?

18. What do the Scriptures have to say about showing partiality? See Lev. 19:15; Prov. 18:5; Rom. 2:11; 1 Tim. 5:21; James 2:1-9.

19. What are some specific ways to love without partiality according to verse 26? See also Rom. 12:9-16; 15:5-6; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 6:2-4; Heb. 13:1-3.

20. What is Paul trying to get across to the Corinthians in verses 27-30?

21. The gifts listed in verses 28-30 are the more “honorable” gifts giving us insight into the problem plaguing the church. What did the Corinthians’ desire? Verse 31 gives us a clue.

22. In his commentary, John MacArthur states, “Because *zeloō* (*earnestly desire*) usually has the negative connotation of coveting jealously or enviously (but contrast 2 Cor. 11:2), and because the Greek indicative and imperative forms are identical, the first half of the verse could be translated, “But you earnestly desire the greater gifts.” That rendering seems much more appropriate to the context, both of what precedes and of what follows. It certainly is consistent with the tone of the letter and the sin of the Corinthians. Because they clearly prized the showier gifts, the seemingly greater gifts, it would seem foolish of Paul to command them to do what

they already were eagerly doing.”¹ This alternate rendering² of verse 31 seems to fit the context better, *therefore, what are the greater gifts?* See verses 27-30.

- a. Is the list of desired gifts in verses 27-30 the sum total of the gifts of the Holy Spirit? See Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:9-11.

 - b. Why would the Corinthians crave those gifts? See verses 22-25.

 - c. The last half of verse 31 fills us with anticipation. What does Paul intend to tackle next according to verse 31?
23. What specific challenges to your thinking or encouragements have you gleaned from Chapter 12?

¹ John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), pg. 325.

² “The translation of earnestly desire presents a problem: Should it be translated as the NKJV does, as an imperative, or as an indicative, a statement of fact: “You are desiring the sensational gifts”? The Greek word *zeloo*, normally a negative term, allows either. The imperative is chosen by most interpreters, but the indicative is possible and would fit with the correction at which chs. 12—14 aim. In contrast to such unprofitable desire, Paul directs them to a more excellent way in ch. 13, the way of exercising any and all gifts only in love.” Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), 1 Co 12:31.

“Brethren, you sometimes think there are some belonging to the Church whom we could well spare; but there is not one superfluous member in the whole body. If they be truly united to Christ, they have all their offices, all their places.” ~Charles Spurgeon³

“How blessed the Christian church, if all the members did their duty! Instead of coveting the highest stations, or the most splendid gifts, let us leave the appointment of his instruments to God, and those in whom He works by His providence. Remember, those will not be approved hereafter who seek the chief places, but those who are most faithful to the trust placed in them, and most diligent in their Master’s work.” ~Matthew Henry⁴

³ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Sermons: Volume 44*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Spurgeon’s Sermons (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998).

⁴ Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1 Co 12:27.