

First Corinthians 12

Introduction:

1. This chapter begins a new topic that will cover three chapters, 12-14. It is the topic of spiritual gifts and church ministry.
2. His primary lesson in this chapter, the one you want to keep before you, was to promote unity in spite of differing gifts.
3. Those with superior gifts were lording it over those with inferior ones; those with inferior ones felt useless and despised.
4. Corinth was divisive and schismatic on many subjects; Paul used this chapter to unite them in the use of spiritual gifts.
5. Nowhere is church growth in numbers made important in Scripture, but church growth in unity and charity is exalted.

Outline of Chapter 12:

1. Introduction to spiritual gifts (1-3)
2. All gifts are from one Spirit (4-11)
3. The body shows the church (12-27)
4. The body has different gifts (28-30)
5. Transition to importance of charity (31)

12:1 **Paul moved to instruct Corinth about spiritual gifts, where the church had many problems.**

- A. There are two things to know about this church and gifts to put this chapter in sharp focus.
 1. This church had more spiritual gifts than any other church of the New Testament (1:4-8).
 2. This carnal church was full of contentions and divisions about several matters (1:11; 3:3).
 3. Those with great gifts looked down on others; those with lesser felt despised and useless.
- B. As we will discover in these three chapters (12-14), they were ignorant of godly use of gifts.
 1. They were divided and schismatic over gifts, though one Spirit had given all gifts (12).
 2. They had totally missed the overriding importance of charity in the use of all gifts (13).
 3. They were using the gifts contrary to God's intentions and civil rules of decorum (14).
- C. Spiritual gifts under consideration here are abilities given by the Holy Spirit to do supernatural things for convincing unbelievers or for instructing or serving the church.
- D. It is important for us living in the 21st Century to not be ignorant of spiritual gifts either.
 1. The last 100 years brought the explosive growth of the so-called Charismatic Movement.
 2. The misuse of spiritual gifts and offices is rampant among Charismatics and Pentecostals.
 3. In dealing with anyone pretending to be under the influence of the Spirit of God, we want certain criteria by which to judge their spirituality and/or their exercise of a so-called gift.
 4. Every child of God should be able to condemn today's abuses and explain these chapters.

12:2 **Paul reminded the Corinthians that before conversion they had been very foolish idolaters.**

- A. In order to appreciate their present advantages, it was good to remind them of past delusions.
 1. Paul described them as having been Gentiles in the past, for he spoke of their religion.
 2. They were not religious experts by any stretch, for they had adored silent gods of stone.
- B. While idols are certainly dumb intellectually, Paul is here describing their inability to speak.
 1. Pagan priests gave credit to the idol for the oracles they received; but the idol was dumb.
 2. Christianity's great superiority gave spiritual utterance to many of the Corinthian saints.
- C. The Corinthians had been saved from a very benighted form of religion – pagan idolatry.
 1. They did not merely go through motions with idolatry – they were passionately zealous.
 2. They did not know how to truly think for themselves – they were led by false teachers.
- D. There were two great changes in their condition and religion – God's Spirit and Jesus Christ.

12:3 **Christianity is based on two important factors – the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

- A. The certain identifying measure of the Holy Spirit is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. No man can speak disrespectfully about the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit of God.
 2. No man can speak anything sincerely true about Jesus Christ without the Holy Spirit.

3. The Holy Spirit's role in redemption is to testify of Jesus Christ (John 15:26; 16:14).
 4. The spirit in any man is to be tried by the apostles' doctrine in the Scriptures (I Jn 4:1-6).
 5. We must remember there is another spirit that is not the Holy Spirit (II Co 11:3-4,13-15).
 6. Both the Gentile idolaters and the Jewish worshippers all thought Jesus was cursed!
- B. If you see, understand, and truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, it is by the Spirit (John 3:3).
- C. There is more than one way to say Jesus Christ is Lord. Do you know the grave difference?
1. There are many professors of His name, miracles, and doctrine; but Jesus knows they are mere belly worshippers (John 6:36; 8:31; Phil 3:18-19; James 2:19; I John 2:4).
 2. He will tell these hypocrites using His name and calling Him Lord that He never knew them, and then He will cast them into eternal torment in the lake of fire (Matt 7:22-23).
 3. Then there are those who prove they know Him by bearing fruit (John 8:31; II Pet 1:10).
 4. The devils knew and owned Jesus Christ as their Lord, but not with affection (Luk 4:34).
- D. This is a very important verse, even beyond the subject at hand of spiritual gifts at Corinth.

12:4 **All their different gifts, which truly were many, were from but one Holy Spirit of God.**

- A. This short and simple verse begins Paul's attack on their divisions over their spiritual gifts.
- B. Paul admitted there were many different spiritual gifts, but one Spirit gave all to the church.
- C. When you have diversity from one Source, then the diverse gifts should be most cooperative.
- D. No matter what supernatural gift they had received from God, it came from one Holy Spirit.
- E. Scripture is unified by one Author (II Pet 1:20-21), so the church is unified by one Spirit.
- F. This is a basic rule about spiritual gifts; they are all given by One Spirit for coordination; therefore, there was no reason for the divisions, envy, and arrogance in the church at Corinth.

12:5 **All their different administrations, which were many, were from one Lord Jesus Christ.**

- A. An administration must pertain to a leadership role in the ministry of the church at Corinth.
 1. An administrator is one who manages or rules; an administration is the office of doing so.
 2. When we get a new president and cabinet, we still refer to it as a new administration.
- B. There were different levels of ministration, which Paul will rank within this chapter (12:28).
- C. But all these different ministerial roles were given by the authority of one Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. It was the Lord Jesus, taking a long journey, Who gave administrative roles (Mk 13:34).
 2. It was the Lord Jesus, Who both received and gave gifts to men (Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8-11).
- D. Offices both high and low in the church should respect one another and work together well.

12:6 **All their different operations, which were also many, were coordinated by one God over all.**

- A. What is an operation? It is the exercise or specific use of a supernatural gift as to its nature, setting, timing, purpose, results, etc.
- B. A man with the **gift** of miracles might heal, drink poison, or handle snakes. These are different **operations** of the same gift, which men in different **administrations** might have.
- C. A man with the **gift** of wisdom might answer an enemy, correct a church practice, or explain an Old Testament passage. These are different **operations** of the same gift, which men in different **administrations** might have.
- D. Regardless of many varied operations of the gifts, it was one sovereign God controlling all.
- E. There was no good reason to be puffed or be cast down by God's use of different operations.

12:7 **The Holy Spirit's gifts, administrations, and operations were for the profit of the church.**

- A. The manifestation of the Spirit is the evidence of the Holy Spirit – the gifts just described.
- B. This is another basic rule about spiritual gifts – they are given for the profit of the church.
- C. **Withal.** Along with the rest; in addition; besides; moreover; likewise; as well.
- D. Spiritual gifts were not for personal advancement or privilege, but for overall church profit.

- 12:8 **The same Holy Spirit gave gifts to men of the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge.**
- A. There is emphasis again on one Spirit giving both gifts, for men to cooperate in their use.
 - B. Paul began three verses to drive home by repetition that all gifts came from one Spirit.
 - C. Frustration with the close definitions of these words should be no greater than in Proverbs.
 - D. Wisdom is the power of right judgment; knowledge is possessing the correct information.
 - E. This was not ordinary wisdom by study, but a special spiritual gift of it when needed (13:2).
 - 1. Moses was the first servant of God that was given the word of wisdom (Exodus 4:10-12).
 - 2. Solomon was given a great gift of wisdom and knowledge, but it was not the word of wisdom, in which a man would be given an answer for a specific case (I Kgs 4:29-34).
 - 3. The apostles were gifted in the wisdom of Christ and redemption (Col 1:28; II Pet 3:15).
 - 4. Paul had great knowledge of God's mystery in Christ for the Gentiles (Eph 3:1-12).
 - 5. The Holy Spirit might give the word of wisdom to settle a difficult church controversy.
 - 6. James used wisdom to summarize and conclude the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:31-21).
 - 7. The apostles were told not to study in preparation for a public trial (Matthew 10:17-20).
 - 8. Stephen had the gift of wisdom to the extent no man could resist him (Acts 6:8-10).
 - 9. This was not the permanent possession of wisdom, but as is stated, a word of wisdom.
 - 10. The wisdom would come as a temporary solution to a need for explication (14:30).
 - 11. It was a limited and partial gift, not revealing all that was needed by itself (13:9).
 - F. This was not ordinary knowledge by study, but a special spiritual gift of it as needed (13:2,8).
 - 1. The Spirit might give a word of knowledge to explain an O.T. text or give a prophecy.
 - 2. The prophets were particularly gifted in the knowledge of Christ and Scripture (14:30).
 - 3. The inspiration of Scripture occurred by a great gift of knowledge (II Peter 1:21).
 - 4. There were prophets that had special knowledge of the future (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11).
 - G. These gifts were given to profit the church, to solve controversies or supply knowledge.
- 12:9 **The same Holy Spirit also gave the gifts of faith and healing for the profit of the church.**
- A. This is not ordinary faith, but exceptional faith, as in great belief in God for a needed miracle.
 - B. The gift of healing was the ability to supernaturally cure a person from a sickness or disease.
 - C. The Spirit does not waste words – we should note the double use of “same” to teach unity.
- 12:10 **The same Spirit gave gifts of miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation.**
- A. The gift of miracles included exorcism, drinking poison, and holding snakes (Mk 16:17-18).
 - B. The gift of prophecy was the ability to foretell the future and/or reveal God's will publicly.
 - C. The discernment of spirits was the knowledge of a person's heart relationship with God.
 - D. The gift of tongues was the ability to speak in a foreign language you had never studied.
 - E. The gift of interpretation was ability to interpret the tongues of yourself or another person.
 - F. These nine gifts have all passed away, as they belonged solely to the time of reformation.
- 12:11 **Every spiritual gift of every sort was given and overseen by the singular Holy Spirit of God.**
- A. This chapter (12) corrects the divisions in Corinth, so there is much said of unity in the Spirit.
 - B. To step out of line with your gift, either in superiority or shame, was to oppose the Spirit.
 - C. These nine gifts have all passed away, as they belonged solely to the time of reformation.
- 12:12 **The human body presents a perfect picture of how a local church of Christ should function.**
- A. Paul here begins an extensive comparison of the human body to members of a local church.
 - 1. This verse and those following must be understood of a human body, and then applied.
 - 2. A single physical body has many members; yet the many members form only one body.
 - B. The entire lesson of this verse and those following (12:12-27) is the unity of the many in one.

- C. “So also is Christ” is not to be understood of Jesus Christ physically, personally, or divinely; but it is rather to be understood of the body of Christ, the local church at Corinth (12:27).

12:13 **The formation of a church is the work of the Spirit putting all the members into one body.**

- A. What forms various members into one spiritual body to be used by the Spirit (12:12,14)?
1. A spirit in man makes him a living soul and animates his bodily members (James 2:26).
 2. A church is more than an organization: it is a spiritual organism with life from the Spirit.
 3. All the members of a church are united together spiritually by the Holy Spirit of God.
 4. God dwells in a local church by the Presence of the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:22; I Tim 3:15).
 5. The Spirit takes spiritual children and makes them living stones in His temple (I Pet 2:5).
 6. In the spiritual union in a church there is no Jew, Greek, bond, or free (Galatians 3:28).
- B. The body here is obviously the local church, for it is all that is mentioned before and after.
1. Those exalting a universal church as the only church that counts interpret this verse to be teaching infant baptism making church members and national citizens, simultaneously.
 2. Paul is writing the local church at Corinth, and he is dealing with gifts in a local church.
 3. He will tell them plainly in a few verses that he is talking specifically about them (12:27).
 4. Paul did not jump subjects to water baptism admission into some universal church.
- C. The baptism here is not water baptism, for it is a baptism performed by the Holy Spirit.
1. Not every baptism is a baptism involving water and burial in it (Matthew 3:11; 20:22).
 2. Water baptism is an individual act of answering God with a good conscience (I Pet 3:21).
 3. Water baptism is performed by a human administrator, not by the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:38).
 4. Water baptism does not make church members except in Roman Catholicism, for the eunuch was not made a member anywhere by his baptism by Philip (Acts 8:39).
 5. Church membership, the outward organization, is by mutual assent in Christ, for Paul’s baptism had not made him a member in any sense of any body (Acts 9:18,26).
 6. Since baptism is an immersion, the verse describes the Spirit immersing us into a church.
 7. We lay claim to this verse by asking for it to be done when we receive new members, which is the opposite action we take when excluding a member from our church body.
 8. The church has binding and loosing authority, which the Spirit applies (Matthew 18:18).
 9. The Holy Spirit immerses, buries, plunges, dips, and otherwise sticks new members into the body until they are grafted onto it and participate in the same Spirit in the body.
- D. The result is not salvation, membership, gifts, or anything else, but participation in the body.
1. “To drink into one Spirit” is mutual participation in the lively energy of the Holy Spirit.
 2. This is a passive work done to members, just like the baptism in the first part of the verse.
 3. The OED has its second definition for “into” the sense of “into the possession of.”
 4. There are more options for this unusual use of “into” in the OED second definition.
 5. The Spirit takes spiritual children and makes them living stones in His temple (I Pet 2:5).
 6. Spiritual sustenance, vitality from Christ, and unifying charity are supplied by this union.
 7. The graces and fruits that make saints of church members flow from unity in the Spirit.
 8. The verse before and the verse after define the unifying animation of the Spirit of God.
 9. The coordination of members in a church is not by a good pastor, but by a perfect Spirit.
 10. The closer a church gets to Christ and walks in the Spirit, the more benefits they realize.
 11. The unified relationship in the Spirit is something church members maintain (Eph 4:3).
 12. The verb “drink” is used to indicate the water vitality of the Spirit (John 4:10; 7:37-39).

12:14 **The human body, being a perfect picture of a church, is not one member, but rather many.**

- A. The body has many different members doing very different things for the health of the body.
- B. A church has many different members doing very different things for the health of a church.

- 12:15 **The foot cannot be less a part of the body than the hand, even if the foot appears inferior.**
A. The foot is not less of the body, even if some functions appear inferior to those of the hands.
B. What good are hands, no matter how dexterous, if both feet do not carry them into action?
C. Paul here defended those members feeling despised and worthless in the church at Corinth.
D. A church member with inferior gifts is still part of the body, and truly necessary to the body.
- 12:16 **The ear cannot be less a part of the body than the eye, even if the ear appears inferior.**
A. The ear is not less of the body, even if its functions appear inferior to those of the eyes.
B. What good are eyes, not matter how sharp, if ears do not help in the dark or around corners.
C. Paul here defended those members feeling despised and worthless in the church at Corinth.
D. A church member with inferior gifts is still part of the body, and truly necessary to the body.
- 12:17 **Paul reasoned that a whole body must have a variety of members in order to be efficient.**
A. An eye is important to a functioning body; but an eyeball by itself quickly becomes a raisin!
B. An eye is important to a functioning body; but how would you hear music without an ear?
C. An ear is important to a functioning body; but how would you smell a rose without a nose?
D. It is the combined abilities and value of all the members that make a body of great success.
E. Church members must believe and act in the interest and value of each and every member.
F. A prophet was important to the church; but a prophet by himself was just a very lonely man.
G. A prophet was important to the church; but what did you need when your mother was sick?
- 12:18 **The body, and all the individual members that comprise it, were chosen by God Himself.**
A. God created the human body by divine wisdom with an important role for each member.
1. If you think eyes are more important than ears, God chose two of both in each body.
2. God could have given the human body three eyes, but He chose to give it only two.
3. The body was created with five senses rather than eight by the choice of God alone.
4. A body may have a beautiful face with a pear-shaped short body that is detracting.
B. God created each local church by His providential choice of each member in the body.
1. Of course, churches do their part qualifying new members and excluding sinful ones.
2. If you think a person in your church is not important, remember God put him in the body.
3. If a member of your church irritates you, what can you do to make them better?
4. The combination of members in a church is by the providential choice of a wise God.
- 12:19 **The body is a combination of members, or it is no body; a body cannot be one member.**
A. Either one eyeball by itself, or a whole bucket of eyeballs, is no body and totally worthless.
B. Where is the combined efficiency and pleasure of a body unless all members are included?
C. If a church had all miracle workers, who in the world would preach and teach to them?
D. If a church had all preachers and teachers, who in the world would do miracles for them?
- 12:20 **God has wisely created a body to include many members for the glory of the one body.**
A. This verse is in contrast to the previous one, where Paul has asked a rhetorical question.
B. Though there are many members with very different appearances and roles in a human body, yet they all work together for the overall efficiency and profit of just one, single body.
C. There are many church members with greatly different roles and gifts, but there is one body.
- 12:21 **The more important bodily members cannot say less important members are not needed.**
A. Though the eye is special for so many things, it has no right to belittle or get rid of the hand.
B. Though the head has ruling authority over the body, it has no right to get rid of the feet.
C. Paul rebuked those members with special and ruling gifts for despising inferior members.

D. When reading a verse like this, don't miss the singular (thee) and plural (you) pronouns.

12:22 **There is a real sense in which those bodily members appearing weak are very essential.**

- A. A nose is a feeble member – can only smell, drips like a faucet, and is easily hit by others.
- B. But who wants to give up their nose? It is extremely necessary to both smell and taste!
- C. A belly is a feeble member – gains weight first, hurts our appearance, and slows us down.
- D. But who wants to try living without the digestive and chemical operations of the belly?
- E. There are members without public or praiseworthy roles, but they are essential to the church.

12:23 **There is a real sense in which you put greater effort into your ugly bodily members.**

- A. Your feet are ugly! Your toes are crooked! They are too short! Your toenails look deformed! Your toe knuckles are so big! Your toes are too long! They look so gnarled! Gross!
- B. So what do we do with ugly feet? We buy 10 pairs of shoes, fancy socks, and nice hose!
- C. Even boring wingtips have fancy designs! Can you see tassels? Buckles? Shine? Two-tone?
- D. We go to great lengths to take this ugly bodily member and make it attractive to the body.
- E. What about the belly, back, and thighs? Gross! There are moles, hair, collops of fat, warts, cellulite, cysts, freckles, lesions, lumps, pale skin, rolls, scars, and so forth and so on!
- F. What do we do? We wear fine clothing that covers all that, so we do not even think about it!
- G. The eyes, ears, and other more honorable members do not get as much attention and care.
- H. A godly church spends greater time on the “uglier” members making them more attractive.
- I. Members with inferior and minor gifts are to be given more attention and honor in charity.
- J. If a church spent as much time on their uncomely members as it should, you would not even notice that the uncomely members were uncomely, for they would be well adorned by effort.

12:24 **The more attractive and honorable members do not need as much attention as the others.**

- A. The comely parts like eyes, ears, face, hair, and so forth do not need any covering attention.
- B. But the uncomely parts like feet, back, belly, loins, and so forth are covered flatteringly.
- C. God so ordered the human body and apparel that we dress our ugly parts to be attractive.
- D. And a church should give more attention to the uncomely members to beautify them.
- E. But it is part of sinful nature to despise, ignore, neglect, and reject such uncomely members.

12:25 **The body should be a functioning and unified whole by mutual care of various members.**

- A. A schism is a tear, rent, or breach in the unity of a thing; division, separation, or hostility.
 - 1. The human body is a beautiful overall package by exposing the comely parts to public view and making extra effort to cover the uncomely parts (12:22-24).
 - 2. There is no rejection of uncomely members or solitary action by comely members.
 - 3. God has arranged the human body to function together beautifully and efficiently. Amen!
 - 4. One bodily member does not go in one direction while the rest of the body goes another.
- B. God has ordained the churches of Christ to work at doing the very same in the same way!
- C. The illustrious members already get care for their gifts; the others get care by necessity!
- D. Good, mature members do not need attention; they should be giving it to inferior members.

12:26 **A church pleasing the Lord Jesus Christ must have mutual care in all good and bad events.**

- A. The analogy is still running, for Paul will not end the analogy until the next verse (12:27).
- B. If any part of the human body is suffering, the rest of the body provides comfort and rest.
 - 1. If you have a headache, your entire body of all members may take a nap for the head.
 - 2. If you break a leg, your entire body of all members will give up activities for the leg.
 - 3. If you smell excellent perfume, your whole body is excited and pleased by the event.
 - 4. If you get a great pair of new shoes, your whole body feels rejuvenated and youthful.

- C. These are body dynamics – church dynamics – of mutual care for every individual member.
 1. A mega-church cannot do these things: here is where a small church can excel in Christ.
 2. Church growth is not taught anywhere in the New Testament, but mutual care is taught.
 3. Paul taught that members should be bound with those in prison as in the body (Heb 13:3).

12:27 **Paul identified his lengthy analogy as describing church dynamics among all the members.**

- A. Here is where he drew his analogy to a close and applied it to the local church at Corinth.
 1. He had pursued an illustrative analogy of the human body to the church since 12:12.
 2. How could they continue despising those with lesser gifts or adore those with greater?
- B. Do not underestimate the value of the local church in the eyes and mind of God. Here it is!
 1. Most cannot see anything beyond some universal, invisible, mystical church of Christ.
 2. We see the general assembly of Christ, but it does not assemble on earth (Heb 12:22-24).
 3. A single local church is the body of Jesus Christ, and it should function accordingly.
- C. Individual church members are particular bodily members of the church of the Lord Jesus.
 1. Each member was to apply the preceding analogy to himself as a member of the body.
 2. A particular member of the church at Corinth was not a member in any other church.
- D. Paul did not want his lengthy analogy lost, so he clearly showed its application in the church.

12:28 **Paul ranked the numerous church gifts at Corinth and provided a summary list of them.**

- A. His purpose is to acknowledge the superiority of certain spiritual gifts over others (12:31).
- B. His purpose is to show these gifts were dispersed variously among the members (12:29-30).
- C. Apostles were special men who had seen the risen Lord and built the churches (9:1; Ep 2:20).
 1. They had authority and responsibility from Christ for all the churches (II Cor 11:28).
 2. They appeared to have possessed to some degree many or all of the gifts of the Spirit.
- D. Prophets were inferior to apostles and revealed God's will supernaturally (Ac 11:28; 12:20).
 1. There were prophets who foretold future events by the common meaning of the word.
 2. There were prophets who revealed the truth of the gospel without any studying (14:30).
- E. Teachers were uninspired, second-generation instructors in the basics of the faith (I Tim 3:2).
- F. Miracles, as seen before, were those with the ability to do signs and wonders (12:10).
 1. Jesus had promised miracles to those believing the apostles' preaching (Mark 16:17-20).
 2. Of course, apostles had this gift with great measure (Acts 5:15; 19:12; Rom 15:18-19).
- G. Healing, as seen before, were those with the ability to heal diseases and sicknesses (12:9).
 1. This was the gift you would want among the elders of the church to fulfill James 5:14-15.
 2. The healers today are nothing in comparison to the apostles (Acts 3:1-11; 9:32-43).
- H. Helps were those members who assisted the officers and churches (Romans 16:1-3,6,9,12).
- I. Governments were those who ruled in various roles in this church (Acts 6:1-6; I Tim 5:17).
- J. Diversities of tongues, as seen before, were those who could supernaturally speak different foreign languages without any training in those languages (Acts 2:1-13; 12:10).
- K. Paul put tongues last for two reasons – to humble them for a weak gift, and to warn us today.
 1. Charismatics make this the most important gift, though Paul made it the least important.
 2. They like speaking in tongues, because it is the easiest gift to fake, and has the least risk.
 3. Snakes have not heard of the Charismatic movement, so they are not always cooperative.

12:29 **Paul taught with rhetorical questions that diversity is what made the church at Corinth.**

- A. And this is not ethnic diversity, which by itself has no value whatsoever, but creating strife.
- B. As he had asked about the whole body being an eye or ear (12:17), now he asked about gifts.
- C. Were all apostles? No, they likely only had visiting ones, or one, or maybe two or three.
- D. Were all prophets? No, they likely had a few more of these, but still a very select group.
- E. The church was very diverse with a few spectacular gifts and more of the ordinary gifts.

- 12:30 **Paul continued to teach by rhetorical questions that the church used a variety of gifts.**
- A. Not every one had the gift of tongues, which many Charismatics think everyone should have.
 - B. Since everyone cannot have every gift, then there must be cooperation among all members.
- 12:31 **Paul exalted the more superior gifts in the church but suggested they could be surpassed.**
- A. Paul transitioned into the next chapter with one of the most potent transitional verses ever.
 - B. He encouraged them, setting them up for the next chapter, to fervently desire the great gifts.
 - 1. He has ranked spiritual gifts from the top (apostle) to the bottom (speaking in tongues).
 - 2. It is godly to covet spiritual blessings, if done with godly motives (14:1,39; I Tim 3:1).
 - C. With their ambition for spiritual gifts stoked to the max, Paul introduced charity (13:1-13).
 - 1. Loving one another by God's definition of charity is superior to even being an apostle!
 - 2. The first three verses of the next will ridicule any spiritual gift or work without charity.
 - D. After all, the major problem at this church was the lack of loving self-denial and unity!

Conclusion:

- 1. Those living in the 21st Century without these spiritual gifts can find much to apply to their own lives as well.
- 2. Stop asking what your church can or should do for you! Ask what you can or should be doing for the church!
- 3. The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is maintained by diligent endeavor of church members (Ep 4:1-6).
- 4. If a church cared for one another as a body's members care for one another, it would be great in Christ's sight.
- 5. Since there is no New Testament direction for growing in numbers, let us make sure we grow in true charity.
- 6. The more united and affectionate a church is, the more the Holy Spirit will be free to bless one and all.

Additional study:

- 1. [A sermon called, "Why Wear Pretty Shoes?" about dressing up uncomely members.](#)
- 2. [A seminar study and sermon condemning the Charismatic Movement by the Bible.](#)