**River of Life Christian Centre, Felixstowe**

**Bible School 2019**

Studies in Discipleship

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**Module 3: FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

# KEY CONCEPTS

## The call to follow Christ is a call to live a transformed life in community

## Each disciple is a member of the Body of Christ—His Church

## The Holy Spirit decides where each disciple fits in the Body of Christ

## Every member of the Body of Christ is necessary to the welfare of the other

## Believers must submit themselves to each other and the leadership of the Holy Spirit

## Spiritual gifts are not trophies, they are tools for mutual edification

## Every believer needs to know about spiritual gifts

# KEY SCRIPTURES:

*Rom 12:1-8 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.  (2)  Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.  (3)  For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.  (4)  For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, (5) so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.  (6)  We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; (7) if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; (8) if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

# DISCIPLES OF CHRIST ARE CALLED TO live transformed lives in community

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. (2) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Ro 12:1-2).*

* Offer your bodies (plural) - as a living sacrifice (singular)
* holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship
* do not conform to the pattern of this world (individualism)
* but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (singular)
* then you will be able to test (affirm) and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will

 Paul begins by telling both groups in the churches of Rome not to be proud and big-headed. Each believer needs to think carefully about the grace that God has given to them for the common good. Seven gifts of service are listed—they are probably just examples of God’s many gifts.

Figure 1 7 Gifts of Service

Whenever Paul talks about spiritual gifts, he ties it to the illustration of the body of Christ (Ro 12:4–8; 1Co 12–14; Eph 4:11–13). The message is clear, every believer receives at least one gift of service from the Lord. This corrects a Pentecostal heresy which said believers not baptized in the Holy Spirit had no spiritual gifts. Everyone who is a member of the body of Christ must have a spiritual gift.

Paul’s teaching also corrects another Pentecostal error which encourages individual believers to seek all the gifts. Clearly, God does not want one person to have all the gifts. If that were so, there would be no need of the rest of the body. God has planted strengths and weaknesses into the body of Christ. The foot can walk but it cannot do the work of the hand. The ear can hear, but it cannot do the work of the eye. The eye can see but it cannot do the work of the nose. *“There are many parts, but only one body*” (1Co 12:14–20).

God’s call to the believers in Rome was to be good stewards of the grace they received. Whenever possible, we should serve in the areas we are most gifted for. We should sacrifice our other interests so that we may develop the ministry that God has given us. This too was the advice of the Apostle Peter: *“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms” (1Pe 4:10).*

Paul expected the believers in Rome to be able to identify the gift that God had given them for service. However, this cannot just be left to the individual. The rest of the body must recognize and receive that gift. There are times when we must serve in areas we are less gifted for—but we shouldkeep that to a minimum (2Tm 4:5). The body of Christ will be healthier and happier when we all serve God according to our gifting.

# key scriptures

*1Co 12:1-11 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.  (2)  You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.  (3)  Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.  (4)  There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.  (5)  There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.  (6)  There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.  (7)  Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.  (8)  To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, (10) to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.  (11)  All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.*

# God wants every believer to be informed about spiritual gifts

*“Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed” (1Cor 12:1).*

By way of interest, the Corinthian believers had written to Paul with various questions:

* + marriage (1Cor 7:1)
	+ the unmarried (1Cor 7:25)
	+ food offered to idols (1Cor 8:1)
	+ spiritual gifts (1Cor 12:1)
	+ the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (1Cor 16:1)
	+ Apollos (1Cor 16:12)

Tonight we are only interested in Paul’s response concerning spiritual gifts. Ignorance (Greek “*agnosis”)* about spiritual gifts makes believers vulnerable to all kinds of errors. Therefore Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to be well-informed about spiritual gifts.

## Confusion About Spiritual Gifts

There is a difference between a spiritual gift, and a talent or natural ability. Many studies on spiritual gifts fail to recognize that difference. That is why so many of the so-called *Spiritual Gift Inventories* are unhelpful. These are often hinged on the idea *“find what you are good at, and that is your spiritual gift”.*

While we can agree that God is the source of both our talents and spiritual gifts, it would be a mistake to confuse them. A spiritual gift is a grace or ability that one receives from the Holy Spirit. This automatically disqualifies any talent or ability you had prior to receiving the Holy Spirit at your conversion. That does not mean we should not serve God and one another with our talents, but it does mean that we should not equate them with spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is a grace or ability that is *added* to your life after your conversion to Christ. It is part of your transformation, and it is a key for your service to the Body of Christ.

## The Holy Spirit Decides Which Gift or Gifts You Receive

*1Co 12:4-6 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.  (5)  There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.  (6)  There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.*

* Different kinds of gifts—but the same Spirit distributes them
* Different kinds of service—but the same Lord
* Different kinds of working—but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work

Unity in diversity is one of the bedrock truths about spiritual gifts and ministries. Our differences do not divide us—*they unite us!* The Holy Spirit makes sure that we all fit together for the glory of God.

## Types of Spiritual Gifts

Paul’s list of spiritual gifts in First Corinthians 12 is not exhaustive. In the early days of Pentecostal teaching, believers were taught that just as there were 9 manifestations of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, there were also 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit

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| --- | --- |
| FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT | GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT |
| Love | Word of wisdom |
| Joy  | Word of Knowledge |
| Peace | Faith |
| Forbearance | Gifts of healing |
| Kindness | Miracles |
| Goodness | Prophecy |
| Faithfulness | Discernment of spirits |
| Gentleness | Speaking in other tongues |
| Self-control | Interpretation of other tongues |

However, even in First Corinthians chapter 12, additional gifts are mentioned: *“1Co 12:28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.* This leads us to understand that the number of gifts was never restricted to 9. Pauls other lists of gifts in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 confirm the fact that there are many more gifts than 9.

# the purpose of spiritual gifts

*“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1Co 12:7).*

Spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit—and they are given for the benefit of the Body of Christ. That is why it is tragic when believers insist on trying to follow Jesus on their own. The very idea that any one of us is self-sufficient is foreign to God’s teaching about spiritual gifts. The tragedy is clearly stated in 1 Corinthians:

*For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.  (30)  That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.  (31)  But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment” (1Co 11:29-31).*

Disconnectedness from the rest of the Body of Christ brought grave spiritual consequences to the believers in Corinth. Many were weak and sick, others had died, because they refused to live integrated lives with their brethren. In a church which lacked no spiritual gift, including the gifts of miracles, healings, and discernment, believers were dying.

They were not dying from natural causes, *they were dying from spiritual causes*—for not discerning the body of the Lord. Unfortunately, the Roman Catholic false doctrine of transubstantiation (whereby the communion bread is supposed to become the actual Body of Christ) has led many believers to misunderstand the communion service. The Body of Christ that Paul speaks of was not the communion bread, but the church: *“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1Co 12:27).*

# Discontentment with spiritual gifts

There seems to have been some discontentment with spiritual gifts in the church at Corinth:

*1Co 12:12-18 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.  (13)  For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.  (14)  Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.  (15)  Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.  (16)  And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.  (17)  If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?  (18)  But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*

Finding your place in the Body of Christ has nothing to do with choosing your place in the Body of Christ. *God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be” (1Cor 12:18).*

There is no room for any one of us to have a sense of inferiority or superiority—but that seemed to be the case in Corinth: *“Now if the foot should say Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body” . . . “If the ear should say Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body” (1Cor 12:15-16).* God has gifted us to serve the Body of Christ—so let us rejoice in our service.

All this leads to the fundamental question of finding your place in the Body of Christ. Having found your place you need to fill that place, ensuring that you make yourself available to the Body of Christ. This changes the whole picture of going to church. Instead of going to get something, your go to give something!

*1Co 14:26-29 What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.  (27)  If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret.  (28)  If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.  (29)  Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.*

KEY SCRIPTURES

*Eph 4:7-16 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.  (8)  This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people."  (9) (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?  (10)  He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)  (11)  So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, (12) to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.  (14)  Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.  (15)  Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.  (16)  From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Writing to the Ephesian believers, Paul emphasizes that we have all received grace as Christ apportioned it. Then he specifically identifies what we have come to call the FIVEFOLD MINISTRY GIFTS: 1. Apostles; 2. Prophets; 3. Evangelists; 4. Pastors; 5. Teachers*“Eph 4:11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,*

Some members of the Body of Christ are given specific ministries. They cannot choose them, they are a gift from God. Unfortunately, many leaders in the church have tried to make a hierarchy our of these gifts. Thus, an Apostle is more important than a Prophet; an Evangelist is more important than a Pastor; a Pastor is more important than a Teacher.

Nothing could be further from the truth! None of the ministry gifts is more important than the other—and all have the same function:

*Eph 4:12-13 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

These ministry gifts are designed to *equip God’s people for works of service.* These ministers can help you discern where you can best serve the Lord in edifying the Body of Christ.

My prayer for you is that you will FIND where you fit, then FILL your position in the Body of Christ, and FULFILL God’s call on your life! As you serve the Body of Christ you will see the results of healthy spiritual growth:

*“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:16).*