

Series: Corinthians, a Church in Progress

Sermon #5: Gifted to Serve Together

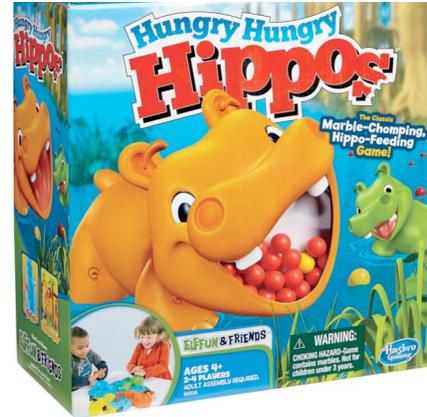
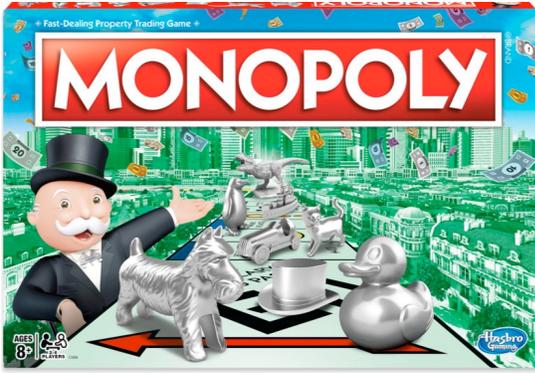
1 Corinthians 12

Dr. Matt Cassidy – March 27, 2022

Let's get started with our learning time today in 1 Corinthians 12. We'll start with a story. Once upon a time Once upon a time there was a collection of cute little houses that lived at the end of a block in a cul-de-sac, and the street was called Church Street. And the people that lived in that cul-de-sac at Church Street were connected with each other. They formed a community. They lived like a village. They raised each other's children. It was like extended family, actually. If I had to say anything about the cul-de-sac on Church Street I would say it was enchanted. It was enchanting to live there.

And then on Christmas Eve, a curse came upon the children in that little cul-de-sac. And as they slept their souls were touched with selfishness and pride and envy and independence. And as they slept, those curses set into them. And this is Christmas Eve, mind you.

So, they woke up the next morning and when they ran out into their living rooms to open presents they were given great gifts like board games and cards and Hungry Hippo to play indoors when it's raining. They got a ball and whiffle ball bats.

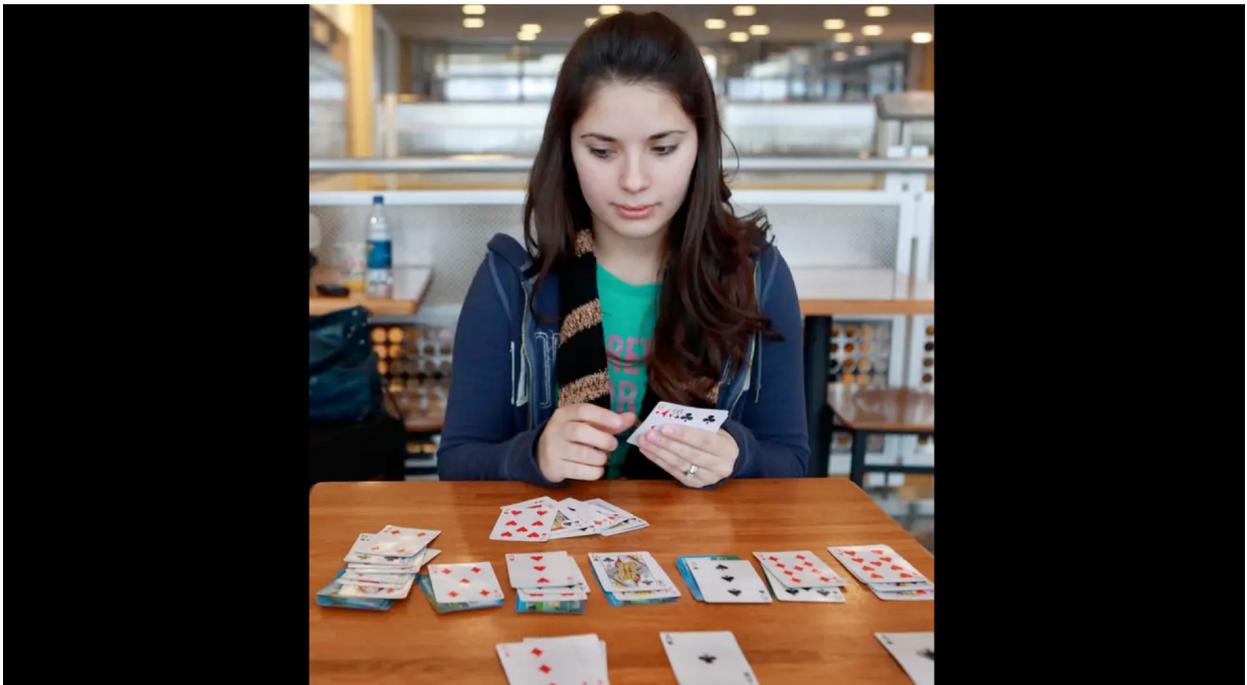


And some of the kids didn't even open their gifts. Again, I don't know why, but they didn't even open up their gifts. And instead of running out in their cul-de-sac like they usually did and playing (it becomes a giant playground), they all ran outside and didn't play with anyone.





They just kept their toys to themselves. They wouldn't share. They envied other people's toys. They wished that they had something else. They therefore couldn't enjoy their own toys. They just wanted to be alone because they were too proud to say, "You want to play my game?" or "Can I play your game?" So, they just played all by themselves.



There was no fun on that day. There was no joy in Christmas because they were cursed, because of the spell.

And that's not all. They started complaining. They started saying things like, "I don't even like this gift, I wish I had Billy's gift." A couple of the children turned on their own parents and said, "You're not even good parents to give me this kind of gift."

And so, the parents are watching all this happen and wondering, "What is happening? What do we do?" And they realized that they had been cursed. So, they gathered together and they prayed away the spirit of selfishness and pride and individuality and envy, and the curse was released. They sat down with the children and they said, "We gave you these gifts to share with each other so that everyone would have a good time."

And the children said, "What?" And they did. They returned to having fun with one another. They played games outside, they enjoyed their interaction together.



And the parents said, "Let me show you how this is supposed to look. And this is Hungry, Hungry Hippo." They showed them how to play that. (I think they're doing that at Women's Game Night, as a matter of fact, so that could be pretty exciting.) And they lived happily ever after, using their gifts to serve and enjoy one another.



Spiritual Gifts

Now it doesn't sound like a very veiled parable about the Church, but that's how it is a lot of times with actual churches. The gifts that God gives us that we're supposed to use-- sometimes we don't even unwrap those gifts.

Today's topic is about gifts from the Holy Spirit. And they have tremendous power and potential, but not if we're selfish or proud or envious or trying to live independent from one another.

1 Corinthians 12:1

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

Paul is so dedicated and wants us all to understand the potential of the power of these gifts and how gracious God is to give these gifts to us that he spends three chapters on the gifts. And he starts with this, verse 1: "Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed."

1. What Is a Spiritual Gift?

And so, the first part of chapter 12—there are three major parts—and the first part is that he answers the question “What is a spiritual gift?” And broadly speaking, it’s part of something bigger, and that is the organizational structure of the Church, that is the greatest organization of all time. Because it’s not like a corporate organization; it is an organization brought to us by God himself, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He gave us this system. When it’s used (and it’s been in existence for two thousand years) it has the potential of creating community and connection that transcends culture and continent and civilizations. It has been very effective. Because when the gifts are used in the context of humility and servanthood and interdependence with each other, heaven is the limit.

The strategy of giving gifts was to empower the individuals inside the Church to use those gifts together, with each other, in unity, to get God’s work done. Every single believer has gifts—a gift or multiple gifts that are spiritual. And the purpose of these gifts—or to define them—they are supernatural attributes, God-powered. They are God-chosen to give you these gifts so that when you use them, the results are profound. Something happens within the user of the gift in that they feel joy and fulfillment in the way God made them. They feel the presence of God in that context. And then the recipient of those gifts feels like they’re being touched by God as well. They’re receiving the grace of God through a member of the Church.

And so, God gives these various gifts. There are too many to mention today in our teaching time, but some people have the gift of hospitality—sometimes they’re just out there working in our lobby. And somehow—a spiritual gift is when someone puts in two ducats worth of energy and they get ten ducats out. I mean, only a spiritual equation works that way. And when they say “Hi”, people feel greeted.

People with the gift of encouragement have the ability sometimes to hear what’s being said at a deeper level and are able to respond by giving just the right tender words to encourage.

People with the gift of teaching are teaching at this level, but the reception is at this level. There’s just something about it that you can’t explain when someone serves the Church. And they get eternal consequences because of their willingness to serve.

Paul wants us to know that these gifts are important and they’re powerful and they’re intentional. They’re all part of God’s sovereign plan, so much so that when he talks about the

gifts, he's going to say, *No, it is the Trinity itself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that are involved in the selection and the giving itself.*

1 Corinthians 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.

Look what it says in 1 Corinthians 12:4: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit that distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”

See how there's the Father, the Son, and the Spirit there? They're all strategically giving the gifts. See how there's multiple different kinds of gifts? It says there are different gifts, there are different kinds of service, different kinds of working, but all the same God. The theme of chapter 12 is unity in the context in of their diversity. Unity in diversity ...

And I think Paul is saying that is just like the Trinity. The Trinity is individual parts of the godhead that all work together. They are different and they work together to be the same thing.

Application: Take the Test

So, the first application: what is a spiritual gift? Do you want to know what your spiritual gifts are? Well, here's what I'd like you to consider doing. Go onto our website at grace360.org, go under the service section to serve here, and I think if you go all the way down to the end of that page it will have a link to spiritual gifts. And that will take you to a website that will give you a very easy quiz and will walk you through the definitions of the various gifts and how you can apply those. As you go through it—pray before you start and say, “Lord God, since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have given me these gifts, could You help me answer these questions? Are these the gifts You gave me? Spirit, can You remind of events that have taken place in my life that would show me one way or another if I have this gift or not this gift?”

And you'll find that you're probably going to come up with the top two or three on the questionnaire of what the probability is of what these gifts from God are. And then you take them out for a test drive and see if they work. And maybe you come back to take the test again.

But the point is, the answer to the question of "Do you want to know your gift?" is to go to our website, take the test, and see what they are.

2. Spiritual Gifts are for Working in Unity to Get God's Work Done

So, the first part is to find out your gift. The second part of spiritual gifts in chapter 12 is to show us that the spiritual gifts are to work in unity to get God's work done.

1 Corinthians 12:7

Now to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Verse 7 says: "Now to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." So, we're all supposed to be getting a gift, all to be working in unity for the common good to get the work of the Church done, to let the kingdom be expanded.

And what he's saying is that your gift is not to be ignored (left unwrapped). They are not to be given so that some people get to show off and draw all the attention to themselves ... *Look at all that I'm doing*. Gifts are not given so that a certain class of gift recipients are higher than another group of people. No. Each person is given a gift, no one has all the gifts.

But what I want you to see here is the weight and the value of these special gifts. Again, if you can imagine these gifts from God on Christmas morning, he's saying that it's all part of a sovereign plan—a detailed sovereign plan.

1 Corinthians 12:11

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines.

Look what he says in verse 11: "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, as He has determined." It says here that the Spirit has determined which gifts go to which person. And all of those gifts are to be shared with one another so that

we can work together, because each recipient of that gift has a vital position in the Church. We are all kind of cogs, and if one cog isn't there, the watch doesn't work anymore. And Paul is saying, *The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—this is all for us to enjoy working in the ambitions of God. Unity in the context of diversity—working together so that we can appreciate one another.* And when we work together in a church, we bless the church and you get blessed because you're getting used by God. And, like I said before, the recipients are receiving a touch from God. We are the voice, the hands, the ears of God.

Application: Use Your Gift

So, the application for the second part of what we need to be learning ... (the first application is to find your gift) the second application is to use your gift. And where would you use your gift? In the church. It takes hundreds of volunteers to have a Sunday event here. I mean, there are literally hundreds of people that are needed just for our children's ministry. So, there are plenty of opportunities. And I would say that one of the things (especially the way our church is structured) that we would love to see more of is mentors, because our church is structured for mentors. We're always looking for opportunities for people to invest in your life. The problem is that everyone wants their life invested in, but no one wants to do the investing.

And here's why—here's the pushback most of the time. *I'm just not ready to be a mentor. I mean, I've got to get some stuff worked out. Maybe in a couple of more years, and then I can do it.*

Personally, I don't know how to respond to that. And some of that has to do with my Christian experience. Here's how it happened for me. (I'm a fan of the model, by the way.) Right around when I was twenty years old I finally understood the Gospel for me. It was preached to me regularly, but I didn't get it. And then when I did get it, I wanted to know more about what it meant. It was at the University of Texas, so I found myself in a university ministry that today is known as CRU (back then it was called Campus Crusade for Christ). And they had a mentoring structure. And so, they handed me off to a guy that I was living with in the same dorm. And he had been a Christian for a long time—almost twelve months. The mentor is twelve months old. And the ministry training style of CRU was, and probably still is, on-the-job training. And so, one of my first assignments with my mentor was that we went and just asked people around our

neighborhood and found a woman next door that wanted to have spiritual conversations. And one of her questions was, “Is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life?”

And so, we went over there and my friend Bill gave me a little pamphlet to help me teach through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in her life. Now the problem was that I had no idea what the ministry of the Holy Spirit was, and so as I’m reading the booklet, I’m being informed with every page. The woman is right here, and I’m having her just focus on the book. And underneath I was doing this: *Help me! I don’t know what’s happening here?* And he just sat there and watched. He had a great time.

Here’s what happened that day at the end of the day. First, no one got hurt. Two, two different people found out about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their life: that woman across the street from us and me. The point is that you can only grow in your walk with Christ so far as a spectator. Without being engaged you plateau early. As the fact of the matter is, you cannot grow in your life with Christ without using your spiritual gifts in the service of the body of Christ. That’s just a fact. And so, you don’t get ready to be a mentor. We start mentors in fifth grade here. We have them mentor the little bitty kids. So, if you’re over thirty, man, that’s awesome. You could mentor some of the single men and women in our church. You could go work in our youth ministry or our children’s ministry. In our youth ministry you’d be like a rock star. You won’t be, but you’ll think you are, and that will be great.

But the point is, if you don’t get involved in ministry, this is true: you cannot grow in your life with Christ without using your spiritual gifts in the service of the body of Christ. So, you need to get out there if you’re in your thirties.

If you’re over forty—are you sitting down?—this might be the first time someone’s told you this, but you’re getting old. I know you don’t feel old, but when you were twenty and you looked at a forty-year-old, you thought, *Man, they’re old*. But that decade is a great decade. It’s the beginning of your wisdom. You are full of information, whether it’s from success or failure, and you could be a marriage mentor. You could be a premarital counselor, you could go through ReEngage and become a ReEngage mentor. You could serve as a mentor in our brand-new marrieds class—you’ve got all kinds of wisdom for them—or maybe the Young Families class. Get involved. Show what happens when you use your gifts to work and to serve in the local church. Because, here’s the thing: you cannot grow in your life with Christ without using your spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ.

If you're over fifty, man, there's the most teachable group of people here on campus, Parenting Teens. Oh, my goodness, they are so afraid. They're just coming to terms with the fact that they were never in control in the first place and there are no right answers. And then you swoop in at over fifty years old saying, *There, there, let's pray for this*. You can teach them how to pray effectively because working isn't working. And if you don't do that you can't grow, because you cannot grow in your life with Christ without using your spiritual gifts in the service of the body.

Are you over sixty? You get to mentor the mentors. These mentors that we've talked about previously are looking for someone to fill their cup because their cup is draining. So, you get to step in and say, *Let me help you. I can work with you through these various trials of life, and I'll do that, whether I'm sixty or seventy or eighty, because I know this*. Well, let's just all read this together out loud, everyone: "I cannot grow in my life with Christ without using my spiritual gift in the service of the body of Christ."

So, if you're looking for a way to find out how you can get connected and serve in this context here at Grace, you can go outside to our lobby and there's a card there. You can fill that out and one of our leadership people will get back with you. Or you can go online, I think it's grace360.org/connect. Fill that card out and say, *I'm ready to serve. I want to grow in my walk with Christ. I've been given these precious gifts by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and I think I've been letting them go to waste*. So, let's get going here.

3. Spiritual Gifts Are to Promote Unity and Interdependence in the Body of Christ

All right, here's our outline: discover what your gifts are; use the gifts of the Spirit in unity with the rest of the people involved to get God's work done; and the third point here in chapter 12 is that spiritual gifts are to promote unity and interdependence with each other in the body of Christ.

There's a part of the gifts of the Spirit that is a little bit like God is a rascal in that we have to work together or nothing will work at all. And so, God has set it up so that no one has all the gifts and everybody has a gift so that we have to work together as the body of Christ. And so,

what's interesting is that Paul is going to use one of his largest illustrations in all of his writing to explain how we work together in unity, all while being diversified with differences.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

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.

And so, he's going to use the human body as a metaphor, as an analogy, of how unity and diversity work together. Look what he says in verse 12: "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized into 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. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many."

This is the unity and diversity aspect here. And today we do one or the other, but can't seem to do both. We'll have unity at the expense of diversity—we just dilute diversity and don't bring up the differences. Or, we'll say, *Sure, express all your differences, but now we can't be unified because if you don't vote like me or act like me or come from my background, you're dead to me.*

And so, Paul is saying, *Look, this is how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have set this up. It's set up in a way so that you guys can celebrate your diversity in the context of your unity. And your diversity actually serves your unity, just like your human body does, just like the Trinity does.*

Remember how we started this in verses 4 through 6, the same Spirit, same Lord, same God? Yeah. They're making it work. And so can you. We're a byproduct of that. Unity and diversity ...

The tragic irony of the gifts of the Spirit is that the very things that God has given us to make us work together and to unify us are often the very things that divide us and split us up. And that grieves the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Because we're using instruments of love for hate. And so, Paul comes in and says, *Let me show you how this is done. Look, this is the story of how your body works.*

1 Corinthians 12:13-14

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.

He continues with the illustration. But he's focusing this time on what we have in common. I'm looking at verse 13 and 14 again. But look what we have in common in contrast to what we have in difference. He says, "You 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. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many."

Paul is saying, *Look at what you have in common, and then you can enjoy your diversity.* What does he say? He's using very experiential vocabulary here. "You've been baptized by this one Spirit." *Look, you guys all got this together!* Then he says, "You also get to drink from this one Spirit." So, in light of how important the Church is, in light of the thing that you have in common (and that is the Spirit of God that you were baptized into, that you are drinking from)—then *vive la différence!* Enjoy the difference between Jews and Gentiles, between economic differences (in this context, I think it means), slave versus free men---whatever it might be. You don't have to dilute your diversities. You just focus on what you have in common, like working together, being interconnected to do God's will. Sure. The body is like the Church. It will thrive—it only thrives—when individual diverse parts are enjoyed and appreciated as they work together.

1 Corinthians 12:15-16

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.

Don't Dismiss the Gift that God Has Given You

There are two implications of these passages here. One of them is, in the context of unity and diversity, don't dismiss the gift that God has given you—the child who didn't open his present on Christmas. Or, *I don't like this gift, you're a bad parent*. Look what he says in verse 15 and on: “Now if the foot should say, ‘Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. Or if the ear would say, ‘Because I am not an eye’”—*I wish I were an eye*— “‘I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.”

You're still part of the body even if you don't like the body part you are. Again, the physical body—some of you are old enough to know—what happens when one of your body parts says, *I'm done. I don't even like being this anymore*. There's a lot of laughter. You know what that's like. I mean, if your kidney says, *All I do is filter fluids, I've got nothing to show for it really. You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to start making rocks. That's what I'm going to do*. And the rest of your body says, *No, no, no! You're good. We love you just the way you are. You're killing it! You're doing great! Don't make any more rocks!* That's what he's saying here. Enjoy the way God made you and the gift He gave you, and use it well.

1 Corinthians 12:18

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.

Look what he says in verse 18: “But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.” God sovereignly chose to pick you and this gift inside.

Don't Dismiss the Gifts of Others

The second consequence is not to dismiss your own, but to dismiss other people's gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:21

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

So, he picks that up in verse 21: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" Paul is talking about how the flashy parts can get cocky sometimes, and the eye says, *Ahhh, I don't need the hand—I'm the eye!* And then suddenly an eyelash falls in that eye and the hand says, *How do you like me now? I can't wait to see what the foot's going to do to help you out, because he's a little clumsy.*

The application is pretty clear. Every person has a gift, and every gift matters. And we're all interdependent on each other. Just because the quiet gifts are quiet doesn't mean that they're nonessential. It doesn't mean that they're less valuable. As a matter of fact, some of those are the ones that are most valuable.

Could I just pause and say this? Like our tech team, or whatever the official title is for everything electric that happens here, are behind the scenes, quite literally in their own room behind a closed door. But ... but... we really appreciated what happens there during the pandemic when they completely rebuilt the entire sound system and digitized it and then rebuilt the video system and the cameras. And then when we started uploading and we were breaking the internet, we rewired everything—I don't know what I'm talking about—but they just kept redoing the internet until all that worked. Right? And because of the people behind the scenes that like to stay quiet a lot of the time, we were able to broadcast quite literally all over the world. But there are a lot of people watching our church online all around the country. There are people watching in Austin right now that aren't able to make it here. You in this audience are enjoying the sounds and the lights and the worship—all of that. And it's because of these gifts that are quiet but absolutely essential. Could we thank our tech team right now?

Unity is this. If it's a formula, it looks like this: unity is humility plus interdependence. See, the interdependence makes you humble towards your needs. *I've got to have these other people in my life.*

1 Corinthians 12:25-26

... there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

And so, look what it says in verse 25 and 26: “ ... there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” It's a team win. It's a team pain. No time for smugness, no time for self-pity. We're too busy being connected to each other with this common baptism and this common living water of the Spirit that we drink from.

The Trinity Is Sovereign in the Giving of Gifts

Now before we move on to the final application, I want us to just stop and pause, and I want you to see for the third time, I think, the power of these gifts being brought to us by the supreme sovereignty of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Sovereignty means that God has a plan—good for Him—but He has the power to make the plan happen.

1 Corinthians 12:11

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines.

And so, watch what happens when you put some of these verses next to each other. The first is verse 11 where it says, “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes each of them just as He determines.” So, the Spirit decided this before the world was started.

1 Corinthians 12:18

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.

And then in verse 18, “But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted to.” And now you put this together—we’ve got the Spirit, we’ve got the Father, and now we’re going to add something from another book called Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

“For you are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10 is one of the flags we fly here regularly, that the ministry is yours. I’m just the pastor, but you’re a minister. You’re the players, I’m a player/coach.

And you look at those verses, and those are statements of fact, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit arranged before time that you could exist anytime and anywhere, and He put you here, right now. And those first two verses say that He gave you a gift or gifts to set you up to do good works that He arranged before time began, to do the King’s work. This is what sovereignty looks like—arranging people, places and events. He could have placed you in any neighborhood, in any village, at any time, in any part of the world. And he put you here. And that’s why every believer is a minister. Because in God’s infinite wisdom He gave you your job, where you work, to be with the people you work with. He put you in your neighborhood to become a minister. You’re the chaplain for that whole street. Your kids’ soccer or football team is purposeful for this kingdom work. When we see God’s work being rolled out in front of us and see, I guess, kind of the weight of it all (the weight being the blessedness of it)...

So, be the body. Be the part of the body that God has designed you to be, and be a giver. You know what you call someone who just takes from the body and just lives off it? It’s a parasite. It’s not a gift from God. There’s no gift of parasitism.

And so, you need to be serving the body. It's interesting that when you look at the passage in verse 12 he's showing us how much of the body of Christ we are.

1 Corinthians 12:12

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

Look what he says. Let me just slow it down. "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all of its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." You'd think he would say, "... so it is with the church." He doesn't say "the church." He says, "... so it is with Christ." Christ's body is us. That's what he's saying. Christ's body is us. We're the ones that are bringing Christ into these places of work and neighborhood and hobbies and all that. We're the body of Christ. We're like a living organization. Take the organization away—that's what corporate does. We're a living being. We're a living body. When you try to incorporate a church—I know that's a popular thing—you're ruining it. Because we're supposed to be a living organism. And so, when shepherds shepherd and when encouragers encourage and when servants serve—when all of that is working, everybody knows their parts and are playing them well—God is glorified. And ministry happens. We have people reading to elementary schools all over the city because of Education Connection because we're working together, right? And in our battle with what to do with the homeless (turn it over to the government? How did that work?) we built two houses down there in the village and, I think, even a corporate shower area, because of the generosity of people at this church, Grace. We have missionaries all over the world. Our mobilization that is going on is fascinating in that a lot of college-educated, successful people are going into prisons with God of Hope ministries. Many of our people here at our church are involved in that and lead and are bringing the Gospel to prisoners. Why does that happen? Because people are humbly desiring to see the sovereignty of God worked out in their lives. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves and they want to see the joy of being used by God and seeing what happens when somebody is touched by Christ—I mean Christ's body; I mean the body of Christ. And when that happens, there's no recovery.

So, if you're involved in leading a life group or you're shepherding some little children down there, walking them or pushing them in a stroller; if you're giving to our church or holding

babies, I'm going to speak for the leadership here. We are eternally grateful for that, and there are eternal rewards for you. And not only are you growing in Christ (because that's how you grow in your relationship with Christ, by using your spiritual gifts as a church), but you're blessing other people. You're blessed and you are a blessing. So, thank you for using your gifts at Grace. You're making some everlasting things take place. And sometimes you guys make it look easy. So, God bless you. No, really—may God bless you.

Let me pray.

Lord, I do want to ask that You would bless the members of this body, that they would enjoy the gifts that You've given them, and even come to a place in their lives where they could see Your sovereignty work in their lives so that the bad and the good, the losses and the wins, the temperaments and the gifts, are all part of a grand scheme so that we can be more effective in being that unique body part, so that we can be interdependent and enjoy the ministry that You have to expand the kingdom.

So, Lord, I'd ask that You would continue to bless us and bless us indeed. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.