SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · LIVING IN THE LIGHT



DEEP DIVE

1 Corinthians

Chapter Twelve, Verses 1–31

One Spirit, One Body, Many Members — the Giver, His gifts, and the members God placed just as He desired

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Corinth had every gift and ranked them all. Paul answers with the Trinity and a human body — one Spirit giving to each one, one God placing every member, and no part the body can do without. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 12:1–31

Giver · gifts · body · honor · order

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from "Jesus is Lord" to "a still more excellent way"

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"Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it." — 1 Corinthians 12:27

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 12:1–31

One Spirit, One Body, Many Members — The Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord, gives to each one for the common good, and baptizes all into one body

† How to Read This Study

This study walks 1 Corinthians 12 in 5 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7

"But ☆ to each one is given △ the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

† Before the Passage

"Now concerning" (12:1) is the formula Paul uses each time he turns to a question the Corinthians wrote to him about (7:1; 8:1; 16:1). Chapter 11 dealt with the gathered church — head coverings (11:2–16) and a Lord's Supper where "one is hungry and another is drunk" (11:21). Chapter 12 stays in the assembly and opens a three-chapter answer: chapter 12 lays the foundation (one Spirit, one body), chapter 13 gives the governing principle (love), and chapter 14 applies both to tongues and prophecy in the meeting.

Corinth was not short of gifts. Paul thanked God that they were "not lacking in any gift" (1:7). The problem was what they did with them. Their instincts about the supernatural had been formed in the idol temples (12:2), and the church had turned its gifts into a ladder of status, with the showiest gift on top. Sproul sums it up: Paul "rebukes those who had elevated their gifts over those of others." The man with a quiet gift began to

wonder whether he belonged at all (vv. 15–16); the man with a public gift began to think he needed no one (v. 21).

The Old Testament stands behind the chapter. The idols of verse 2 are "mute" — the psalmist's idols that "have mouths, but they cannot speak" (Psalm 115:5), as Henry notes. Moses once longed, "Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29). Joel promised that God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28), and Pentecost fulfilled it (Acts 2:16–18). In 1 Corinthians 12 that promise has come true in a single congregation: "to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit" (v. 7).

Read the chapter in four steps: the Giver (vv. 1–3: the Spirit always confesses Jesus as Lord), the gifts (vv. 4–11: many gifts, one God, all for the common good), the body (vv. 12–26: many members, one body, placed by God), and the order and the way beyond it (vv. 27–31). One more thing should be said plainly at the start. Our four teachers do not agree on whether the miraculous gifts continue today. Guzik holds that they do; Henry calls them "extraordinary offices and powers, bestowed on ministers and Christians in the first ages"; Sproul holds that apostleship was for the first century and denies that tongues are a required sign. Spurgeon's notes on this chapter mostly leave the question alone. Where they differ, this study says so.

I
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1–3

The Spirit's Signature

Before any gift is named, the Giver is identified — He always says "Jesus is Lord"

> [1] *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.* [2] *You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.* [3] *Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1–3

> *"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"*
>
> ROMANS 10:9

πνευματικῶν

PNEUMATIKŌN · "SPIRITUAL GIFTS" · G4152

Literally "the spirituals." The word "gifts" is supplied by the translators (the NASB prints it in italics). The Greek form can be neuter ("spiritual things") or masculine ("spiritual people"), and Paul answers both questions in these three chapters: what the Spirit gives, and who the truly spiritual really are. In verse 4 he changes the word to *charismata*, "grace-gifts" — which quietly moves the spotlight from the man to the Giver. The verb of verse 1 is *agnoeō* (G50), "to be ignorant"; Paul uses the same formula for Israel's future (Rom 11:25) and for believers who have died (1 Thess 4:13).

ἀνάθεμα · Κύριος

ANATHEMA · KYRIOS · "ACCURSED" · "LORD" · G331 · G2962

Anathema is a thing devoted to destruction, placed under God's curse; Paul uses it of himself in Romans 9:3 and of false gospel-preachers in Galatians 1:8–9. *Kyrios* is the word the Greek Old Testament uses for the divine name, the LORD. So the two cries of verse 3 are opposites: one curses Jesus, the other confesses Him as God. *Iēsous Kyrios*, "Jesus is Lord," is the church's first creed (Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11). Verse 2's idols are *aphōna* (G880), "voiceless" — the dead idols had no voice; the living Spirit speaks, and what He says is the lordship of Jesus.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik starts with the word on the page: "The word "gifts" is added by the translators." Paul literally turns to "spirituals," after chapters of Corinthian carnality. Their pagan past had not prepared them to understand the gifts, and he warns that our own past teaching and experience can do the same, leaving us with materialistic or superstitious ideas of the Spirit. Verse 3 gives the broad principle for all that follows: judge things by how they relate to Jesus Christ. Does a supposed gift glorify Jesus — the true Jesus or a false one? He grounds it in John 15:26 and 16:14: "The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not to promote Himself or any man, but to glorify and represent Jesus."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

In his *Ultimately* podcast episode "Jesus Is Lord," Sproul does not treat verse 3's confession as a slogan. "The very first confession of faith of the Christian Church was a simple formula, *Iēsous ho kyrios*, 'Jesus is Lord,'" he says — long before Nicaea, Chalcedon or Westminster. He explains what it cost. Rome demanded that Christians say *kaiser kyrios*, "Caesar is lord," and they answered, "We'll call him whatever you want us to call him, but we will not call him *kyrios*." Some died in the arenas for it. That is the weight behind Paul's words: no one can say "Jesus is Lord" and mean it except by the Holy Spirit, because the words claim for Jesus what belongs to God alone.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his expository notes on 1 Corinthians, Spurgeon observes that the Corinthians had gifts but "they do not seem to have known how to use them." Some in the assembly were saying wild things in the name of the Spirit, and "Paul gives them to understand that this kind of talk could not go unrebuked." His test is simple and generous: "If a man really knows Jesus as his Lord, and he declares that truth," you may receive him as speaking by the Spirit. Spurgeon does not ask first how loud or how strange a man's utterance is; he asks what it says about Christ.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry wants the Corinthians to remember what they had been: "It is of great use to the Christian … to think what once he was: You were Gentiles." They had been hurried to "dumb idols, that had ears but could not hear, and mouths but could not speak" (Psalm 115:5–6). Then he draws the line Paul draws. No one moved by the Spirit of God curses Jesus, for the Spirit bore witness to Christ; and no one can confess Him as Lord "with a believing subjection to him and dependence upon him, unless that faith be wrought by the Holy Ghost." We depend on the Spirit for our sanctification and perseverance as truly as on Christ for our acceptance.

II
MOVEMENT

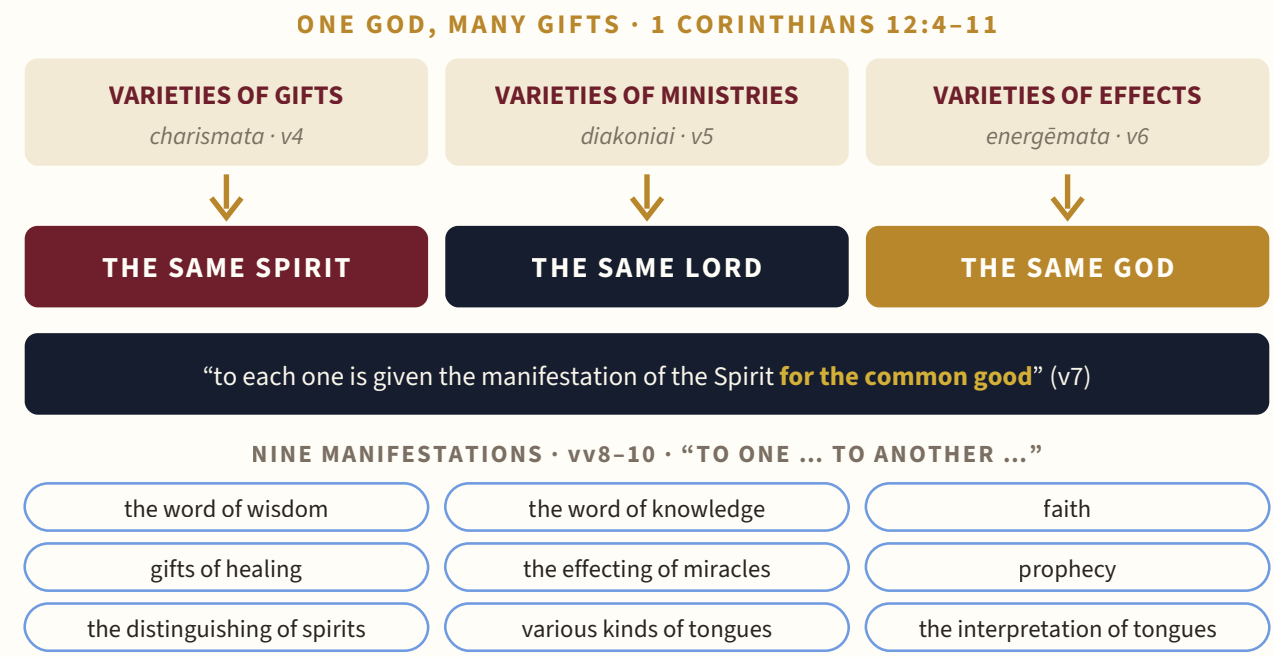
1 CORINTHIANS 12:4–11

One God, Many Gifts

Varieties of gifts, ministries and effects — from the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God

> 4 *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the* ⟲ *same Spirit.* 5 *And there are varieties of ministries, and the* ⟲ *same Lord.* 6 *There are varieties of effects, but* △ *the same God who works all things in all persons.* 7 *But* ✩ *to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit* ▤ *for the common good.* 8 *For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the* ⟲ *same Spirit;* 9 *to another faith by the* ⟲ *same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,* 10 *and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.* 11 *But one and the* ⟲ *same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually* △ *just as He wills.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4–11

FIGURE · ONE GOD, MANY GIFTS



"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (v11)

Read down each column: three kinds of variety, each traced to one Person of the Godhead — and all of it given to each one for the common good.

χαρίσματα

CHARISMATA · "GIFTS" · G5486

From *charis*, grace: a gift is grace made concrete — not earned, not a badge of rank. Paul uses the same word for salvation itself ("the free gift of God is eternal life," Rom 6:23). Verses 4–6 pair it with two more words: *diakoniai* (G1248), "ministries" — the word for table service (Acts 6:2) and for the apostolic office (Acts 1:25) alike — and *energēmata* (G1755), "effects," workings, from which we get "energy." The same root is the verb *energeō* (G1754) in verse 6 ("God who works") and verse 11 ("the same Spirit works"). Each sentence also opens with *diaireseis* (G1243), "varieties" or "distributions." Henry draws the line between *charismata* and *charis*: gifts and graces "greatly differ."

φανέρωσις · συμφέρον

PHANERŌSIS · SYMPHERON · "MANIFESTATION" · "COMMON GOOD" · G5321 · G4851

Phanerōsis is a making-visible, a disclosure; it occurs only here and 2 Corinthians 4:2. The Spirit who is always present becomes apparent through a gift. *Sympheron* is "what profits, what brings together for advantage" — the KJV's "to profit withal." Paul uses the verb for what builds others up rather than what pleases me ("All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable," 10:23). A gift is measured not by how it feels to the one using it but by what it does for the body.

διαιροῦν … καθὼς βούλεται

DIAIROUN … KATHŌS BOULETAI · "DISTRIBUTING … JUST AS HE WILLS" · G1244 · G1014

Diaireō is to divide out, apportion — the verb form of the "varieties" of verses 4–6. *Boulomai* is to will, to purpose deliberately. The Spirit is the subject of both: He decides, and He hands out. Henry takes it as proof of the Spirit's personhood: "The Holy Ghost is a divine person." A power does not have a will; a Person does. Hebrews 2:4 says the same of the gifts — "according to His own will."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears the Trinity "in a typical, subtle New Testament flow": the gifts are the work of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus and the Father. He takes "ministries" as the gifted offices of Ephesians 4 and *energēmata* as active, miraculous power. The manifestation of verse 7 is the Spirit becoming apparent, yet we should never think He is "more" present when He is manifested. He walks the nine gifts one by one, from wisdom for the critical moment (Stephen, Acts 7) to interpretation, and he holds that all of them continue today. His weight falls on "as He wills": "We should never assume that giftedness is connected to maturity." That is why leadership rests on character, not gifting — "character and maturity take time to build."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul preached on gifts in Romans 12 (25 February 2007) and called 1 Corinthians its "closest follow-up." His first point is verse 7's: "every Christian has been gifted by the Holy Spirit." You cannot be a Christian unless the Spirit regenerates you and dwells in you, and He does not come empty-handed. His second point is stewardship: "If God has given you a gift, He has not given it to you to waste." And: "If God has given you a gift, He expects you to use it." He wanted the church to help each member find his gifts so that all could work together for the common task. In his *Foundations* lesson "The Gifts of the Spirit," Ligonier notes, he surveys the different views of the gifts and their validity for our day.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's notes read verse 7 in both directions at once: the gift profits the man who has it, "and also that he may be the means of profiting those who hear him." On verse 9 he says "Paul probably means here some special kind of faith" — not the saving faith every believer has. The gift of distinguishing spirits means a man "is able to detect the impostors." And he lands where Paul lands in verse 11: "Let us all trace whatever gift we have to the hand that gave it." The gift is real; the glory belongs to the Giver.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry calls these gifts "extraordinary offices and powers, bestowed on ministers and Christians in the first ages," and sharply separates them from saving grace: "there may be great gifts where there is not a dram of grace." All come from one fountain — Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Their purpose is public: "They are not given for show, but for service; not for pomp and ostentation, but for edification; not to magnify those that have them, but to edify others." And their measure is the Spirit's pleasure: "What more free than a gift? And shall not the Spirit of God do what he will with his own?"

III
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12–20

Baptized into One Body

Many members, one body — "so also is Christ" — and the member who thinks he does not belong

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12–20

FIGURE · THE FOOT, THE EYE AND THE VERSE THEY FORGET

TWO MEMBERS TALKING THEMSELVES OUT OF THE BODY · 12:15–22

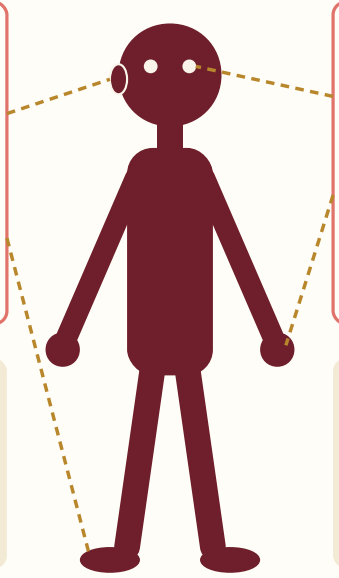
THE FOOT AND THE EAR

vv15–16

"Because I am not a hand … I am not a part of the body"

THE ERROR: "I don't belong"

Paul: "not for this reason any the less a part of the body"



THE EYE AND THE HEAD

v21

to the hand, to the feet: "I have no need of you"

THE ERROR: "I don't need you"

Paul: the members "which seem to be weaker are necessary" (v22)

LOOKS LIKE HUMILITY

compares itself with a stronger member and quits — envy, turned inward

LOOKS LIKE CONFIDENCE

compares itself with a weaker member and dismisses it — pride, turned outward

BOTH ERRORS ARGUE WITH THE SAME VERSE

"But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired." (v18)

God has so composed the body … that there may be no division (vv24–25)

The foot and the eye make opposite mistakes — one quits, one dismisses — but both are comparison, and both are answered by verse 18.

ἐβαπτίσθημεν … ἐποτίσθημεν

EBAPTISTHĒMEN … EPOTISTHĒMEN · "WE WERE BAPTIZED … MADE TO DRINK" · G907 · G4222

Both verbs are aorist passive: something done *to* us, once, by Another. *Baptizō* is to immerse; "by one Spirit" (*en heni pneumati*) every believer was plunged "into one body." *Potizō* is to give drink or to water a field (3:6–8 uses it of Apollos watering what Paul planted). The two pictures together — immersed in the Spirit and filled with Him — leave no believer outside. "We … all" comes twice. The walls Corinth knew best, Jew and Greek, slave and free, are named only to be erased (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).

μέλος · σῶμα

MELOS · SŌMA · "MEMBER" · "BODY" · G3196 · G4983

Melos is a limb or organ — not a name on a roll but a living part the body cannot do without. "Member(s)" comes seventeen times in the NASB of verses 12–27, and "body" eighteen. Paul has already used the picture for the Supper ("we who are many are one body," 10:17) and for sexual purity ("your bodies are members of Christ," 6:15). The surprise is verse 12's last clause: not "so also is the church" but "so also is Christ." The body belongs to Him so closely that Paul calls it by His name.

ἔθετο … ἠθέλησεν

ETHETO … ĒTHELĒSEN · "HAS PLACED … DESIRED" · G5087 · G2309

Tithēmi is to set, place, put in position — the verb Paul uses again in verse 28 ("God has appointed"). Middle voice here: God placed them for Himself. *Thelō* is to want, to desire; the aorist points to God's settled decision. The KJV's "as it hath pleased him" catches the sense. No member chose his own place, and no member was misplaced.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik's first sentence on this paragraph is the key: "The "body-like" unity of Christians is not a goal to achieve; it is a fact to be recognized." He reads verse 13 as Spirit baptism, the common immersion of every believer into Jesus, not water baptism as a rite of entry — and he objects that treating baptism as the church's initiation ceremony has fed unbiblical practices such as infant baptism (a point on which many Christians differ). Every cell shares one DNA yet the members look and work differently. The foot that says it is not of the body is "both foolish and mistaken." Why is a foot a foot? It pleased the Designer: "everybody has something; but nobody has everything."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul brought verse 13 to the Strange Fire conference (2013) in a talk Ligonier published as "Undervaluing Pentecost." He grants that Spirit baptism "may indeed be distinguished from the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration," but he insists that Pentecost was for the whole church: "the pouring of the Spirit is to every Christian, so that every Christian has been empowered by God." "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." No believer is a second-class Christian. His complaint against teaching that makes Spirit baptism a later experience for some is not that its view of Pentecost is too high, but that "its view of Pentecost is too low."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's notes call the body of verse 12 "Christ visible—the Church of Christ," and on verse 13 he exclaims, "Oh, what a sacred oneness that is which exists between all the Lord's people!" In his 1870 sermon "The Saint One with His Savior" (on 6:17) he reaches for this very verse: "The foot is baptised into the same spirit as the head." So when the foot complains, he answers flatly: "Of course, it is of the body still, whatever it may say." And verse 18 settles every argument about placement — "That is the best rule for each part of our body: 'as it has pleased him.'"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry says believers are made members "by the renewing of the Holy Ghost"; water baptism is the divinely instituted sign, but "it is baptism by the Spirit … that makes us true members of Christ's body." "Being animated by one Spirit makes Christians one body." To the foot and the ear he says: "the meanest member of his body is as much a member as the noblest, and as truly regarded by him. All his members are dear to him." A body all eye would be a monster. And verse 18 leaves no room to complain: "What foundation is here for repining in ourselves, or envying others?"

IV
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21–26

The Members That Seem Weaker

"I have no need of you" — and the God who gives more honor to the member that lacked

21 *And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."* 22 *On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;* 23 *and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,* 24 *whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,* 25 *so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.* 26 *And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21–26

ἀσθενέστερα … ἀναγκαῖα

ASTHENESTERA … ANANKAIA · "WEAKER … NECESSARY" · G772 · G316

Asthenēs is weak, without strength — the word of 1:27 ("God has chosen the weak things of the world") and 8:7–12 (the "weak" conscience). *Anankaios* is necessary, indispensable, what cannot be done without. Paul ties them with "much truer" (*pollō mallon*). Notice the verb: they "seem" (*dokounta*) weaker. Verse 23 adds "which we deem" — *atimotera* (G820), "less honorable," is our estimate, not God's.

συνεκέρασεν

SYNEKERASEN · "HAS SO COMPOSED" · G4786

From *synkerannymi*, to mix together, blend into one whole — the KJV's "tempered the body together." It appears only here and Hebrews 4:2, where the word did not profit Israel because it was not "united by faith." God is the blender, and He blended with a bias: "giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked." The participle "lacked" (*hysteroumenō*) is the same family as "lacking" in 1:7.

σχίσμα · συμπάσχει · συγχαίρει

SCHISMA · SYMPASCHEI · SYNCHAIREI · "DIVISION" · "SUFFER WITH" · "REJOICE WITH" · G4978 · G4841 · G4796

Schisma is a tear, a rip in cloth (Mark 2:21) — the word of 1:10 and 11:18. The whole body-picture exists "so that there may be no division." Its cure is in verse 26, two verbs with *syn*, "with": *sympaschei*, suffers with, and *synchairei*, rejoices with. *Synchairei* returns in 13:6 — love "rejoices with the truth." The verb of verse 25, *merimnaō* (G3309), is the anxious care Jesus forbade for ourselves (Matt 6:25) — here commanded for one another.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik turns to those "tempted to pride and a sense of superiority because of their gifts." We think a part of our body unimportant "until it is hurt – then we realize how important it is!" Quoting Clarke, he points to the heart, lungs and stomach — weak and hidden, yet more essential to life than the limbs. If you feel like a hidden member, "God knows how to bestow honor upon them." He presses the picture further: when one part lives only to feed and grow itself, "We call this cancer." And he notes that Paul gives the theology before the command — "the best results are based on understanding!"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul's Romans 12 sermon recalls this paragraph — "Can the eye say to the ear, 'I have no need of you?'" — and describes the church "where each part needs the help of the others." He reads Corinth without flattery: "In the church at Corinth, there was an ongoing battle for power and status," a community "torn apart by strife, where everyone was elevating their own gifts and offices over everyone else." The root, he says, is a drunken self-esteem. So his counsel runs both ways: "We are not to despise the roles that other people play," and "Don't be jealous of other people's gifts, and don't try to elevate your gift over everybody else."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's notes find tenderness in anatomy: the hand never leaves the eye to fend for itself — "it is ready at once to protect it." Of the hidden parts, "They are covered and concealed; and so we take more trouble with them." Verse 24 is "a lesson for us with regard to church-fellowship," and verse 25 means "no division, no rent in the body." He warns that "Condescension is often a sort of pride," and he notes that "It is an easier thing to suffer with those that suffer" than to rejoice when a brother is honored. In his sermon "Helps" he tells helpers to "endeavour to feel their difficulties as your own."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry sees "mutual dependence" built into the body: "the lowest members of all have their use, and the highest cannot do well without them. The eye has need of the hand, and the head of the feet." We cover the uncomely parts with care; so believers should cover a brother's infirmities, not expose them. He diagnoses division at its start: "All decays of this affection are the seeds of schism," and "this mutual disregard is a schism begun." Verse 26 is duty, not sentiment: "Christian sympathy is a great branch of Christian duty" — to suffer in our brothers' sufferings and count ourselves honored in their honors.

V
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27–31

You Are Christ's Body

God's appointments, seven questions that expect "No," and a way beyond every gift

27 *Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.* 28 *And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.* 29 *All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?* 30 *All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?* 31 *But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27–31

FIGURE · GOD'S ORDER AND PAUL'S SEVEN QUESTIONS

"GOD HAS APPOINTED IN THE CHURCH" · v28		SEVEN QUESTIONS · vv29–30	
1st	apostles	All are not apostles, are they?	NO
2nd	prophets	All are not prophets, are they?	NO
3rd	teachers — *the Word-gifts first*	All are not teachers, are they?	NO
then	miracles	All are not workers of miracles, are they?	NO
then	gifts of healings	All do not have gifts of healings, do they?	NO
•	helps	All do not speak with tongues, do they?	NO
•	administrations	All do not interpret, do they?	NO
•	various kinds of tongues — *listed last*	Each begins with μή — Greek that expects "No."	

"But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you **a still more excellent way**." (v31)

On the left, God's appointments with the Word-gifts first and tongues last; on the right, seven questions that each expect the answer "No."

ἀντιλήμψεις · κυβερνήσεις

ANTILĒMPSEIS · KYBERNĒSEIS · "HELPS" · "ADMINISTRATIONS" · G484 · G2941

Two words that occur nowhere else in the New Testament. *Antilēmpsis* is help, relief — from a verb meaning to take hold of a load alongside someone; Thayer applies the plural to the care of the poor and sick. *Kybernēsis* is steering, pilotage — the art of the ship's pilot (*kybernētēs*, Acts 27:11). Not ruling from above but guiding the ship through the water. The KJV calls them "helps, governments." Both are quiet gifts, set in the same list as apostles and miracles.

ζηλοῦτε

ZĒLOUTE · "EARNESTLY DESIRE" · G2206

To burn with zeal for something — for good (14:1, 39) or for ill ("love … is not jealous," 13:4, the same verb). The form can be a command ("desire!") or a statement ("you are desiring"). Most translations take it as a command; Henry reports that some read it as a charge — "You are envious at each other's gifts" — and either way Paul redirects the zeal toward the "greater" gifts (*meizona*, G3173), the ones that build up the church (14:5, 12).

καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν ὁδόν

KATH' HYPERBOLĒN HODON · "A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY" · G5236

Hyperbolē is a throwing beyond — our word "hyperbole." *Kath' hyperbolēn* means "beyond measure, surpassingly" (Rom 7:13; 2 Cor 1:8). Paul does not offer a better gift but a better *way* (*hodos*), a road to walk while using every gift. The next verse names it: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (13:1).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik holds that the original apostles had a unique authority "which will never be repeated because the foundation of the church has already been set (Ephesians 2:20)," and that anyone claiming the title "prophet" should be held to Deuteronomy 18's standard. He loves the helpers — the Levites were called helps of the priests, and an old Puritan preached on "And Bartholomew," the man always named beside someone else. On verse 30 he is blunt: "Great damage has been done in the church by promoting tongues as necessary." The more excellent way is love; the gifts are only the containers. Trapp: "A shopful of barrels enrich not, unless full of commodities."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

In "Zeal without Knowledge" (Tabletalk), Sproul says that in chapters 12–14 Paul deals with abuses of tongues and "rebukes those who had elevated their gifts over those of others." Paul "did not put tongues, or *glossolalia*, at the apex of gifts," though "he does not outlaw their use"; in chapter 14 he compares the good and the better. Sproul speaks from experience: he once sought the gift and prayed in tongues with friends, "But I found no great edification from it and still preferred to pray with understanding." He objected when tongues were made a necessary sign, splitting the church into two classes of Christians. And in his Romans 12 sermon he says apostleship "was only for the first century."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached a whole sermon on one word of verse 28 — "Helps" (No. 777, 1867). These are the people who help others who cannot help themselves: "Learn to stoop your back"; "you must go right down to the man." Anyone can be one — "I cannot pray in public, but I can help." He has no patience for idle members: "We do not want any drones," and "Every Christian who is not a bee is a wasp." On verse 31, in "Grace Preferred to Gifts" (No. 2694), he says, "Gifts are good, but grace is better," for "Gift is often barren, but grace is always fruitful."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry notes the order of verse 28: "Those of most value have the first place." Apostles, prophets and teachers instruct the people; tongues stand last, and spoken "merely to amuse or boast," the gift can raise admiration but cannot edify. All are not apostles — that would make the church "a monster." On verse 31 he weighs both readings of *zeloute*: covet the best gifts, or a rebuke of their envy. Their quarrels were "about precedency," and pride extinguishes charity. So: "Grace is therefore to be preferred before gifts," and "To have the heart glow with mutual love is vastly better than to glare with the most pompous titles, offices, or powers."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From Moses' wish to the Damascus road — where 1 Corinthians 12 reaches back and forward

> *"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."*
>
> ROMANS 12:4–5

> *"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;"*
>
> EPHESIANS 4:11–12

> *"from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."*
>
> EPHESIANS 4:16

> *"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*
>
> 1 PETER 4:10

> *"He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."*
>
> JOHN 16:14

> *"and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?""*
>
> ACTS 9:4

> *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*
>
> GALATIANS 3:28

> *"But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!""*
>
> NUMBERS 11:29

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads the "ministries" of verse 5 beside the gifted offices of Ephesians 4 — apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers — and the test of verse 3 beside John 15:26 and 16:14: the Spirit's whole ministry is to testify of Jesus and glorify Him.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry reads the mute idols of verse 2 through Psalm 115 — idols "that had ears but could not hear, and mouths but could not speak" — and the Corinthians' former state through Ephesians 2:12, strangers to the covenants and without God in the world.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and makes the case that every gift continues; Sproul presses the doctrine — the creed, the universal gift of the Spirit, and a warning against tongues as a required sign; Spurgeon turns the anatomy into fellowship and the helps into a calling; Henry gathers it into Puritan counsel and treats the extraordinary gifts as belonging to the first ages. They agree on the body; they differ on the continuation of the miraculous gifts.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The test	Judge every gift by how it relates to Jesus; the Spirit glorifies Him.	"Jesus is Lord" was the first creed — and Christians died rather than call Caesar kyrios.	Not how strange the utterance, but what it says about Christ.	Remember you were Gentiles; no one owns Christ as Lord but by the Spirit.
II · The gifts	Trinity in the flow; giftedness is not maturity; all the gifts continue.	Every Christian is gifted; God expects you to use it, not waste it.	Trace whatever gift you have to the hand that gave it.	Not for show but for service; great gifts, perhaps not a dram of grace.
III · One body	Unity is a fact to be recognized; nobody has everything.	Pentecost was for every Christian; no second-class believers.	A sacred oneness; the foot is of the body whatever it may say.	One Spirit makes one body; the meanest member is as dear as the noblest.
IV · The weaker	We notice a member when it hurts; self-serving parts are cancer.	Corinth's battle for status; don't despise others' roles or envy their gifts.	Condescension is a sort of pride; feel their difficulties as your own.	Mutual disregard is a schism begun; sympathy is Christian duty.
V · The order	Apostles' foundation laid; tongues not for all; love fills the barrels.	Tongues not the apex, not outlawed; pray with understanding.	Helps: stoop your back; gifts are good, grace is better.	Most valuable first, tongues last; love outshines pompous titles.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1–31 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The chapter begins with the Giver, not the gifts.** Before a single gift is named, Paul gives a test of content: the Spirit says "Jesus is Lord." Guzik: judge things "by how they relate to Jesus Christ." THE TEXT
- **"Jesus is Lord" is a creed that costs something.** Sproul: the church's first confession was *Iēsous ho kyrios*, and Christians died rather than give the title *kyrios* to Caesar. SPROUL
- **Variety is Trinitarian.** Gifts from the same Spirit, ministries from the same Lord, effects from the same God (vv. 4–6). "Same" comes six times in vv. 4–11; diversity in the church reflects God, not a lapse in Him. THE TEXT
- **Verse 7 disarms the proud and the discouraged at once.** "To each one" — no one was skipped. "For the common good" — no one's showcase. Henry: "not given for show, but for service." HENRY
- **Giftedness is not maturity.** The Spirit gives "just as He wills" (*bouletai*), not as a reward. Guzik: leadership rests on character, because "character and maturity take time to build." GUZIK
- **"So also is Christ."** Paul does not say "so also is the church." The body bears Christ's name, which is why Jesus asked Saul, "why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). THE TEXT
- **Every believer was baptized by the Spirit.** Two aorist passives — "baptized," "made to drink" — and "all" twice (v. 13). Sproul: no second-class Christians; a later-blessing view of Pentecost is "too low," not too high. THE GREEK

- **The foot and the eye make the same mistake.** One says "I don't belong," the other "I don't need you"; both compare, and both argue with verse 18: "God has placed the members … just as He desired." THE TEXT
- **God composed the body with a bias toward the weak.** *Synekerasen* — He blended the body, "giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked" (v. 24), the same reversal as 1:27. Henry: mutual disregard "is a schism begun." THE GREEK
- **The quiet gifts are in the list.** "Helps" and "administrations" appear nowhere else in the New Testament. Spurgeon: "I cannot pray in public, but I can help" — and "Gifts are good, but grace is better." SPURGEON

† Questions for the Table

1 **Before I ask whether something "spiritual" is powerful, do I ask whether it makes Jesus Lord? Where has excitement fooled me?**

The Spirit's signature is the lordship of Christ, not intensity.

12:1-3; John 16:14

2 **What gift has the Spirit given me, and who received the "common good" of it this past week?**

Every believer has a manifestation of the Spirit; none is for private display.

12:7, 11; 1 Pet 4:10

3 **Have I been the foot — "because I am not ___, I don't really belong here"? What does verse 18 say to me?**

God placed you, each one, just as He desired. You were baptized into the body, not auditioned.

12:13-18

4 **Have I been the eye — "I have no need of you"? Who at this table, or in my church, have I quietly written off?**

The members that seem weaker are necessary; God gives them more abundant honor.

12:21-24; 1:27

5 **When a brother here is suffering — a relapse, a court date, a death — do I suffer with him, or send a text and move on? Can I rejoice when another man is honored?**

The body feels together; Spurgeon: suffering with is easier than rejoicing with.

12:26; Rom 12:15; Heb 13:3

6 **What would it look like for me to be one of the "helps" this week, and to pursue love above any gift?**

Helps: stoop your back, go right down to the man. The more excellent way is love.

12:28, 31; 13:1

Paul ends where he began: with the Spirit who confesses Jesus as Lord, gives to each one as He wills, and baptized every believer into one body, while God placed every member just as He desired. The church that believes this stops ranking, stops envying, and stops saying "I have no need of you" — and then it is ready for the more excellent way of chapter 13.

Teaching the Word. Living in the Light. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; his *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians was completed after his death by Simon Browne from his notes

and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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