

September 26

Scriptures: Read 1 Corinthians 12

Key Verse: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”
(1 Corinthians 12:7 NIV)

Overview

Unity in diversity: That’s the story on the body of Christ. We’re all different, and we’re all one—or, at least, we’re supposed to be.

Paul begins a three-chapter dissertation designed to dispel “ignorance” about spiritual gifts. The Corinthian church didn’t need to be motivated in this area—they were the most “charismatic” of all his congregations. But they were so keen on their individual gifting that they were forgetting the primary function of spiritual gifts: to meet the needs of a coordinated body. Instead there was confusion, wrangling, and division. Paul sets out to put spiritual gifts into perspective.

He establishes three underlying principles for any discussion or understanding of spiritual gifts: (1) Not all gifts are the same, (2) God is the same, and (3) The gifts are given by God for the common good (vv.4-7).

One person is an “eye”; another is a “foot”. One is visible; another is behind the scenes. And even though one member may be more visible, and thereby given greater deference (the hand, for example), the unseen member may be more vital (the liver, for example). God, however, is the “same”—He coordinates all these differing members. And the manifestation of the gifts has meaning only if their motive is “the common good”

Spiritual giant hood doesn’t apply here. We don’t seek gifts for gifts’ sake. Nor do we seek the “honor” a gift may bring; we seek to serve our brother. Service, not achievement, is the underlying motivation for exercising one’s gift.

If we don’t stir up our gift for God and Christian brothers, then we’re wasting our time, regardless of impressive our gift may be. The bottom line in this discussion is not giftedness at all; the litmus test is fruitfulness.

Prayer

Father, as we prayed yesterday, we truly want to live right with fellow members of the body of Christ. You gave the gifts of the Spirit so we could minister one to another, and so that there would be no schism in the body. Help us to have the same care for one another, as we would want to receive in our time of need.