

First Corinthians Chapter Twelve

Inductive Lesson Twelve



Unity Out of Diversity

The first year our new high school opened, the administration thought having friendly staff versus student competitions would be a great way to build school spirit because most of the fledgling athletic teams were taking a real beating. The initial contest was a tug of war between fifteen of the largest students on campus versus the only fifteen staff members foolish enough to volunteer. The entire campus turned out at lunch expecting to see fifteen teachers pulled head over heels into the mud pit separating the two teams. Looking at the mass and the muscle on the two teams, a student victory seemed a foregone conclusion. However, one of our varsity coaches stepped forward and said if we would work in unison with each other doing only his assigned task we would trounce our opponents. Our shot put coach was to serve as the anchor, I was assigned to the front and told to taunt and trash talk our rivals, and all others were to give a forceful short tug every time the coach shouted 'go teachers'. When the principal yelled "Go!!!" we lost a little ground but as we worked together we slowly moved the students closer to the pit until every student got a mud bath. That day we forged the motto for our new school, "Together we can, together we will". This is the essence of the message Paul is giving to the Corinthians in chapter twelve. Within the Body of Christ, that is the church, there are a wide variety of spiritual gifts given to different members of the body. The use and exercise of these spiritual gifts is essential for the smooth operation and success of ministry.

When we moved into our new house as a part of the 'welcome to the neighborhood' mail, we have received many gifts from local merchants. When you accepted Jesus as your Savior you received a welcome to the kingdom package, which included one or more spiritual gifts. According to verse seven we are expected to use our gift for the common good of the Body. Unfortunately, in most churches on any given Sunday, it resembles a stadium of fans at a professional football game. You have twenty-two men on the field desperately in need of a rest, while they are being watched by fifty thousand in the stands who are desperately in need of exercise. When our talents go unused, we suffer and the Body suffers as well. We do not want to be like the servant chastised in Matthew 25:25 for not using our talent but hiding it in the ground. Christianity is not a spectator sport. John MacArthur goes so far as saying that not using your spiritual gift is an act of disobedience.¹

Paul goes to great length to establish that all gifts are of worth and essential to a healthy church body. In God's economy there is no hierarchy of gifts, meaning that helps ministries are as valuable as teaching. We tend to admire those with more visible gifts such as teaching and take for granted those exercising less showy gifts. Paul uses a metaphor of parts of the human body to dispel this notion. Indeed, this was the message of our founding fathers when they chose the Latin phrase 'E Pluribus Unum' (Out of Many One) imprinted on American coins opposite the phrase 'In God We Trust'.

There is some controversy today concerning some of the gifts listed in this chapter. Certain denominations focus on the extensive use of certain gifts (such as speaking in tongues). While other groups within the church feel that certain gifts (healings, miracles, tongues and interpretation of tongues) were temporary or sign gifts that while active during the apostolic period of the church in the first century have since ceased to function. Northpoint believes that all spiritual gifts listed are

available today as the Holy Spirit sees appropriate for use. However, Northpoint recognizes this is not an essential doctrine and is tolerant of other viewpoints.

¹John MacArthur. *New Testament Commentary – First Corinthians*. Moody Publishers. Chicago. 1984

Prayer

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh insights and wisdom in understanding it. Then read through the entire passage two or three times. It is helpful to view the passage in a different translation for one of your readings.

Inductive Method Step 1: Observation

My Observations: In the left column, write down observations you make directly from the text. Things to look for:

What are the promises?

What are the commands?

What are the sources of conflict?

What are the cause/effect relationships?

What are repeated words and ideas (areas of special emphasis)?

What do we know about who is speaking and who is receiving the message?

What comparisons and contrasts can you identify and what do they illustrate?

Do you have any questions on part of the passage?

Digging Deeper: In the right column, write down any additional observations you can add from such sources as:

Others scriptures that apply (cross references)

Dictionaries for specific words (English or Greek dictionary)

Bible dictionaries for historical information

Commentaries

Parallel passages in other books of the Bible. These passages, while similar, may reveal small but important additional details about subject.

Inductive Method Step 2: Interpretation

Webster tells us that *interpret* means “to explain the meaning or make understandable.” What is the spiritual truth or lesson that God is trying to teach in this passage? Don’t isolate the passage but read into it and read out of it. Look for commands, imperatives (orders). promises or warnings. What is God saying to those people at that time? You will share what God is saying to you in the next section.

Inductive Method Step 3: Application

This is where you purpose to do what God has taught you in your time with Him. It is through applying the Word that God changes lives. Application does not happen by osmosis but by intent. God enlightens us with His Word, we apply what we’ve learned by our wills, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to carry out these choices. The goal of all application is to glorify God by becoming more like Jesus. Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for...”

Teaching: What did I learn?

Reproof: Where to I fall short?

Correction: What will I do about it?

Training in Righteousness: How can I make this principle a consistent part of my life?

Study Text / Worksheet

Write down your observations, comments, or questions directly on the text as you go over it.

Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. **3** Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. **4** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; **5** and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; **6** and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. **7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. **8** For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, **10** to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. **11** All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

My Observations

Digging Deeper

Interpretation: _____

Application: _____

One Body With Many Members

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. **14** For the body does not consist of one member but of many. **15** If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? **18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19** If all were a single member, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. **21** The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” **22** On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, **24** which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, **25** that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. **26** If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. **27** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. **28** And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of

healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. **29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? **30** Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? **31** But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

My Observations	Digging Deeper
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Interpretation:

Application:

Take Away / Summary

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did on Thursday night, you would tell them a Bible Study. The next question would likely be, "What did you learn?" We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences which easily will convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills giving a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in additional sentence or two, describe how this passage will impact how you live.

Memory Verse

Select the verse from this chapter that you feel is most worthy of memorization. Jot down the address of the verse and share why you selected this one.

Tool Box

Step 1: The Bible. Read the passage in a couple of different versions. If you are having trouble understanding a passage, choose a more dynamic version such as *New Living Translation* or *The Message*. To focus in on the exact meaning of a verse, choose a more literal translation such as *New American Standard Bible*. You can access various versions online for free (see blueletterbible.com or biblegateway.com)

Step 2: Study Tools. Use these to help you dig deeper. Background Information: 1) Unger's Bible Dictionary 2) Bible Dictionaries online at biblestudytools.com and blueletterbible.com. Word Studies: 1) Zodhiates' *The Complete Word Study New Testament* 2) Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary* 3) Strong's *Dictionary of Bible Words*

Step 3: Commentaries. Commentaries should not be used in place of studying God's Word directly, but they can give you additional insights. Some good commentaries include: John MacArthur, J. Vernon McGee, *The Expositors Commentary*, NIV Application Commentary, F.F. Bruce, William Barclay (great for background and culture).

Step 4: Online Assistance. Should you have a specific question about the study feel free to email your inquiry to: runnewt@mac.com

Various Translations of the Bible

There are more translations of the Bible available online than flavors at Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream Shop. This chart developed by Zondervan is designed to help you sort through the myriad of possibilities. Those on the left side are more literal (word for word) and accurate while those on the right are more dynamic and flow or read easier. If a passage is difficult to understand it might be helpful to re-read it in one of the translations found on the right side of the chart before studying it further.

IL=Greek Interlinear NASB=New American Standard Bible AMP=Amplified
ESV=English Standard Version (official version of Northpoint) KJV=King James Version
NKJV=New King James Version NIV=New International Version
NLT=New Living Translation Message=Eugene Peterson's paraphrase

