

CONVERSATION GUIDE

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon.

READ 1 Corinthians 12

DISCUSS and REFLECT

Paul established the Corinthian church around 50 A.D. and lived in Corinth for about 2 years before continuing his missionary journeys (Acts 18). The church that he left behind was struggling to live out its faith in a city full of temptations, and the 1 Corinthians letter was written to the new community of believers to address some issues and questions that were occurring in the church. In this passage, he responds to a question that he received from them about the special abilities that the Spirit gives to us. Here, and in other areas of the bible (Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4:10-11), we can read lists of these spiritual gifts. While it is possible that the Corinthians were having a specific issue with speaking in tongues (Fee), it is not exactly clear what the issue was that they were having with spiritual gifts. Paul does, however, make three very clear points in the passage about spiritual gifts:

1. All spiritual gifts come from God.
2. All believers have a gift; the gifts are different, but all are important.
3. The gifts are given for the common good.

All spiritual gifts come from God.

We see "Spirit," "Lord" and "God" repeated over and over in this passage which indicates that God is the focus, not us. If pride about one's spiritual gift was causing friction in the Corinthian community, Paul makes clear that our gifts come from God and should not be a source of personal pride. Reread vs. 4-6 and note that we have different gifts, service and work but the same God. It's God at work, not us. "All spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit decides which gifts each believer should have. We are responsible to use and sharpen our gifts, but we can take no credit for what God has freely given us" (Life Application Study Bible).

Are you inclined to take credit for any spiritual gift that God has given to you?

All believers have a gift; the gifts are different, but all are important.

While some may believe that they have no special spiritual gifts, this passage and other verses clearly state that God has given each believer something to use for the benefit of the body of Christ. "In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well" (Romans 12:6 NLT). It appears that the Corinthians were potentially having an issue with elevating some gifts above others. In 12:31, we read that "some of you keep competing for so-called "important" parts" (the Message). "Instead of building up and unifying the Corinthian church, the issue of spiritual gifts was splitting it. Spiritual gifts had become symbols of spiritual power, causing rivalries because some people thought they were more "spiritual" than others because of their gifts" (Life Application Bible). Paul devotes a large part of this passage (vs. 12-26) to describing the one body/many parts analogy, and he makes it very clear that all gifts matter. "God himself is a Triune God; there is one God, but he exists in three Persons. There is diversity in unity, and wherever you find God at work you will always find that mark" (Steadman).

Do you view some gifts as more spiritual than other gifts? Speaking in tongues vs hospitality for example.

The gifts are given for the common good.

"A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other" (12:7 NLT). We also read in 1 Peter, that "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another" (NLT 4:10). This is a fairly simple, clear message – we should use our gifts to help others and to spread the good news of Jesus. "Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits" (The Message 4-11).

APPLY

As we are charged in FPC's Vision 2020, "we will need to recognize our unique gifts and surrender them to Jesus for his kingdom work." In other words, if we want to bring glory to God, take the gifts that he has given us, and use them to serve other people. Find your gift and go serve – it's that simple. He gives the gifts, and we use them for His glory.

Ray Steadman summarized this well: "God, at infinite cost, has given gifts to his people without exception -- nobody is left out, everybody has one -- and yet people can live for years and years of their Christian life and never ask themselves, "I wonder what my gift is?""

Do you know your spiritual gift(s)?

Discuss your gift with your small group and how you are using it to benefit others.

If you are not sure about how to use your gift, discuss with your small group how you can use your gift to serve others.

MEMORIZE

"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." 1 Peter 4:10 NLT

Sources:

Gordon D. Fee commentary, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#)
Ray Steadman Sermons
Life Application Study Bible