

LESSON 21: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:11-13:13

One Body, Many Parts

1. How are Christians like a human body (vv. 12-13)? Why is Christian unity important? (See also v. 26.)
2. If Paul were writing today, what divisions in our culture would he state are overcome in the oneness of Christ's body? Describe an event in your life in which you have experienced the oneness of the body of Christ.
3. In the body of Christ, what happens when one particular gift is emphasized to the exclusion of others?
4. Why might some members of Faith feel useless or inferior within the body? What is the answer (vv. 14-20)? How does Paul handle the human tendency toward self-doubt? Why might some members of Faith feel superior to others within the body? What is the answer (vv. 21-26)? What are causes of the "independent spirit" that threatens the members of the body of Christ?
5. How should the reality of unity in Christ be manifested in the life of your Church? What hindrances are there in realizing that unity?
6. Define each of the eight ministries mentioned in v. 28: apostle, prophet, teacher, miracle worker, healer, helper, administrator, speaker, and interpreter of tongues. What are the higher gifts? Why are they "higher?" How do you "seek" them? Paul does not offer a complete list of spiritual gifts in this chapter, and not "all" have the gifts which he lists (vv. 27-30). However, what should all of us "eagerly desire" (v. 31)?
7. What, in summary, does chapter 12 teach about the source, purpose, variety, and priority of spiritual gifts? What does this chapter teach about unity and diversity in the body of Christ?

The Gift of Love

1. Why is the one who does something, but has not love, said to be “nothing” (vv. 1-3)? How does motivation affect the perceived value and the true value of an act?
2. What then is so tragic about using your gift or gifts without love (vv. 1-3; see also 8:1 and 12:7). How does this destroy the unity of the church?
3. List the characteristics of love (vv. 4-8a) and describe/define each one. Why do you think Paul gives us more examples of what love “isn’t” than of what love “is”? What does this tell us?
4. Paul writes that love “rejoices with the truth” (v. 6), thereby joining love and truth. Why is it so difficult to join love and truth in our thoughts, words, and actions? Which aspects of love do you find the hardest to practice consistently (vv. 4-7)? Why? Finally, in my view, the ESV provides a better translation of verse 7 than does the NIV: “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” Can our love look like that? How?
5. In verse 8, Paul compares love with prophecy, tongues and knowledge. Why do these gifts (or any other gift, for that matter) have limited value, while love is unlimited in its greatness (vv. 8-12)? Why will love “never fail” (v. 8)?
6. In verse 11, Paul contrasts the behavior of a child with that of an adult. How are the Corinthian Christians childish in their attitudes and actions? In what ways is the church today childish?
7. Who will you “see face to face” and “know fully” when “perfection” comes (vv. 10-12; see also Job 19:25-27; 1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:10-14). Why will faith, hope, and love remain (v. 13)? Why is this love the ultimate solution to the divisions in the Corinthian church (and for our church) (see Matthew 22:27-40 and 1 John 4:7-12)?