

Bible Study Group Notes

1 Corinthians 12.1-11

THE BIG PICTURE

The Christians in Corinth were very interested in what looked spiritual. They valued dramatic gifts and striking experiences, but this was producing comparison, competition, pride, and disorder in the church.

Paul does not want them to ignore the work of the Holy Spirit. But before they can understand spiritual gifts, they need to understand what the Spirit-filled life really looks like. It begins with confessing that Jesus is Lord. The Spirit does not draw attention away from Jesus, but brings us under his rule.

Then Paul shows that God gives differently. The same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God work through different gifts, services, and activities. Difference in the church is not a problem to overcome, but part of God's design. And whatever God gives is not given merely for me, but for the common good.

INVESTIGATE

Read 1 Corinthians 12.1-11.

1. What does Paul not want the Corinthians to be "uninformed" about? Why might this have mattered in Corinth? See 12.1-2.
2. According to 12.2-3, what contrast does Paul draw between their former pagan life and the work of the Holy Spirit?
3. Why is "Jesus is Lord" such an important starting point for thinking about spiritual gifts? See 12.3.
4. What repeated words and phrases do you notice in 12.4-6?
5. What do 12.4-6 teach us about variety and unity in the church?
6. According to 12.7, to whom is the manifestation of the Spirit given?
7. What is the purpose of the Spirit's gifts in 12.7?
8. Look at the examples in 12.8-10. What range of gifts does Paul mention?
9. What does 12.11 teach us about who gives gifts, and how they are distributed?

REFLECT & APPLY

10. When you hear the word "spiritual", what kind of person or experience do you tend to imagine? How does 1 Corinthians 12.1-3 challenge or correct that?
11. Paul begins not with gifts, but with Jesus as Lord. Where might you be tempted to want help, usefulness, or spiritual experience from Jesus, without gladly submitting to his rule?
12. How does the truth that "God gives differently" challenge comparison in the church?
13. How does it challenge superiority or pride?
14. Are there gifts, roles, or kinds of service in church life that you are tempted either to overvalue or undervalue? Why?
15. Verse 7 says that gifts are given "for the common good". What has God given you – ability, experience, time, money, wisdom, faith, practical skill, hospitality, encouragement – and who is presently benefiting from it?
16. How can we make sure that "serving for the common good" does not become anxious busyness, but remains rooted in love and grace?

PRAY

- Thank God that the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to Jesus and leads us to confess him as Lord.
- Ask God to forgive pride, comparison, passivity, and the desire to remain in control.
- Pray that St Peter's would value the variety of gifts God gives, including quieter and less visible forms of service.
- Ask God to help each of us use what he has entrusted to us for the good of others and the building up of the church.

NB The Church Prayer Pointers for September are available in church or on the WhatsApp group.