

- ✍ Imagine a large jigsaw puzzle with many pieces in front of us: every piece is different in size, shape, and color. Every piece is necessary to complete the puzzle. There are not any extra pieces. Every piece fits into only one place. If we force a piece to fit where it does not, then there will be two pieces out of place. This is one way of thinking about what the Bible calls the Body of Christ. A Body is like a puzzle in some respects and our job, as the Body of Christ, is to be constantly reworking the puzzle. We are all pieces of that Body, all are different, all are needed, none are extras, and all having a unique place within the Body. Nobody else can fit where we fit into the Body.
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1. The last time we were together, we began looking at the Body of Christ and the diseases that can harm it. This week we will consider the things each of can do to make the Body better. Simply put: God has so gifted the Body of Christ that each parts best contribution to that Body is to be itself!

- ✓ 1st Corinthians 12:1, the word "gifts" is in italics in my translation because it was not in the original Greek but was added to clarify what is being said. The immediate context is not so much spiritual gifts as much as it is spiritual things in general. Paul is trying to give discerning direction because not all things that are spiritual are good. People are enamored by spiritual things: supernatural or unexplained things. 1st Corinthians 12:2, there is a spiritual power in paganism, but it is not good! In paganism, there was and is speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, miracles, healings. 1st Corinthians 12:3, this is a test about who is really with Jesus or not, and just the saying of them is not the real test (because I just said them both, as can anybody else). It is the saying it and believing it that matters here. The fact is that those who are involved in spiritual things can appear similar until we get to the subject of Jesus, then they part ways. The issue is not Judeo/Christian tradition, ethics in the Bible, or the moral law of the Bible. The issue is Jesus. The issue is not Jesus the miracle worker, teacher, example, but Jesus as Lord and Master. The Cross?, we come to the cross to realize God's sacrifice to save us, but we don't stay there. The Empty Tomb? We are getting closer to Jesus, but Jesus isn't there! The Central truth of Christianity is the Living Christ, Lord of all! Remember the question Jesus asked His disciples?, "Who do you say that I am?" He is still asking that question today.

2. It is to the group that claims Jesus as Lord that Paul begins to explain their differences and how they function together.

- ✓ 1st Corinthians 12:4, 'Gift' is the word "charismata" (where we get our word charismatic) in the Greek, it has the root "charis" which means "grace." These gifts are gifts of grace. The grace of God is something that is not earned or deserved but is given because God chooses. We cannot take credit for our salvation by grace any more than we can take credit for our gifts which are by grace. Technically, since every gift is a charismatic gift, we are all, in the Body of Christ, Charismatics! Diversity is inherited in the "Body just in the same way as puzzle pieces will each have their unique characteristics. "Varieties of gifts...but the same Spirit." One is gifted just like the next even though some seem more "spiritual" than others at times. Each gift is a gift to the "Body" before it is ever a gift to the individual. A gift of God is something not directly for the person who possesses it but for the Body who needs it. A gift can only benefit the person who possesses it in a secondary fashion: He or she is only blessed when that gift of given away to benefits others. A gift is a capacity for service for the Body's benefit.
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The Corinthian Letters, Lesson 41, 1st Corinthians 12:1-7 , An in the Body Experience, Part 2

- ✓ 1st Corinthians 12:5, varieties of gifts, there are varieties of ways that any one gift can be used. Every gift's application comes through the unique personality and experiences of the one upon whom the gift is given. For instance, the gift of Teaching: can be used to preach; write curriculum; teach a class of adults or children; write books; etc. The gift of Mercy, the person may be a counselor; a teacher; a social worker in the sense that they work with those who need mercy, orphanages, halfway house, hospitals, or, maybe, just seeing you in church and sensing your need. 1st Corinthians 12:6, a variety in gifts and those who use them and a variety in results. The same gift will not produce the same results in every person who has it. Some have a wide scope, Billy Graham had an evangelism gift; does that mean that all evangelists have the same results?, NO! So: many different gifts, many different people with them, many different ways they can be used with many different results, but One God who gives them all.
- ✓ 1st Corinthians 12:7, "each one," there is no believer without a gift just as there is no puzzle piece without a place. In a very real sense, a believer without a ministry is a contradiction in terms, there is a place for each one of us. Every gift is a ministry, if our hearts are to follow Jesus and be useful to Him, we will find those ministries. Have you ever tried to work a puzzle without all the pieces? Can you still make out the picture? Is it complete? There is a place in the Body of Christ that only you fill! "Manifestation of Spirit," the way He shows Himself in each one of us is unique, special and purposeful, it also throws out any idea that says only certain gifts are the manifestation of the Spirit. "Common good," your gift is your ministry to the Body; what God has gifted you to do, He has called you to do. Your gift is your obligation to the Body of Christ. Your gift states the fact that you have a debt you owe to the Body.

Your gift does not directly benefit you, it's not your gift but for others that you are to give to them, and they have gifts that are yours that they give to you.
