

1 Corinthians Ch 12:12-31

“Care For One Another”

You know one of the things that interest me about this particular portion of scripture is where exactly Paul the apostle places the emphasis regarding what he desires believers to know, understand and operate in. We've taken the last 2 weeks introducing, looking into, and studying, that is seeing in action throughout the pages of the scriptures these various gifts of the Spirit that are listed for us in these 1st 11 Vs. **What the bible says and shows in regards to them because for us in the church today it seems to be a bit of a mystery, how does this happen specifically and what should I expect personally when the Spirit is manifesting Himself through the gifts? But Paul didn't take the time to expound any of those things.** He just says, “Here's a variety of ways in which the Holy Spirit might manifest Himself among you, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, via faith, various healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and the interpretation thereof.” and Then he moves on, not taking the time to explain really any of those gifts in action, the practical implications or connotations behind any of them.

and I'm not sure really why that is, probably because what those gifts were and how they operated were the given in the equation, because it wasn't until about the middle of the 4th century that the gifts of the Spirit even came into question. Up until that point they were just the expected norm, but around the middle of the 4th century (and I don't want to pick on anyone) but due to what we might term today as “hyper-Pentecostalism” people getting out of control and really freaking people out in the name of Jesus. Swinging from chandeliers, handling snakes, rolling in the isles (of course I'm putting it in modern vernacular/lingo but that's the essence of it) and so the church rightly condemned that course of action and people said, “You see, when you believe that miraculous gifts are for today, that's what happens to you. You become fruit basket.” and So everybody said, “Let's not touch it.” **and It's not much different today is it? There are certain groups of people that seem to be off their rocker with respect to what they consider to be of the Holy Spirit and so people respond by saying, “Man, those people have lost their minds and if that's the way things go when you're open to the Holy Spirit moving in your life, then lets not touch it.”** and So you have the body of Christ polarized in many respects in one extreme position or the other; and we spent some time speaking about that over the last couple of weeks so I'm not going to readdress the issue today. But I think that it's important that when it comes to the gifts of the Spirit, and really any/everything else when it comes to our walk and relationship with God that rather than looking at what's going on around us and drawing conclusions based upon circumstantial evidence. **We need to just seek out what the bible says, and what the bible shows in its context and let the Word of God give us the proper balance and understanding as to the heart of God on the given issue.**

and Can I just say that when you look into the Word of God you don't find expiration dates given on the promises of God's Word. “Well the sign gifts died out with the apostles.” You have to read that into the Word, because the word in no way shape or form endorses that idea. Jesus said, “...*these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*”
Mark 16:17-18

Now of course you have those who remove that from its context and because of that they handle snakes, that's not what Jesus was saying at all. But my point is that Jesus didn't offer a particular time period that that promise would be relevant to. Remember there in Acts Ch 2 when the Holy Spirit fell and Peter stood up to address the crowd explaining what was going on?

and After he shared the gospel and gave them scripture with regard to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit that would accommodate His coming upon them he said, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise (that is the promise of the Holy Spirit and all that that entails) is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”* Acts 2:38-39 So again he doesn't issue an expiration date there, or say “You better get in on this while we apostles are still alive because after that God will withdraw His offer.” “The promise is to you, your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” So you have to apply an artificial division upon the scriptures to retract any particular set of spiritual gifts because the bible doesn't do it.

The bible simply states a # of ways in which the Holy Spirit might minister to and manifest Himself to the body, and then it moves on. But for Paul, making sure that the believers understood the particulars that revolve around each gift really wasn't the issue. However making sure that they understood that they were a *family*, that they were a *body*, and that they were to look out *for*, tend *to* and take care *of* one another was. **So he gives 3 Vs to the listing of a few specific gifts and then takes the next 16 to develop and expound upon this fact of body life and the essential nature of our interdependent need for one another and how God uses diversity to create unity in the body of Christ. Notice**

Vs 12

Now you remember that in the 1st portion of this Ch Paul spoke of diversities of gifts, differences of ministries, diversities of activities, but it's the same Spirit, Same Lord, same God who works all in all. and Then in Vs 7 he said that the point of any of those things taking place in any individual's life was for the profit, or benefit and blessing of all. **and Really Vs 8-11 are parenthetical, it's a “for instance” section. It's peripheral to his primary point, he's primarily pointing out the fact that even though the Holy Spirit works in different ways in different people's lives the purpose of it is to unite us and bring us together so that we might function effectively as a body for the benefit of one another to the glory of Jesus Christ**

Remember there was all kinds of division on multiple levels in the church at Corinth, and Paul is seeking to shed some light on how the body of Christ is to operate on a corporate level, in the collective gathering. and Ultimately (you might tuck this away) he's saying that there's not a single Christian who should not be serving somewhere, somehow and in some way, and never for personal gain but for the profit or benefit of the body, of others. **and In order to illustrate this the Holy Spirit inspires him to use the brilliant example of something we're all familiar with and that is the way our own body works. He says, “Check it out, just like your physical body has many members, yet all those members together make up one body, that's just like the spiritual picture of the body of Christ.”**

Think about how many members make up your body, it would go beyond us to break it down into the cellular level, but think about it. You have the cardiovascular system, the nervous system, the respiratory system, the reproductive system, the digestive system. Of course the skeletal structure, how many bones compose each hand, each foot, you've got all kinds of glands. **Do you realize that on the average in a 24 hr period your heart will beat approximately 103,689 times? Your blood will travel 168 million miles (equivalent of 6,720 times around the world!) You'll breathe 23,040 times, inhaling 438 cubic feet of air. You'll move 750 muscles and exercise 7 million brain cells (some of you a few less).** The human body is incredible, governed by several hundred systems of control - each interacting with and affecting the other. I read on line where 1 inch of human skin can contain 19 million cells, 625 sweat glands, 90 oil glands, 65 hairs, 19 feet of blood vessels, and 19,000 sensory cells.

But we're the product of random chance and evolution? Give me a break, it's no wonder that David cried out to the Lord, *"You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,"* Ps 139:13-14

Each of these systems and members (so much diversity) working together serving the other systems and members creating incredible unity in the body. Paul says, "That's how the body of Christ is to interact, and interrelate to one another." and As I mentioned if we were to break the body down on to a cellular level, I don't know about you but I know that I couldn't comprehend it, so much diversity. **Yet with in every cell there is a common code known as DNA, even though the cells form together to make up different parts of the body, the DNA is the same. and That's the way it is with the church, you might consider Jesus Christ to be our common DNA code, yet there's an incredible amount of diversity and activity going on, but Christ is the same in each one of us.**

Vs13-14

Ok, now we have to stop here for just a minute and speak on the subject of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because there's a lot of confusion on this topic and much of it stems from Vs 13 right here in this Ch. Those who purport that there's only 1 experience that happens in the believers life as it pertains to one's relationship to the Holy Spirit use this Vs to support their perspective. **and They say, "See the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens upon conversion, when you're converted you're baptized by the Spirit." and That's true, you are baptized by the Spirit upon conversion, but you're not necessarily baptized with the Spirit upon conversion. Now perhaps you're thinking, "Jeff, aren't you splitting hairs here, this sounds like a simple issue of semantics."**

But it's important that we look at this carefully because it's a hair worth splitting and it's not a matter of semantics, here's why. (and Understand that the baptism with the Holy Spirit *can* happen at conversion, we see that in scripture, but we also see where it does *not* happen at conversion in the scripture. Why is that? I don't know, that matter resolves itself in the sovereign heart of God.) I want you to look at this Vs closely, **"By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Who does the baptizing here? "The Spirit" into what are we baptized? "One body," that is Christ, so when you believe it is the work of the *Holy Spirit* to plunge you into the body of Christ, you are saved, this is a matter of salvation. and There's no distinction, we're all one be we Jew, Gentile, slave or free, we're all made to drink into one Spirit.**

Now that's what we call a parallelism 2 ways of saying the same thing, being baptized by the Spirit or being made to drink into one Spirit. When you take a drink of water what are you doing? You're taking something *into* you, when we drink of the Spirit the Spirit comes *into* us, it's a matter of salvation. Remember Jesus said, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*" John 7:37 and Of course there in John Ch 4 He spoke to the woman at the well saying that if she knew who she was speaking to she would've asked *Him* for a drink and He would've given her living water with reference to the Holy Spirit, salvation.

Now you remember when J.B. spoke of Christ; he said, "*He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*" Matt 3:11 Now who is the One *there* who is doing the baptizing? Jesus, and into what or with what are you being baptized? The Holy Spirit, we're talking here about 2 different things. Jesus reiterated that there in Acts Ch 1 where we read, "*He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'*" Acts 1:4-5 Again not *by* the Spirit because they were already saved, but now *with* the Spirit to empower them to be the witness God had called them to be. and We don't have time to develop it all now but the bible is very clear using 3 different prepositions that describe our relationship to the Holy Spirit.

There are the words, "With", "In" and "Upon" Jesus said in speaking to His disciples said that the Holy Spirit was dwelling *with them* (John 14) and that He would be *in* them, speaking of the born again experience. and Then in Acts Ch 1 Vs 8 He told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit had come *upon* them, so one baptism by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ for salvation and positional sanctification, another baptism *by Christ with* the Holy Spirit for that enabling, or empowering for service and growing in practical sanctification. Here Paul is simply saying that when you receive Christ, you become apart of the body of Christ and a specific member accordingly. (Which is another reason we subscribe to "church membership" per say. You're either a member of the body of Christ or you're not, if you want to call this fellowship "home" we think that's awesome, but you can't sign a piece of paper and become a member of the body of Christ, that's a work of the Holy Spirit in your life.)

Vs15-20

What's the point here? That God desires *unity*, but not *uniformity*. It's not cookie cutter Christianity whereby we all look the same, act the same, and do the same things. Uniformity leads to death, our body will one day subscribe to uniformity; we'll be completely dust. **But we'll also be dead, and when a fellowship seeks to mold everyone into the same thing it's just death at work in their midst. and So Paul is seeking to encourage that person that says, "Hey, I'm not like them, I don't have that gift, I don't look like them or act like them I don't belong there."**

Hey hold up, the fact that you don't look like, act like, or perhaps have a gift exactly like anyone else here is precisely the reason *you do* belong here! Let's go back to the diversity with in the human body, there are numerous members in my body that make up my hand, or that together make up my face, or that allow me to speak and enunciate clearly.

Each of them working for and interdependent upon the other, so to in the body of Christ, if my foot should say, “I’m not a hand so I’m really not important, I mean that’s where all the true godly action takes place,” is it therefore in reality not apart of the body? No, if any member has a right to complain it’s the foot, always in the dark, covered up, never any attention given to it, let’s face it; it stinks being a foot (pardon the pun). But just because there’s not a lot of attention given to it, that doesn’t make it an invalid part of my body, hey it provides forward momentum. Yeah an eye is important but that doesn’t make my ears less significant, how can I know what’s going on if I can’t hear what’s happening around me? But how the enemy loves to rip people off on this point, “See you’re not like them, there’s nobody like you here, you just don’t belong with this group.” and You’re buying in on the lie, like the foot saying, “I’m not a hand so I guess I’m not part of the body.” and It’s so easy to buy in on general discontentment, “Oh if I were a hand the things I could do for God.” and The hand says, “Hey buddy you don’t know where I’ve been, trust me it’s not all that glamorous,” but what we need to realize is that every part is important if we’re to function effectively and efficiently as a body.

and Even more importantly we’re to realize that God has set each of us as members in the body of Christ (notice Vs 18) *just as He pleased*. In other words it has pleased God to create you with your own unique personality, characteristics, and place you in His body with a specific gifting/giftings that you might bless your brothers and sisters in Christ. What does that mean, if God is pleased to do a particular work in you, yet you’re *not* pleased with where God has placed you, or how God has equipped you? So here’s a novel idea, once you begin to discover how God has gifted you, or you come into the realization that you’re a little different than other people around here.

Rather than belittling your position, or walking around with a critical spirit, how about seeking to excel in the particular position that God has equipped you for, cultivate those gifts, get involved with the body that you might add to it and be a blessing by bringing something to the table that otherwise wouldn’t happen. “Why isn’t anyone ____?” Probably because God is calling you to that, you just won’t respond to His call, you’re too busy being preoccupied with the fact that people aren’t catering to the need you see rather than just being the one to meet it. You see there’s a reason God has you here and it’s not just to sit and gorge yourself at the table of God’s Word (though that’s a wonderful thing) but God has gifted you, and is equipping you for a purpose, and we all come together individually to form the unity of the body of Christ collectively.

But again this tells us that the reasons God places one person in one place and another person in a different place resolve completely in Him, not in us. He does as He pleases, so it’s just as wrong for me to be ashamed of where I am as it is for you to be prideful over where you are. My hand had no choice in being a hand, my eye didn’t pick to be an eye, each member was placed precisely where it was by the sovereign choice of God, how it pleased Him.

Vs21-26

The overall emphasis here being that we take the time to cater to our body, look out for it, tend *to* it and take care *of* it, and we’re to do the same as it pertains to the body of Christ. There’s no Lone Rangers in the kingdom of God. The eye can’t say to hand, “I don’t need you,” or my head can’t say to my feet, “You’re irrelevant to me.”

Even if it seems like (on the surface) that my eye is superior to my hand, it's impossible for me to function completely as I should with out every member of my body in place and my body will suffer in some way apart from every member doing it's thing. You see I want you to note that he uses the word, "weaker" in Vs 22, but he doesn't use the word, "inferior" or "lesser." **There are certain parts of my body that I don't spend a lot of time thinking about or giving attention to but if they weren't in order everything would come to a raging halt. I'm going to be honest, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about or giving honor to my pancreas or my intestinal tract. But if because of that one or both of them decided they were just not going to be apart of the body, or quit contributing to the body, I'd be in trouble. I don't generally think about my kidneys, but if you've ever had an infection it'll bring your world to a grinding halt. Hey these areas that aren't out in the forefront, they're necessary.** and When he speaks of unpresentable parts that's exactly what he means. But he says these have greater modesty, in other words you tend to them and take time to clothe them carefully, even doubly. You'll throw 2 layers over those areas, but you don't really give any special care that way to your presentable parts. I wash my hands, and that's pretty much it. and You see he's creating the picture of balance here. The members of the body serving one another, being there to meet the needs of the others.

"That there should be no schism (or division) in the body. But that the members should have the same care for one another." That's the application, but Paul has spent all this time developing the illustration so that you'd know why it's so important to tend *to* and take care *of* one another. There is no part of my body that seeks solely to serve itself, my eyes serve my whole body, my heart serves my whole body, my stomach, my hands or feet, they all serve the whole of who I am. **Now every now and then there is a part of the body that will seek to serve only itself, it doesn't contribute anything it only seeks to take everything and feed and serve itself, we call that cancer. Don't be a cancer in the body of Christ, you're either here to get or you're here to give, and it's not wrong to receive, but the greater blessing lies in giving (that's what Jesus said).**

and That's what Paul is saying when he speaks of caring for one another. He's saying, "You've been designed by God to serve, and when you cease to function, or refuse to function in the capacity that God has gifted you, or enabled you, then you go from being a benefit to a detriment." **Or to understand it another way with out trying to throw stones but I just don't know how else to say it, I can either be a blessing or I can be a burden, but there's not much in between. I'm either adding to the body, or taking from the body, I can either function in the capacity that God has called me to, or I can belittle my call or criticize others. But God calls us to active service, we're all in this thing together.** and When a member of my body ceases to function it's usually either amputated or extracted because it can be infectious. Jesus said that those branches in Him that don't bear fruit will be what? Cut off and tossed in the fire, and I'm not trying to issue forth scare tactics. **I'm simply saying pray about what God wants to do with you, where God wants to use you and obey Him in that, bless the body through that. Perhaps it's through prayer, that's a powerful and much needed service to the body.**

But Paul is teaching that all for one and one for all frame of heart and mind. If one member suffers we all suffer, if I stub my toe the rest of my body doesn't carry on the entirety of who I am is affected and is stunned with pain. My heart quits working, the rest of me isn't going to say, "What a drag but I've got things to do." **No, my whole body will suffer with it. When you're hurt, that impacts me, be it directly or indirectly it affects the body in some way. When a public Christian figure goes down in the medias eye, that causes us all to suffer, to look bad, to take a hit. But when Billy Graham is honored, well that makes us all look good, we all rejoice then. You see we're all intricately interwoven together.**

Vs27-28

Some of these we spoke about last week, others we didn't. Real quick Apostles and prophets don't exist anymore. Eph 2:20 is real clear that the foundation of the church was established on the apostles and the prophets Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, but since the foundation is laid we can concede that those offices aren't in existence. **So be careful when people call themselves apostles, or prophets, if someone wants to be known as a prophet then let them be held to the standard of a prophet 100% accuracy and if they ever miss, then they're to be killed (stoned), that's what the bible says. But we obviously have teachers of the Word around, we spoke of miracles and healings, helps is pretty much exactly what it sounds like.** People with the gift of helps are invaluable, they're just quick to be there for you, they see needs, and they're not afraid to jump right in there and meet those needs. Or you're down and out and they're the one's right there to help you in your hour of need. Barnabas was that guy, of course Jesus had the quintessential helps ministry.

Administrations or "governments" these people obviously bringing order and organization to the table, most people think that people with the gift of administrations don't like them because these are the people that always see how disorderly you and I am and it drives them crazy, but we love them and need them around, they create structure and order. Jesus didn't just feed the 5,000 in a random frenzy He had a system had them sit down in groups of 50, delegated the responsibilities to the disciples and had them carried out in an orderly fashion, even the clean up, that's administration. **So the gifts range in order of the greatest benefit in those categories that deal with communication and equipping the Sts, to edification and organization, then *personal* edification last of all with tongues.**

Vs29-30

Again he's speaking here of diversity and he asks the rhetorical questions each of them being phrased in such a way as to demand a negative answer. "Are all apostles?" No, "Are all prophets?" No, "Are all teachers, do all work miracles, do all have gifts of healings?" No "Do all speak with tongues?" No, **why then do certain groups state that speaking in tongues then is the evidence that you have the Holy Spirit? I have no biblical idea, it is thoroughly unscriptural, as if every question here demands a "no" except the last one...**

Vs31

and Of course he'll begin to speak of the essential nature of love that's to permeate each of the gifts if they're to be of any value whatsoever. But it's ok to desire the best gifts. What are the best gifts? Depends on what you've been called to, for me as a teacher, teaching, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, prophecy, discerning of spirits, man I need those things, desire those things.

If God has called you to bless the body through cleaning the fellowship, administrations would be great, helps would be fantastic, you get the idea. Some take this to say it depends on the needs of your particular congregation. What gifts would best fill the gaps that are there, pray for them, seek God for them. The bottom line is God wants us to be balanced, working together, serving one another, realizing, recognizing, and taking the initiative to care for one another.

Prayer Points:

God give us Your heart in this, give us the motivation, and the inspiration to get involved and bless Your body, tending to and taking care of one another. Father that *You* might be magnified, and glorified in this place. and I pray for anyone who may be searching their heart for what it is that *You* have for them, how it is that *You* want to use them, that *You* might speak to them clearly, grant them the faith to step out and trust in *You* to lead them where *You*'d have them to be. and I pray for anyone who may feel like they don't fit in because perhaps they see themselves as different from others in the body. God that *You* would show them that's why they *do* fit in that they wouldn't buy the lie of the enemy in that. We thank *You* for the beautiful unity *You* create through diversity, make us one in *You*.

It has pleased God to make you apart of His body, but perhaps you're not part of the body, you haven't given Your heart to Christ, Jesus also said that it pleases the Father to give to you the kingdom. God has opened the door, and have given you a personal invitation to receive His salvation, He desires to baptize you by His Spirit into His body, to immerse you into the body of Christ that He might set you in the body just as He pleases. But that invitation is only available in the person of Jesus Christ Jesus said, "I am the door," it's by Him and Him alone that we enter into everlasting life. Let me just encourage you today that you not resist the call of God upon your life any longer, but that you receive Jesus Christ let Him give you new life.