

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

You Are Gifted
1 Corinthians 12:4-31

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Give each participant a piece of paper or a card on which he/she may write the name of his/her spiritual gift or gifts.

Bible Study Leader:

Have a white board or large piece of paper for writing the lists of spiritual gifts and/or copy the lists given at the end of the lesson for the group to fill in as you go along.

Worship Time Leader:

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You Are Gifted – 13-35-10-en

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On the paper or card given to each participant during the Gathering Time, ask participants to make changes or additions as desired.

Music Sources:

Grace Alone, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI # 2335524

We Are An Offering, *The Worship Hymnal* #547; CCLI #162201

I Give You My Heart, *The Worship Hymnal* #528; CCLI #1866132

We Are One In the Bond of Love, *The Worship Hymnal* #387; CCLI # 4459

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

You Are Gifted

Focal Text

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

Background Text

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Main Idea

God through the Holy Spirit has given varied gifts to each Christian to be used for the common good.

Question to Explore

How are you using the gifts God has given you?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide how they will use the gifts God has given them.

Gathering together:

Sing: **Grace Alone**, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI # 2335524

First thoughts:

The exercise of spiritual gifts was causing problems in the Corinthian church. Some people were using their gifts to call attention to themselves. Others may have been dominating the worship services and not giving others time to use their gifts. Others were boasting about their gifts. All of this was causing friction and division.

Paul introduces several truths that help us recognize our gifts and know how to use them properly. First, he recognizes that every believer is gifted. He also affirms that gifts are to be used for the common good. Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit as He wishes. They cannot be learned from another or decided upon by the believer. Paul teaches that the church is like a body and the parts must work together in an interconnected and interdependent way.

We may be thinking that while other people have spiritual gifts, we are not so sure about ourselves. Today's lesson may help us understand more about spiritual gifts as Paul describes them in New Testament times. If you believe you have a spiritual gift or gifts, write that gift on the piece of paper given you. Do not be embarrassed if you cannot identify a gift at this time.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

You Are Gifted

Focal Text

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

Background Text

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Main Idea

God through the Holy Spirit has given varied gifts to each Christian to be used for the common good.

Question to Explore

How are you using the gifts God has given you?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide how they will use the gifts God has given them.

Introduction to your personal study:

Consider your own spiritual gifts. Teaching may or may not be one of them. Spiritually gifted teachers make the message clear. But good teachers who are careful in preparation and constant in prayer also make the message clear. Pray as you prepare that you may encourage others to understand spiritual gifts without making them discouraged if they cannot easily identify a gift which they possess. List your participants in your own mind. What gifts do you perceive them as having. If there is an opportunity to affirm that gift, do so.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 – Spiritual gifts

Paul has indicated that his teaching will be on spiritual gifts so that no misunderstanding can exist. Verses 4-6 emphasize that spiritual gifts may differ, but the source of those gifts is God – God as Spirit; God as Lord.

This teaching is designed to stress the unity of the Church. The church is the body of Christ and the characteristic of a healthy body is that every part performs the functions for which it is designed (Barclay, Wm. *The Letter to the Corinthians, The Daily Study Bible*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954, p. 120). Various gifts are given to members of the body for the good of the whole.

All abilities come from God and are to be used for his service. We will, in the following passages, study the list of gifts which Paul mentions. But it is well to remember that other abilities – that of craftsman, electrician, computer expert, cook, plumber – need to be used in the service of God and others.

The writer is reflecting on the gifts needed in these days of recovering from disastrous tornados in the United States. Many gifts are needed, but not all are listed in 1 Corinthians 12 except as they fit under helps or serving. Fortunately, these broad categories are very inclusive.

“The word “gifts” comes from the same root as “grace”. This word includes the idea of that which is freely and graciously given by the grace of God. Christians do not earn the gifts. God, through his spirit, gives them. They are given as an evidence of God’s love. God decides what gift or gifts are to be given to each person.” (Smith, Ebbie C. **Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts**, (Equipping Center Module) Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1981, p. 11).

1 Corinthians 12: 8-11

In this passage, Paul lists the following spiritual gifts:

message of wisdom

message of knowledge

faith

gifts of healing

miraculous powers

prophecy

distinguishing between spirits

speaking in different kinds of tongues

interpretation of tongues

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1 Corinthians 12: 28-31

Paul repeats some of the gifts mentioned earlier and adds others. He begins by saying And in the church **God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers ...**

he then returns to listing

workers of miracles
gifts of healing
helps
gifts of administration
tongues

Barclay discusses the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge together (p. 121). "This wisdom is the highest kind of wisdom; it is nothing less than the knowledge of God Himself. It comes not so much from thought and from the mind as from communion with God. It is the wisdom which knows God." Knowledge is more practical and encompasses things learned and the ability to make application in specific situations.

These may be expressed in the life of a single person, of course. That person may be, but is not always, the person who is "up front" in church life. Many church leaders are grateful for those persons of wisdom who support the work of the Lord and the church with little public recognition.

A much beloved professor of systematic theology, ethics, and church history retired from a small seminary. Friends of the seminary discussed the difficulty of his replacement. One said, "It will be difficult to replace him because of finances and willingness to commit to such a small seminary and such a heavy teaching load." The other said, "And we can never replace his soul." It was to the wisdom of this professor – far greater than intellectual knowledge – that the student referred. That professor has the spiritual gift of wisdom.

Faith is necessary for salvation, so all in the church have faith. But the quality of faith here is a great faith – "a potent faith and as the power to realize the spiritual" (Barclay, p. 121). It is a wonder working faith – a mountain-moving faith (see Matthew 17:20; 21:21 and 1 Corinthians 13:2). Perhaps this gift of faith is given to some for specific life experiences which they encounter. It is important here to remember that as a grace gift it is not something we can force. "If only I had enough faith, I could..." is not a profitable way to think. God may give us that faith as we face unbelievably difficult circumstances.

Certainly one of the most difficult for modern day Christians to understand is the gift of healing. The gifts of healing did exist in the early church. In James 5:14 there is the instruction that one who is ill should come to the elders and they will anoint him with oil. The scientific emphasis of the 20th century with its great advances in medicine led away

from an emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of healing. However, the 21st century has re-emphasized the importance of understanding the whole person. Stress, lack of exercise, and poor diet now are seen as major factors in illness and changes in these areas are potentially helpful in fighting disease. It is important to note that “gifts” of healing have been misunderstood and misused throughout history. Again we must remember that we cannot force the gift – it is from God.

Although medical care was not available to many and the Jews (as well as others) believed that illness was related to sin in one’s life (See John 9:1), medical care was available to some. Luke was a physician. The great Hippocrates lived from 460 BC-370 BC and was an outstanding figure in the study of medicine. He wrote about his many remedies and those writings were available. He taught that illness was a product of environmental factors, diet and living habits – a very modern sounding analysis!

Nonetheless, the need for healing was very real and the gospels contain many stories of Jesus healing the needy. The gift of healing was given to the twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1; Acts 3; Acts 5:12-16) and to Paul (Acts 14:8-10). Acts 20:7-12 records the story of Eutychus, a young man who fell asleep during Paul’s long sermon and fell out of a third story window. He was picked up dead and Paul threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. He declared “Don’t be alarmed, He’s alive”.

We read these amazing stories and ask what it means for us. Certainly Jesus’ ministry was one of love and compassion. He simply could not ignore the needs of the people. He did not, however, want the news of the healings to be widely told probably because so many would come that his teaching message would have had to become secondary.

The disciples and Paul also understood that their main task was the proclamation of the gospel, not a healing ministry.

Perhaps this is the greatest caution for us today. God can and does still heal miraculously. But when a person or group is focused on a healing ministry, it can lose sight of the great ministry of redemption from sin. Certainly a healing ministry should never become a means for personal enrichment or fame.

Miraculous powers or “the ability to produce wonderful deeds of power” (Barclay, p. 121) is another difficult gift for us to understand. Barclay feels this refers to exorcisms. In the New Testament days many illnesses, often all illnesses, and especially mental illnesses were attributed to the work of demons and it was the function of the Church to exorcise these demons. Some cultures today attribute illness to demons and although we may not understand this phenomenon we do well to admit just that. We may question, however, if TV and video games which promote the occult and violence can create an atmosphere for the expression of demonic-like forces. Evil exists in the world. We pray “deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13) in sincerity. We should ask for it daily as we ask for our daily bread.

Prophecy may best be translated preaching to understand the meaning of spiritual truths. Prophecy is not so much telling what is going to happen as it is telling what has happened. The prophet lives close to God and knows the mind of God clearly enough to bring rebuke and warning as well as advice and guidance. Prophecy is listed in all five lists of gifts and in 1 Corinthians 14 Paul argues that prophecy is very important to the church. In verses 26-33, the indication is that various people may speak but worship should be orderly. The congregation as a whole “should weigh carefully what is said” (verse 29) indicating that the people are not passive receivers of information, but active meaning-makers and hearers of God’s word.

The ability to distinguish between different kinds of spirits refers to the ability to know what supernatural events were related to God’s activity in the lives of people and what events were caused by delusion and/or hysteria. Discernment between what is real faith experience and what is a short-lived expression brought about by a crowd mentality and a manipulative leader is still needed in today’s world.

Speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues must be considered together. Paul speaks strongly about the need for interpretation of tongues. In 1 Corinthians 14:2-25 he indicates that the one who speaks in tongues speaks to God while the one who prophesies speaks to men for their “encouragement and comfort” (verse 3). He indicates his desire for all to speak in tongues, but says he would rather that they prophesy. He indicates that he personally speaks in tongues more than all of the others (verse 18), but that he would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct than ten thousand words in a tongue (verse 19). Speaking in tongues without an interpreter present does not build up the church.

Later in chapter 12, Paul speaks of apostleship, teaching, helping others, and administration. The apostles were those who were with Jesus during His earthly life and who had been a witness of the Resurrection. A modern day apostle would have to be one whose relationship with Jesus was so close and intimate that few earthly concerns would interfere with it.

The ministry of teaching is one which we see regularly expressed in the church today. Good and caring teachers are needed for preschoolers, children, youth and adults of all ages. Many techniques and principles of teaching can be taught and learned. But the gift of teaching is that special grace of God which makes a good teacher a special blessing to others. He or she speaks with a clarity and authority which is not of his or her own abilities or training although those abilities and training may be used by God as well.

Teaching is listed in four of the five lists of gifts and in all three epistles.

The gift of administration is one that may seldom be sought by Christians. Yet the good administrator of time, resources and plans is freed to exercise many other spiritual gifts. In the seminary curriculum, church administration is often a required course and students may reluctantly take it, but wish they could take a real theological course. Yet

most church leaders will spend a significant part of their time and energy in administrative tasks. Again the gifted administrator is one especially equipped of God to give leadership. Their task may be as denominational leader, seminary president, missions coordinator or children's ministry director as examples. They must work with people, enlist volunteers, wisely use resources and creatively plan for the future.

The lists in 1 Corinthians 12 are not exhaustive. Romans 12: 6-8 mentions serving, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership and showing mercy. Ephesians 4:11 mentions evangelism and pastoring or shepherding in addition to apostles, prophets and teachers. These are to **prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

1 Corinthians 12: 12-26 – One Body, Many Parts

Paul's emphasis for these verses is the unity of the body which is the church. **For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body –whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were given one Spirit to drink** (verse 13). Paul had long advocated for the inclusion of Gentiles into the early church. It is hard for us to realize how difficult this was for Jews who for so long had cherished their position as God's chosen people. That slaves and free should belong together was another radical concept. Even today we are constantly challenged to include the immigrant, the less well educated or those of a different social class in our body of believers. **We are baptized by one Spirit into one body.**

Paul uses the human body as the analogy for the church. A human body functions best when every part of the body is strong and healthy and doing what it is supposed to do. Most people have known how debilitating an injury to a toe can be. Arthritis in the hand makes everything about life difficult. We are amazed to see how soldiers with massive injuries from war or accident victims learn to manipulate prosthetic devices and regain mobility and productive lives. But for each one who does that hours and years of rehabilitation has been required. Supportive therapists, family and friends have enabled the one who has overcome such liabilities.

In the church, everyone needs to do what they are equipped to do. Some of that equipping comes from special training or ability; some are true grace gifts of God. Probably most are a combination. One of the most effective evangelist/pastors accompanied his pastor father on evangelistic visits as a young boy. He saw his father witness in unusual and difficult circumstances. Witnessing seems easy for him. He has the gift of evangelism. But it was nurtured by example and teaching.

Some churches have spent time and energy examining the issue of spiritual gifts and trying to help everyone find their specific gift and minister within that area. Others give opportunity for young people, new members and less active members to work with more experienced people in their area of special interest. It would be counter productive to

wait to begin a task until one had the assurance that it was a “spiritual gift” which they enjoyed. It would also be short sighted to think that giftedness would express itself full-blown in the new believer or young person.

A spiritual gift will most likely express itself by

a person’s deep joy in fulfilling that gift
an unusual capacity to do the task well
being a blessing to others
being affirmed by others
strengthening the body of believers.

In 1 Corinthians 13, we will study Paul’s assertion that love is the most important thing we can express. The love chapter follows this chapter on spiritual gifts as a corrective to any thinking which might bring pride to one who exercises a special gift. No act of service is meaningful if its underlying motivation is not one of love.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

To help participants understand the various gifts of the Spirit and to understand the necessity of using gifts for the unity of the body.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

You Are Gifted

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

Background Text

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Main Idea

God through the Holy Spirit has given varied gifts to each Christian to be used for the common good.

Question to Explore

How are you using the gifts God has given you?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide how they will use the gifts God has given them.

Connect with Life:

Has anyone every told you that “you are a shoulder to cry on” or “you have a listening ear”. That may indicate that you have the gift of encouragement or of mercy. Perhaps your great love is to be in the kitchen during fellowship time serving coffee and preparing the tray of cookies. You may be exercising your gift of serving or of helps. Maybe you come up with a clear solution to a difficult situation in a church business meeting. Perhaps you have the gift of wisdom or discernment.

Today’s lesson is not so much to put a specific name to how we serve God in the body of believers of which we are a part as it is to realize that we are all important to one another. Whatever we do well, we need to do to serve the whole body and the Lord.

Guide the Study:

Have someone read 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11

Ask: How does Paul begin his discussion of spiritual gifts? (He emphasizes that although there are different spiritual gifts, they all originate with God.)

Comment: In verse 6, Paul says that **“the same God works all of them in all men”**

Ask: Can we assume then that spiritual gifts are for all believers?

Comment on verse 7. All spiritual gifts are for the common good. This will be the topic for the Worship Time so an emphasis on this will be made there.

Discuss the nature of spiritual gifts from the back ground material. (They are freely and graciously given by the grace of God. Christians do not earn the gifts. They are evidence of God’s love; their purpose is to build up the church.)

Use a white board or large sheet of newsprint or white paper to list the following spiritual gifts. You may also use the sheet at the end of the Worship Time as a teaching aid which may be filled out as you study or completed as home work.

1 Corinthians 12: 7-11

message of wisdom
message of knowledge
faith
gifts of healing
miraculous powers
prophecy
distinguishing between spirits
speaking in different kinds of tongues
interpretation of tongues

1 Corinthians 12: 27-31

workers of miracles
gifts of healing
helps
gifts of administration
tongues

Discuss the difference between wisdom and knowledge. Do not try to distinguish too closely since these gifts may exist together. Emphasize that knowledge does not always lead to wisdom and wisdom can exist in one with little formal knowledge.

Ask: Who among believers has faith? (All believers must have faith)

Inquire: What then, is different about the gift of faith? Have someone read Matthew 17:20; Matthew 21:21 and 1 Corinthians 13:2).

Emphasize the nature of spiritual gifts is that they are grace gifts from God. We cannot force ourselves to have more faith.

Investigate with the group the reasons for the healing ministry of the New Testament times. (Lack of medical training available to the masses; the presence of great need; opportunity to gain credence for the greater ministry of proclaiming the gospel.)

Comment on but do not spend time discussing miraculous powers since this topic is difficult to apply in modern circumstances.

State: We need to understand prophecy, not as foretelling the future, but as a ministry of clearly explaining God's plan and purpose. We see this in preaching at its best.

Ask: Is the ministry of distinguishing between spirits or discernment still needed in the world? (Yes, we still need those who see clearly where God is at work as distinct from instances of religious fervour inspired by a charismatic leader and a group mentality).

Comment: Speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues went hand in hand. Paul spoke in tongues, but declared that he would rather speak 5 words of instruction about Christ than thousands of words which could not be understood. (Do not allow the group to stop for a long discussion about tongues. It is too big a subject to adequately address in this lesson.)

Continue: How could we define the spiritual gifts of "helps"?

Also ask: How is it expressed in the church?

Add: Administration may not appear to some as a glamorous spiritual gift, but when a person is gifted in this area, he/she works efficiently and empowers others to be able to work as well.

Have someone read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-16.

Inquire: What is the picture which Paul gives here? (The human body depends on all of its parts to function well.)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Conclude by reminding the group: A spiritual gift will most likely express itself by:

- ✓ a person's deep joy in fulfilling that gift
- ✓ an unusual capacity to do the task well
- ✓ being a blessing to others
- ✓ being affirmed by others
- ✓ strengthening the body of believers.

Ask someone to close in prayer—asking God to give His wisdom to each one as you seek and develop your spiritual gifts.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

You Are Gifted **1 Corinthians 12:4-31**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Use the work sheet given at the end of the lesson to list the various gifts which Paul mentions. If you have completed some of the list during the teaching time, complete the rest of the list now.

At the bottom of the page, make a list of gifts which you feel may be yours.

Evaluate the list by asking if your gifts meet these criteria:

- you have a deep joy in fulfilling that gift
- you have an unusual capacity to do the task well
- you are a blessing to others
- you are being affirmed by others
- your use of the gift strengthens the body of believers.

Do not be alarmed if you have not yet identified a spiritual gift or gifts or if you are not sure that your gift meets the criteria above. Use this lesson as a starting point for considering how God may be gifting you.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***You Are Gifted***
1 Corinthians 12:4-31**Beginning the Service:**

Choose one or more of the following to sing:

We Are An Offering, *The Worship Hymnal* #547; CCLI #162201

I Give You My Heart, *The Worship Hymnal* #528; CCLI #1866132

We Are One In the Bond of Love, *The Worship Hymnal* #387; CCLI # 4459

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Abidjan, Ivory Coast is a “melting pot” of people from different ethnic and economic groups, as people come from all over West Africa for jobs and a new life. Islam, African traditional beliefs, and Christianity (particularly Catholicism) are predominant. French Bibles are readily available; however, a low literacy rate means vast numbers of people cannot read the Word of God. Distortion of the truth by cults and other major world religions brings confusion and mistrust. People may visit churches, even cults, seeking to fill the void in their lives that only God can satisfy. Others may hear the story of redemption for the first time or encounter newly baptized believers giving testimony to their new faith. Pray that the lonely who come to Abidjan find community, but also find Christ.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

For the Common Good
I Corinthians 12:7; 14:12
Ephesians 4:12-13

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
1 Corinthians 12:7

Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. 1 Corinthians 14:12

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
Ephesians 4:12-13

The point and purpose of someone having a spiritual gift is that they serve the common good. Spiritual gifts are to be used to build up the church. They are to be used for works of service with the end result being that the body of Christ is unified and mature. In fact, the goal is that the church is to be like Christ Himself.

No gift exists to be exercised alone. The interdependence of gifts produces unity. There is a mutual incorporation of all members of the body. (1 Corinthians 12: 14-16). No part of the body exists to itself; nor can it consider itself separate from the body. Every member and every gift contributes to the well-being of the whole.

The various parts of the body are mutually dependent (17-21). The welfare of the entire body depends on the special function of each part. Unity comes as we each share our gifting. To fail to do so would be a kind of selfishness.

Unity is maintained by mutual respect (22-25a). There is no place in the church for one person to feel that his or her contribution is greater than that of another person. When a church is functioning as it should be, it is beautiful to see how every person can find a place of important service.

Members of the church are unified by their mutual support. When one suffers, others suffer as well. When a member is honoured, all rejoice. When a child or preteen plays their first offertory hymn, the church feels joy. When a new baby is introduced to the church, the church shares the happiness. When a new Christian shares a testimony, everyone is blessed. When there is a death in the body, there is grief and loss and celebration for the life to come.

There is mutual enhancement of the ministry of each member. This can often be reflected in the music ministry of a church. A healthy church enjoys the music offered

by the skilled and trained musician. The skilled and trained musician is teaching and encouraging others and the church enjoys their contribution as well. (See Smith, Ebbie. **Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts**, [Equipping Center Module] Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1981 for future discussion of these concepts of mutuality. This module is out-of-print but available online from a few suppliers of Christian materials).

The home church is a microcosm of these elements. Because the group is small, everyone's regular attendance is essential. When business, illness, or travel makes it necessary for some of the group to be absent, the others are greatly impacted. When that member returns from the absence, the group rejoices.

Shared leadership allows for the discovery and development of spiritual gifts. Every member who chooses to do so may teach or lead worship or prayer. Then every other contributes from their area of giftedness. Wisdom, knowledge, discernment, encouragement and service are some of the gift expressions which may be seen in any meeting of the group regardless of which person is actually "in charge".

**Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
1 Corinthians 12:7**

Each time we meet we need to ask ourselves what our contribution to the "common good" has been? Have we joined in given our teaching ability, our word of discernment or encouragement or wisdom. Have we truly served others?

Do we desire to attain to the **whole measure of the fullness of Christ?** Do we desire that for others as well. If so we will be using the spiritual gifts we have been given and we will be nurturing the gifts of others in the body of Christ of which we are a part.

Call to Commitment:

Ask the group to take the card or piece of paper used in the Gathering Time. Encourage them to consider what they have written in the light of today's discussion. Additions may be made. If appropriate ask for sharing of ideas. Encourage the affirmation of gifts which one perceives in others. Ask how their gifts fit with the following criteria:

- ✓ a person's deep joy in fulfilling that gift
- ✓ an unusual capacity to do the task well
- ✓ being a blessing to others
- ✓ being affirmed by others
- ✓ strengthening the body of believers.

Concluding the Service:

Pray that all we do in the use of our gifts will be done for the common good, for the building up of the body of Christ. Ask that we may be more Christ like in our actions this week.

Spiritual gifts as found in various passages

1 Corinthians 12: 8-11

message of wisdom
message of knowledge
faith
gifts of healing
miraculous powers
prophecy
distinguishing between spirits
speaking in different kinds of tongues
interpretation of tongues

1 Corinthians 12: 28-31

apostles
prophets
teachers
workers of miracles
gifts of healing
helps
gifts of administration
tongues

Romans 12: 6-8

prophecy
serving
teaching
encouraging
contributing to the needs of others
leadership
showing mercy.

Ephesians 4:11

apostles
prophets
teachers.
evangelism
pastoring or shepherding

Copy the following sheet for the group to use during the teaching session or as homework.

1 Corinthians 12: 8-11

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
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1 Corinthians 12: 28-31

- 1.
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Romans 12: 6-8

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
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Ephesians 4:11

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.