

The Church - Unity and Spiritual Gifts | 7/22/18

- Introduction
 - Previously we studied what the “church” truly means, that it is the believers.
 - Then we saw that Jesus Christ is the head of the church and that we are His body.
 - Jesus directs the church and we the body obediently obey.
 - This week we will focus on the unity that Christ desires for the body and then also on our Spiritual gifts.
 - The Spiritual gifts are a vital function of the church to build up the body of Christ.
- The unity of the church (body of Christ)
 - **God desires for the Christians, for His church to come together in unity.**
 - God did not create us to be alone, to only have a relationship with Him and to exclude others.
 - **He did not create us to compete with one another, Christianity is not a competition to see who can win more converts or have a bigger church.**
 - God desires for the Christians, His church to have unity to work as a whole and not individually.
 - To come together for the purposes of God.
 - **This unity is vitally important, and Jesus even prayed that we would have it.**
 - John 17:11
 - “And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father keep them in your name, which you have given me, **that they may be one, even as we are one.**”
 - The perfect picture of unity is the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
 - This is the most perfect example of unity and it is the example that Jesus desires for His church.
 - It is this unity that Jesus desires for the Christians to have.
 - Our salvation is an example of this unity.
 - Salvation itself is a perfect example of this unity that Christians must embrace.
 - Ephesians 4:4-6
 - “There is **one body and one Spirit**—just as you were called to the **one hope** that belongs to your call—**one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all**, who is over **all** and through **all** and in **all**.”
 - The word “one” is used 7 times and the word “all” 4 times just in these few verses.
 - Because everything about Christ brings us to a state of unity.
 - We might have been all going our own separate paths, living our own lives for our own purposes (which we still do to an extent).
 - **However, as Christians who are members of the body of Christ, we now ALL have a single and common purpose to fulfill the will of God.**
 - God has called His children to Him in the same way, we are all equals in His eyes regardless of where we came from.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:13
 - “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”
 - **The results of Christian unity**
 - There are many benefits and reasons for there to be unity in God’s church.

- The most important however is because this unity will show the world that He sent us.
 - **This unity gives evidence and proof to the unbelievers in who Christ is.**
 - John 17:21
 - “that they **may all be one**, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, **so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**”
 - This is significant, Jesus said that with unity among the Christians, with unity in the church that the world will believe in Jesus Christ.
 - If we needed to be reminded of why it is so important that we have unity, then this is it.
 - It is vital that Christians are unified together for Christ.
- **God’s plan for us to fulfill His Holy will requires that we have unity in our church**
 - To do God’s work requires this unity. **If we are all doing our own thing without any cause for our fellow Christian**, we cannot hope to have the impact that having unity would achieve.
 - **An example of this can be seen in a basketball or football team.**
 - If the team is not united all working for the same goal they will not be very effective.
 - But if they come together in unity then they can accomplish great things.
 - **We must put aside our personal agendas** and do what God desires that benefits the entire body, that grows His Kingdom.
 - **But if the church is unified, great and mighty things can be accomplished for Christ.**
 - The early church had this unity
 - Acts 4:32
 - “Now the full number of those **who believed were of one heart and soul**, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common”
 - **This is a spiritual union, not a command for a single physical church or denomination.**
 - While the church division across the world does show problems, this is not the intention of this passage. These divisions didn’t even yet exist yet.
 - Today our unity needs to be focused on the common goals for Christians striving to grow the Kingdom of God, not putting everyone under one denomination or church building.
- **The current church landscape tends to present more disagreement and conflict instead of unity to the world. What impact does this have on the worlds perception about Christianity?**
- **Why do you think this unity that God desires for the church is so important? What are the positive results that come from it? Either to the world or even just within your community or at New Site.**
- **The Spiritual Gifts of the individual members that work together for Christ.**
 - We can see the results and impact of this unity when we take a closer look at the body of Christ and the purposes that the individual members serve.
 - We are individual members of the body of Christ, but part of the same body.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:27
 - “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”
 - 1 Corinthians 12:12

- “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”
- **While we are unified together we also find that the body (or church) has many different members that serve different purposes.**
 - God gave each of us a job to do, and to do that job He gave us spiritual gifts which contain the desire and ability to accomplish them.
 - **While we are unified together for the same objective, we all have a different part to play in how it is accomplished.**
 - God did not call anyone to be a bench warmer.
 - God did not call anyone to sit on the sidelines and watch the game.
 - **God called ALL CHRISTIANS to serve a purpose and play a part in building the body of Christ.**
 - **There are many different spiritual gifts that God bestows. While different they are all designed to build up the body of Christ.**
 - 1 Corinthians 12:4-7
 - “Now there are **varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit**; and there are varieties of service, but the **same Lord**; and there are varieties of activities, but it is **the same God who empowers them all** in everyone. **To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**”
 - Ephesians 4:11-12 (HCSB)
 - “And he personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, **to build up the body of Christ.**”
 - Romans 12:6-8
 - **Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:** if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”
 - 1 Corinthians 12:8-10
 - “For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”
 - **As individual members of the body of Christ, as member of Christ’s church, we must embrace our gifts that God has given us regardless of what they are.**
 - They key here is we must **“USE THEM”**.
 - If we sit around and waste the spiritual gift that God gave us, we are doing NOTHING to build up the body of Christ.
 - That is our true purpose in life, regardless of our personal desires or wants might be.
 - We are called to serve God and build His Kingdom, regardless of which spiritual gift we are given.

- **We must realize that GOD CHOOSES our spiritual gifts, not us.**
 - 1 Corinthians 12:18
 - “But as it is, **God arranged the members in the body**, each one of them, **as he chose.**”
- **We are not trying to discover our desired spiritual gift, we are trying to discover the ones God has given us.**
- **We are not trying to discover WE WANT to do or where WE WANT to serve. We are trying to discover what GOD WANTS for us, where GOD WANTS us to serve.**
- **Our CHOOSING is whether or not we are going to embrace the gift and obediently use it to further the Kingdom of God.**
- A breakdown of the gifts listed in these passages is as follows:
 - Prophecy-The gift of speaking God’s inspired message.
 - Service-All the different ways that we can serve.
 - Teaching-the gift to effectively instruct others in spiritual understanding.
 - Exhorting-the gift to encourage and cheer others toward godly living.
 - Contributes/Giving-the gift to contribute or give generously.
 - Leading-the gift of organizing and guiding Christians for service and spiritual growth.
 - Showing mercy-the gift of acting with grace and cheerfulness to help people that are suffering or enduring hardships.
 - Feeding the hungry
 - Caring for the sick
 - Tending to the elderly
 - Uttering wisdom and knowledge – speaking and interpreting the Word of God.
 - Faith – Not saving faith, but one with this gift shows an overabundance of faith in all circumstances.
 - Healing – This gift was used in the Scriptures by Christ and the apostles. Today God will providing healing, though He does not bestow this on someone who can then heal at their will. Their purpose was to validate Christ.
 - Miracles – Only Jesus Christ has ever performed miracles. Today He will work miracles through people. Their purpose was to validate Christ.
 - Tongues – In the Scriptures show when they were used they were a real spoken foreign language that could be interpreted. The purpose was also to validate Christ. There is much disagreement today on what consist of true speaking in tongues.
- **We must also realize that the spiritual gifts that God give us may not be exactly as those listed in these passages, this is not an all-inclusive list.**
- **I want you to consider for a moment this question: What is your spiritual gift?**
- **How do you know what your spiritual gift is?**
- **How would you describe what it feels like to use your spiritual gift?**
- Each spiritual gift is important, even the ones we might think to be of lesser value or insignificant.
 - It is very easy for us to look at a list of spiritual gifts and think that some of these appear to have more value or are more important.

- **This is because of our humanity, we always put greater worth on things that are seen and look “important”.**
- But this is not the case with God, He sees all of the spiritual gifts (even those unseen) as vitally important.
- God made each of us DIFFERENT for a PURPOSE.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:14
 - “For the body does not consist of one member but of many.”
 - 1 Corinthians 12:17-20
 - “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.”
 - **Just as each body part in the human body serves a unique function, so does each spiritual gift that God bestows on the Christians.**
 - Each is important, you cannot have a functioning body if they are all eyes or ears, each part is needed to make the body whole.
 - **So it is with the church, each Christian has gifts that better the body.**
 - We cannot have a church with just pastors, singers or nursery workers. It takes all of the various functions to make the body work as God intended.
 - This is why it is so important that we embrace our spiritual gift and serve in the church.
 - God intentionally gave us the gifts to build up the body, which is also our church home.
 - We use our gifts and abilities to further the kingdom of God.
- **The spiritual gifts that are seemingly less important or hidden are actually even more important.**
 - 1 Corinthians 12:22-23
 - “On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,”
 - As with the human body our organs are unseen yet serve the greatest function. So in the church, the “unseen” less glamorous roles can be the most important.
- **God designed all of this so that there would be unity in the body.**
 - 1 Corinthians 12:24b-26
 - “...But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”
 - So it is with the church. This Godly design will bring great unity among the church as we all need and support one another as we are all here for a common goal of growing the Kingdom of God.
- **What spiritual gifts or “ministries” might we think of as less important?**