

Text: 1 Cor 12.4-11

As we move through Corinthians, we will keep our place by developing the broad outline we started with.

I. Introduction (1.1-9)**II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)****III. Questions asked of Paul (7.1-16.4)**

1 Cor 7.1 ¶ Now concerning the things about which you wrote...

“The remainder of the body of this epistle deals with questions that the Corinthians had asked Paul in a letter. Paul introduced each of these with the phrase *peri de* (‘now concerning,’ 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).”¹

A. Questions about marriage (7.1-40)

B. Questions about things sacrificed to idols (8.1-11.1)

C. Questions about worship services

1. Head coverings (11.2-16)

2. Communion practices (11.17-34)

3. Spiritual Gifts (12-14)

Summarizing 1 Cor 12 so far

- **The context:** In the mystery religions of the ancient world, ecstatic practices resembling the gift of tongues *confused* the Corinthians
- **The issue:** Some Christians in Corinth equated tongues-speaking as the mark of true spirituality, skewing their focus from serving others to exalting self
- **Biblical gifts:**
 - Comprise a variety of equally valued gifts from the Triune God
 - Given for the benefit of the church as a whole: “the common good” (7), “just as He wills” (11)
 - Differing in nature according to the times:
 - At-will miracle supernatural gifts in apostolic times
 - Day-to-day ordinary gifts in all times and all places

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Co 7.1.

Today: the importance of the Body in understanding the Gifts

The unity of the body (12-13)

The word body occurs three times in v. 12. What does Paul mean by “body” in here? **a human body**

What comparison does Paul make in v. 12? The body is **Christ**

Verse 13 emphasizes the Spirit making one body out of diverse individuals. What categories does he mention?

1. **ethnic/racial**
2. **social/economic**

Who is active in placing members in Christ’s body? **the Spirit**

How does this make the church different from other human social organizations? Its common ground is **spiritual**, not **social affinities**

The differences in the body (14-17)

This section is an extended metaphor, set up in v. 14.

The previous verses emphasized unity; this metaphor emphasizes **differences**

What effect do differences in functions have on membership in the body? (15-16) **none, each function needed for a whole body**

What would happen if every member had the same function? (17)

It would destroy the body; a body without diverse functioning parts is no body.

The placements in the body (18-26)

Verses 18-20 reiterate points from the previous section but brings up one key point in verse 18. What is the point?

God placed the members in the body according to his will.

What body is Paul talking about, even though he keeps using the language of the physical human body? **the church**

It takes **many** members to make **one** body. (20)

What should members of the body realize about other members of the body? (21-22) The other members are **necessary**.

By “less honorable” / “less presentable” parts of the body Paul means those “private parts” that we cover up or decorate. (23-24)

“When dealing with our human bodies we bestow more honor on our less honorable parts by covering them up.”²

What then would our more “presentable” members be? **uncovered parts — faces, hands**

To make a spiritual application from the illustration, what does God do for the members that lack honor? (24) **gives more abundant honor**

What are God’s purposes for making diversity among the members of the body? (25-26)

1. (25) **no division**
2. (26) **sympathetic care**

Application:

When charismatics emphasize that all must speak in tongues to be Spirit-filled, what are they missing?

The God-ordained diversity of the body

² Constable, 1Co 12.23.