**INTRODUCTION**

**The church at Corinth was a young church, both chronologically and spiritually. It should not be surprising that there were problems – “growing pains”. The apostle Paul was aware of this – he had “given birth” to this church and remained involved as its instructor and counselor.**

**There was a long list of problems with this church, most of which were rooted in the fact that they lacked the most basic need of all churches – LOVE. We will (finally) see this in the next chapter. Another apostle – Peter – declared that “charity (love) shall cover a multitude of sins” (I Peter 4:8). With love lacking, the sins of the Corinthian church were uncovered – arrogance and pride (they were “puffed up”), disregard for the weaknesses and feelings of others, self-indulgence, and careless living. Paul sharply but lovingly rebuked these Christians as he called them to make the necessary changes needed to correct these problems.**

**Unfortunately, the problems that were threatening to tear apart the church at Corinth did not go away in the first century. Many churches today, in the twenty-first century, face the same divisive issues. This is why the study of the Bible is essential for all of the Lord’s people – because if we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem!**

**Chapter 12 introduces us to the topic of SPIRITUAL GIFTS: those special endowments that every follower of Jesus Christ receives. Like the various parts of the human body, ALL spiritual gifts are important, and each has its place in the church. The problem at Corinth was that some saints were acting as if their own particular gifts were MORE important, while those of other saints were not. Like children at Christmastime, some were boasting about their own gifts while belittling the gifts of others. This became yet another source of envying, division and discord in this immature, worldly church. As Paul stated the earlier, “You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” (I Corinthians 3:3 NIV) To put an end to this practice, and give the Corinthians an appreciation of all of God’s gifts, Paul arranges them in order of their usefulness to the building up, or edification, of the church. Later, in Chapter 14, he provides guidelines for their orderly usage in worship.**

1. **Read verse 1. What is the subject that Paul addresses in this chapter, and what is his desire for the church?**
2. **Read verse 2. What might have limited the ability of the Corinthian believers to use their spiritual gifts properly? Answer: They had been led astray by the worship of “these “. (see Psalm 115:4-8; Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 10:1-5)**
3. **Read verse 3. Who is it that enables (empowers) the Christian to testify that “Jesus is Lord”? Answer: “The .” (Matthew 16:13-17; I John 4:1-3, 15)**
4. **Read verses 4-7. In this passage, Paul emphasizes the UNITY in the DIVERSITY of spiritual gifts. (The immature Corinthian believers were focused only on their differences.) Note that Paul’s threefold statement includes the Holy Trinity: Spirit (Holy Spirit – verse 4), Lord (Jesus Christ the Son – verse 5), and God (the Father – verse 6). What is the PURPOSE of the “manifestation of the Spirit” (spiritual gift)? (v. 7) Answer: They are given “to withal”. (See Ephesians 4:4-16)**
5. **Read verses 8-11. In this passage Paul lists the various gifts of the Spirit. How many are listed? Answer:**
6. **What are the first two gifts listed? (v. 8) Answer: The of and the of .**
7. **What do these two gifts have in common? What kind of people in the church might possess these two gifts? (See verse 28. Also, read Matthew 13:53-54; Luke 21:14-15; Acts 6:8-10; Ephesians 4:11-12)**
8. **What spiritual gifts are listed next in verses 9-10? Answer: The gift of , the gifts of , the working of , the gift of , and the of . (Read Acts 6:5-8; Acts 8:5-7; Acts 16:16-18; Acts 19:11-12)**
9. **What are the last two gifts of the Spirit listed in verse 10? Answer: kinds of and the of . (Mark 16:14-20; Acts 2:1-21)**
10. **In your opinion, which of these gifts appears to be the most popular today, and why?**
11. **In your opinion, which of these spiritual gifts are most urgently needed today, and why?**
12. **Regardless of which gifts(s) the Corinthian believers possess, what is the ONE unifying principle that should unite all believers? (v. 11) Answer: “But all these worketh that one and selfsame .”**
13. **Read verses 12-14. How many times is the word “one” mentioned in this short passage? Answer: . In your own words, describe what Paul is trying to get across to this contentious, divided, and spiritually immature church.**
14. **What does the church, the BODY OF CHRIST, have in common with the human body? (v. 14) Answer: The body (and church) does not have one , but many.**
15. **Read verses 15-19. In this passage, Paul again challenges the Corinthian saints with a number of questions concerning the importance of each part of the human body. What should this passage teach us about the value of every member of our churches?**
16. **One of the wonderful things about the human body is how well the various parts are designed for their highly specialized purpose: the foot is designed to support the weight of the whole body; hands are specially designed to hold objects; ears efficiently collect sound waves; eyes efficiently collect light waves. Now consider the comparisons that Paul makes with the church, the body of Christ. How should Christians appreciate each other? (v. 15-17)**
17. **Who decides where each person is to serve in the church? (v. 18) Answer: sets (places) the every one of them in the body, as it pleases .**
18. **Read verses 20-26. In this passage, Paul keeps using the example of the human body to show how each spiritual gift is important. The FUNCTION f the gift is more important than its APPEARANCE. Finally, the working together of all of the gifts makes the whole body better. What UNIFYING statement does Paul make in verse 20? Answer: “But now are they , yet but “. (See also Romans 12:4-5)**
19. **What can the eye NOT say to the hand, or the head NOT say to the feet? (v. 21)**
20. **Which parts of the body seem to be all the more necessary? (v. 22) Answer: Those which seem to be more .**
21. **Paul points out that some parts of the body (members) are “less honorable” (*unmentionable*) or “uncomely” (*unpresentable*). How should these parts of the body get treated? (v. 23)**
22. **Who is it that puts the church (Body of Christ) together? What does this say about how we should treat each other? (v. 24)**
23. **What should every member of the church have towards one another, and why? (v. 25) Answer: we should have the for one another, so that there will be no (split or gap) in the church body.**
24. **If one member suffers, or is honored, what should be the response of all of the other members? (v. 26) Sadly, what is the more typical response, and WHY?**
25. **Read verses 27-31. This is the last passage of Chapter 12 and sets up the introduction of the great “Love Chapter”. What is Paul’s conclusion and application of his teachings in Chapter 12? (v. 27) Answer: “You are the of Christ, and in particular.”**
26. **Verse 28 lists the different offices, or duties, of the church members. Compare this list to the list of spiritual gifts in verses 8-10. What are the similarities and differences?**
27. **Paul asks SEVEN rhetorical questions in verses 29-30. What is the implied answer to all of them? Is there any one spiritual gift that is given to every member of the church? (Note: Paul devotes nearly all of Chapter 14 to teaching about one spiritual gift – tongues)**
28. **Is it acceptable for believers to desire (covet) spiritual gifts? (v.31) Answer:**
29. **Is there something even better than the “best” gifts?**

**Summing Up**

**If you watch much of what’s called “Christian” television, churches today appear to be focused on the spectacular – the emphasis is on signs, miracles, prophecies, speaking in tongues, casting out demons, shouting, dancing, running up and down the aisles and so forth. Certain of the spiritual gifts are more associated with these actions than others. As a result, these gifts tend to be more desirable. Paul ends this chapter by promising to show the Corinthians a “more excellent” way to worship and serve God. We have now climbed to the summit of this letter – the most wonderful GIFT that we receive from God – the gift of God’s LOVE. Next week, we begin Chapter 13!**