

1 Corinthians Session 9: Gifts, Lordship and Love (1 Cor 12:1-13:13)

(Scripture references based on NIV)

1. Key Learning Objectives

Key pointers to keep in mind as you prepare and lead the session.

- Recognize that spiritual gifts have been given by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body of Christ (common good).
- Understand what the Church should look like - different gifts, different uses, different parts, one body of Christ.
- Love is the supreme ethic which should govern everything we do, including the usage of our gifts.

2. Warm-up activity / Starter Question

These questions are meant to establish a baseline level of understanding or tease the themes of today's passage. You may pick one of the three. There is no need to hear from everyone or correct any opinions here.

- What would you say is one of your gifts / strengths?
- What does 'love' mean to you?

3. Opening Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for bringing all of us here safely today. You have created each one of us unique in your image, with unique gifts, talent and personalities. Help us to understand ourselves and one another better, so that we may know how to be a better servant to those around us and a better representation of Christ to each other, so that we might do Your will in the world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

4. Context

Spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church

- Paul has mentioned that the church does not lack any spiritual gifts (1:7).
- Paul reminds the church that there should be unity of mind and not division (1:10).

Overview of today's passage (for leaders' reference)

- V1-11: *Spiritual gifts - the source, purpose, and diversity*
- V12-31: *Analogy of the body of Christ*
- 1 Cor 13:1-13: *Love as the supreme ethic*

5. Scripture Reading

Assign two or three youths to read the passage aloud.

6. Discussion Questions

1) Referring to v1-11, Paul states a diversity of spiritual gifts. Who is the source of these gifts and what is the purpose for which they are given?

- Paul illustrates the diversity of spiritual gifts that are given by the Holy Spirit (v5-6).
- He emphasises that although there are different gifts, they all come from the same Spirit, and they are intended for the common good of building up the body of Christ (v7).
 - You may wish to discuss / explain what the term “common good” means. Eph 4:11-16 is a helpful reference.

2) How does the analogy of the different body parts (v12-31) help us to understand God’s design and intention for the church?

You may split the group up into three smaller groups for them to discuss the three segments of verses, before coming back together to share their understanding.

| Verses | God’s design and intention for the church |
|--------|--|
| v14-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God intended for the body of Christ to have many parts (v14).• Though each part is different, it is still a part of the body of Christ (v15-16).• Perhaps, some might feel excluded due to their lack of a specific gift. Paul teaches that they all have a role in the body of Christ. |
| v17-20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God has uniquely designed us and has his unique intention for each one of us in his own body (v18).• Diversity is instrumental because the body of Christ would not be fully functioning if different members were all the same body part (v19). |
| v21-25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members should not view themselves as superior to others (v21).• Each should recognize their need for others to function in the body of Christ.• Paul stresses that even those members who might seem weaker or less honourable are indispensable (v23).• Unity and shared concern for each other should be of great priority (v25-26). |

3) What does 1 Cor 12:31 - 13:10 tell us about how Paul thinks love compares to the other spiritual gifts ?

- Love is the most important value, above and beyond the spiritual gifts that he has already listed (v31).
- Without love, no matter how we use our spiritual gifts will be in vain and as be of no benefit (v1).
- Without love, we are nothing (v2-3).
- Love is eternal while spiritual gifts are only temporal (v8-10).

4) a) With reference to chapter 13, what are the characteristics of Love?

Feel free to link to chapter 12 too.

- Love is patient and kind.
- Not envious or boastful, not proud.
- Love does not seek its own interests; it is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs.
- Love rejoices in truth and bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

b) Spend some time to discuss and fill in this table with meaningful real-life examples for each characteristic of love from your group members.!

| Characteristic of love | Possible example of love |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Patient | |
| Kind | |
| Not envious | |
| Not boastful | |
| Not seeking its own interests | |
| Not easily angered | |
| Keeps no record of wrong | |
| Rejoices in the truth | |
| Bears all things | |
| Believes all things | |
| Hopes all things | |
| Endures all things | |

7. Main Discipleship Takeaway

Ask the youths how they would summarise everything that has been discussed today with one sentence.

God has intended for all of us to have our unique places in the body of Christ, where we were to use our spiritual gifts in love, for the common good of the church.

8. Application / Reflection

Split up into smaller groups to share. Leaders are encouraged to have prepared their own thoughts and sharings for the application questions.

- 1) Having discussed the gifts mentioned earlier (Starter question), how do you think you can use / have been using it for the common good of building up the body of Christ?
- 2) Should you struggle to identify any gifts, allow others to share about the strengths / encouragements they have observed of you to help you discern where your gifts may lie!
- 3) Has the analogy of the body and its different parts changed your perspective towards other members in the church? How will you view / treat them differently?
- 4) Based on the definition of love in 1 Cor 13:4-7, what do you find most difficult to uphold? Why?

9. Closing Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for this time of discussion. Thank you for making us all unique in your image. Please guide us in drawing closer to you - to find our place in the body of Christ, and show us how we can be good role models to others of the love You have shown to us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.