



LIFEgroup Study Guide

September 23 - October 14

LIFEgroup Study Guide

This study guide follows along with LBF's current Sunday message series, and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*
[www.lbf.church/resources]

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big, contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan:*
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Lesson 1: The Giver

1 Corinthians 12:1-6 • Pg. 4-6 • September 23

Lesson 2: The Common Good

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 • Pg. 7-9 • September 30

Lesson 3: Inferior?

1 Corinthians 12:12-20 • Pg. 10-12 • October 7

Lesson 4: Superior?

1 Corinthians 12:21-31 • Pg. 13-15 • October 14



The Giver

Lesson 1 • September 23 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

The one true God is the giver of each and every spiritual gift.

Getting Started

1. What do you think of when you hear the term “spiritual gifts”?

2. Do you have any indication of what your spiritual gifts are? If so, share your thoughts with the group.

Explanation of the Passage

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-6

¹ Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.

³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the

Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”

A number of times in the book of 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul starts a new section with two Greek words that are often translated, “Now concerning . . .” 1 Corinthians 7:1 begins, “Now concerning the things that you wrote about.” 1 Corinthians 8:1 begins, “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols.” 1 Corinthians 16:1 begins, “Now concerning the collection for the saints.” Our passage begins with Paul saying, “Now concerning spiritual gifts,” or, as the NIV has it, “Now about the gifts of the Spirit.” This signifies that Paul is starting a new section (one that lasts from 12:1 until the end of chapter 14), and that the section concerns spiritual gifts.

To be even more specific, the word Paul uses for “gifts of the Spirit” could be more literally translated, “spiritual matters.” Paul will focus in on gifts of the Spirit, but he begins more broadly by talking about Christian spirituality. These instructions begin in verse 2 when Paul speaks of the pagan and idolatrous past of the Corinthians. He says that they previously were

influenced and led by mute idols. It is likely that the reason he points out that the idols were mute is to contrast them with the true God who speaks through the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, in some way the Corinthians were led by these idols. This would seem to indicate that Paul is bringing attention to the fact that there are spiritual beings, angels and demons, in the world. In fact, later on in 1 Corinthians 10:20, “The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons.” On the one hand, Paul emphasizes that these idols are nothing at all. On the other hand, he points to a spiritual reality behind the idols. These spiritual beings were influencing the Corinthians before they came to faith in Christ.

In order, then, to clarify how to discern between these demonic spirits and the Spirit of God, Paul gives a test. He says that the Spirit of God never leads anyone to curse Jesus, and the demonic spirits never lead anyone to proclaim that Jesus is Lord. Taking in an overly simplistic way, someone might object that it is possible for a person to say the words, “Jesus is Lord” without truly believing them. This is true. Paul’s point is that the Holy Spirit exalts Jesus. Therefore, we must ask if the spirit who is influencing us is exalting Jesus or disregarding him.

Paul then moves on more formally to spiritual gifts. In verses 4-6 he makes a three-fold statement that parallels the diversity of gifts with the diversity within the Godhead. This is a deeply Trinitarian passage. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different ways to serve by using these gifts, but we are all serving the same Lord Jesus. There are different effects of the spiritual gifts, but it is the same God and Father who brings about these effects. The Godhead is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God in three persons. No member of the Godhead is inferior to or superior to any other member. What a powerful way to emphasize that the

body of Christ has many parts, and believers have many different gifts, but all of these gifts are given by the same Spirit in order to serve the same Lord Jesus in order to bring about an impact that will be worked by the same Father.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. In the Bible, spirits are often associated with teachings (1 John 4:1-6). What are some ways that you think people today—whether they realize it or not—might be led by demonic spirits?

5. What are some ways that the Holy Spirit leads people to glorify Jesus?

6. If the same Spirit has gifted each Christian in order to serve the same Lord, what implications does this have for the calling of each Christian to participate in the local church?

7. In verse 6 Paul says that God is working in and through us as we use our gifts. Share about a time that you experienced this happening.

Wrestling with Issues

8. What do you think is the difference between a spiritual gift and a talent?

Taking it to Heart

9. What intentional steps can you take to put yourself in a position to be led by the Holy Spirit instead of being led by other influences?

10. What is one way that you can use your spiritual gifts to glorify Jesus and point others toward him?



The Common Good

Lesson 2 • September 30 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

All spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of the church.

Getting Started

1. What do you see as the purpose of spiritual gifts?

2. Practically speaking, how do you think a person can determine what his or her spiritual gifts are?

Explanation of the Passage

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

"7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them

to each one, just as he determines."

Paul previously introduced the concept of spiritual gifts. These are gifts that are given (1) to believers, (2) by the Holy Spirit, (3) in order to serve Jesus, (4) in order for God to work through them. While believers in Jesus have different gifts, they are all given by the same Spirit. This unifies Christians as members of the body of Christ, the church over which Jesus is the head.

Paul begins this passage by further clarifying the purpose of spiritual gifts. He says that each believer has received a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. In other words, the purpose of your spiritual gift is that it would benefit the church. Another way of putting it is this: Your gift belongs to the church, not to you. It is less of a gift that the Spirit gave you to enjoy, and more of a gift that the Spirit gave you to pass along. In fact the picture Paul paints is similar to the idea of a group of people placing a pile of resources into the middle of a room and then saying that the pile represents common property. All of it belongs to everyone. Spiritual gifts do not belong primarily to individuals, but to Jesus' church.

Paul then gives several example of spiritual gifts. One person has a message of wisdom through the Spirit. The idea behind this gift is that some people are empowered by the Spirit to discern and speak wisdom

into difficult situations. Another person has a message of knowledge by the same Spirit. Knowledge and wisdom are connected, but the gift of knowledge probably has to do with the Spirit empowering someone to learn and process information so that it can be brought to mind and passed along to others. Another person has the gift of faith. While we are all called to live by faith, some people are specially gifted to trust—and call others to trust—the promises of God. This is a gift to the church.

Paul also names gifts of healing and miraculous powers. These gifts were powerfully used in the history of the early church as a sign of God's endorsement of the gospel of Jesus. Today we believe that God still heals and does the miraculous. The Spirit works however he pleases. But even these miraculous gifts are not given for the glory of the person who practices them. They are given for the purpose of benefiting God's people and glorifying Jesus.

Finally, Paul speaks about two pairings of gifts: (1) Prophecy and the distinguishing of spirits, and (2) speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Prophecy is not simply predicting the future, but boldly speaking God's message into a particular situation at a particular time. It seems to be more than simply preaching and teaching in general, but rather speaking a timely message to a specific audience. The distinguishing of spirits is tied to this, because this gift is about discerning whether or not a prophetic message is truly from God. Paul speaks of judging prophecies in 1 Corinthians 14:29-33. In 1 John 4:1, John speaks of testing the spirits, which is a reference to using discernment when it comes to teachers. Some people are gifted to speak God's message with boldness, while others are gifted to discern when a bold message is from God

and when it is not.

Speaking in tongues refers to people spontaneously speaking in a language that they did not previously know. This happens several times in the book of Acts, including in Acts 2:4 when the Holy Spirit first came upon the apostles. They spoke all kinds of languages that were then heard by people who were visiting Jerusalem from the surrounding areas. Speaking in tongues is a miraculous sign from God. But Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 that the sign is only truly helpful if someone interprets. Appropriately, then, some people are gifted to interpret the language of someone who speaks in a tongue. These gifts go together so that the church may truly benefit.

Paul's list here is not exhaustive. He names other spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8. In addition to prophecy, he speaks of serving, teaching, encouraging, leading, giving, and showing mercy. And even this list does not seem to be presented as exhaustive. The point is that God gives all kinds of gifts to members of the church so that they can then practice those gifts in ways that benefit the people of God.

Paul ends by coming back to the reminder that each of these different gifts has something in common. Namely, they all come from one and the same Spirit. While the gifts are diverse, they are unified through the giver. And the giver gives them not as we determine, but as he, in his wisdom, determines.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. What do you think it would look like if you viewed your spiritual gifts as common property that belongs not simply to you, but to the body of Christ?

5. As you read of all the gifts that Paul names in verses 8-10, what questions are you left with?

6. Of all the gifts that Paul names in verses 8-10, which one seems most likely to be a gift that you have?

7. How does it impact your perspective of your gift to know that the Holy Spirit gave it to you, just as he determined?

Taking it to Heart

9. In what way might someone hoard their spiritual gift and seek to use it to their own advantage?

10. Think of your specific spiritual gifts. Name at least one way that your gifts could be used “for the common good.”

Wrestling with Issues

8. Some people believe that miraculous gifts like healing and tongues were used by God in the early church, but that they are no longer around today. Others believe that all the gifts are still around today. If the miraculous gifts are still around today, why do you think we don't see more miracles happening around us?



Inferior?

Lesson 3 • October 7 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

No spiritual gift is less important than any other.

Getting Started

1. Do you struggle more with feeling inferior or superior to others?

2. How do you normally respond if you feel that you are not needed?

Explanation of the Passage

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body."

Now that Paul has established the source of spiritual gifts (the Triune God) and the purpose of spiritual gifts (for the common good of the church), he delves into an illustration about how spiritual gifts work in the church. The illustration is that the church is a body and all the members are the different body parts. While the body parts have an individual nature to them, they are all interdependent. And also, they all have a unifying purpose and use. As members of the church, we ought to consider ourselves as parts of the body.

Paul emphasizes this powerful unity by reminding us that, regardless of our ethnicity or our station in life, we all became part of the body in the same way. When he refers to baptism, he is most likely talking both about the physical baptism and also what this

baptism signifies. Physical baptism is a way that a person indicates their faith in Christ and publicly announces this faith to the world. This physical act reflects the spiritual reality that we die to ourselves and are raised to new life when we embrace faith in Christ. And not only were we all baptized by the Holy Spirit upon our conversion, but we also are given the same Spirit to drink. This simply refers to the fact that believers live in the ongoing reality of the Holy Spirit's presence and indwelling in their lives.

Paul, after reemphasizing the unity of the many parts of the body of Christ, explores an implication of this unity. Specifically, he explores the idea that certain parts of the body might feel inferior to other parts. For example, the foot might think itself to be less important than the hand. And the ear might think itself to be less important than the eye. Paul's conclusion is that the sense of inferiority would change nothing. The ear and the foot would not cease to be parts of the body. In other words, if a believer felt that their contribution was unimportant because they did not have a showy spiritual gift, this would not make this person any less a part of the body of Christ. And if that believer chose not to participate in the body, the body would be hampered by this.

Paul further critiques the idea that parts of the body are inferior by asking us to imagine what the body would be like if every part was the eye. How would the body hear or smell or walk or work? In other words, the body only works correctly if it has many different parts. To have two different parts does not mean that one is more important than the other. It is simply to have a functioning body.

Finally, before reinforcing his point one last time, Paul gives believers the comfort that they are exactly where God intends for them to be. He says that God has placed the parts of the body, every one of them,

just as he wanted them to be. If you have the gift of mercy, this is not a mistake or demotion. If you have the gift of helps, you are not a second-class citizen. If you have the gift of encouragement, you are not a sub-par member of the body of Christ. You are playing exactly the role that God wants you to play. Therefore don't be discouraged. No part of the body of Christ is inferior. Every part is needed.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. In verse 13, Paul says that all believers in Jesus—Jew or Gentile, slave or free—are united by the Holy Spirit. What are some ways that you have seen barriers overcome because of the unity that the Holy Spirit brings?

5. In verses 15 and 16 Paul writes about parts of the body that might feel inferior because they are not as prominent. What are some parts of the body of Christ that might feel inferior because they are not as prominent?

6. Think specifically of the spiritual gift that God has given you. What would the body of Christ miss out on if you—and others with that same gift—never used that gift in service to the church?

7. How does it impact you when you read in verse 18 that each part of the body—including you—is placed exactly where God wants it to be?

Wrestling with Issues

8. While Paul makes a strong case that every part of the body is needed, we know that it is easier to live without some parts than it is to live without others. Do you think that this is true also with the body of Christ? Explain your answer.

Taking it to Heart

9. What are some ways that you can show honor and value to people in the church whose gifts are typically overlooked?

10. How can you fight against a sense of inferiority when it comes to your own spiritual gifts and how they fit into the life of the church?



Superior?

Lesson 4 • October 14 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

No spiritual gift is more important than any other.

Getting Started

1. In what situation might you be tempted to see yourself as more important than others?

2. Name something that you regularly do, but for which you receive very little credit or gratitude.

Explanation of the Passage

Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-31

"²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts."

In the previous section, Paul depicted the church of Jesus as a body with many parts. Paul emphasized that, while some members of the body of Christ might feel that they are inferior to other parts, this is not the case. Every part is needed. On the flipside, Paul in this section emphasizes that, while some members of the body of Christ might feel that they are superior to other parts, this is not the case either. Every part is needed.

Paul illustrates the foolishness of a sense of superiority by suggesting that the eye decides that it does need the hand, or that the head decides that it does not

need the foot. Paul is setting up the idea that certain members of the church will think that other members are less important. This is most likely to happen with members whose gifts are prominently seen.

Teachers and Bible study leaders and musicians are using their gifts in front of the rest of the body. Because of this, they are viewed as being important—even indispensable. There is a very real temptation for these members to look at those who are using their gifts behind the scenes, and to see them as unnecessary. It is possible for one part of the body to say to another, “I don’t need you.”

Paul corrects this sense of superiority by reminding us that, in the human body, the most vital parts are actually the unseen parts. While it is sad to lose a finger, it is much more significant to lose an internal organ. The parts that seem to be “weaker” and “unpresentable” are actually indispensable. We need them much more than the “presentable” parts like the hand or the eye. Paul even seems to imply that those prominent gifts are more easily replaced than those who have behind-the-scenes gifts. This is a sharp warning against any sense of superiority among those with up-front gifts.

The ultimate goal of how God has set up the body, according to verses 25 and 26 is that there would be no division (no schism), but that all parts would have concern for one another. Just as the eye works together with the foot in order to keep the body from stepping on a sharp object, the body of Christ shows concern for each member. If one member of the church is hurt, this impacts the entire body. This is why we suffer along with fellow believers who are suffering, and we rejoice together with other members of the body who are rejoicing.

As Paul wraps up chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians,

he reminds us that we are all placed in the body by God, and that we are exactly where he wants us to be. God could have made everybody apostles or prophets or teachers or pastors or helpers or those who speak in tongues. However, he didn’t do this. Nobody has all the gifts, and there is no gift that is possessed by everyone. We have different gifts, and this is exactly what God intended.

Paul’s final statement in the chapter is, “Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.” His meaning is debated. Some think that he is saying that we all should seek gifts, especially miraculous ones like healing and tongues and prophecy. This would seem strange, though, in light of the fact that he spent the entire chapter showing that we all have different gifts and that this is as God intended it. It seems more likely that he makes this statement as an introduction to chapter 13. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul shows that none of our gifts does any good if we don’t have love. The most impressive sermon, the most organized event, the most extravagant music set is worthless to God if we don’t have love. In this sense, the greatest gift is love. Paul wants us to focus more on the fruit of the Spirit than the gifts of the Spirit. His goal is not that the church would be full of impressively gifted people. His goal is that the church would be full of Spirit-led, love-fueled believers who faithfully use their gifts for the common good.

Digging In

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. What members of the body of Christ might be most tempted to think themselves superior to other members?

5. Give an example of believers who do “indispensable” things that are often overlooked.

6. In verse 26 Paul speaks of members of the body of Christ suffering with one another and rejoicing with one another. What do you think it might look like for one member of the church to suffer together with another member?

7. According to the end of this passage, no believer has every gift, and this is as God intended it. How can you truly embrace the part that God has called you to play in the body of Christ?

Wrestling with Issues

8. Paul ends chapter 12 by saying, “Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.” There are several ways that this verse can be understood. Read through the final paragraph in the “Explanation of the Passage” section of this lesson. Do you agree or disagree with the solution presented there, and why?

Taking it to Heart

9. What are some practical ways that you can combat any sense of superiority toward other members of Jesus’ church?

10. Think of a member of your church who is currently suffering in some way. How can you walk with them in their suffering?