

The Body of Christ

*1 Corinthians 12 from the series, "I Believe in the Holy Christian Church"
Message from the Master Broadcast September 16, 2007 by Pastor Daron Lindemann*

Want to work on your brain power? If so, your options are many. Commit to completing the daily crossword or crypto quip in the newspaper. Purchase and use a page-a-day flip calendar featuring a new vocabulary word with pronunciation and meaning every day. Learn a new language. Memorize the periodic table. Supplement your diet with ginkgo biloba. There's no shortage of help when it comes to enhancing the brain or battling ignorance. Especially for Christians armed with the greatest wisdom of all: the Bible. The apostle Paul knew and believed this, so he wrote, "*Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.*" Sad to say, the Christians in Corinth were failing to recognize what they possessed in the blessing of spiritual gifts, and then failing to use them. Paul's response will help you better recognize, understand, and use your spiritual gifts as a part of the body of believers, the Holy Christian Church.

Paul begins, "*You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.*" What do idols, especially the fact that idols are mute – as in not able to speak or make a sound, like pressing the mute button on your TV – what do they have to do with the body of believers?

Consider this: mute idols are as useless as your radio or surround sound system without speakers. They can't communicate or reveal anything – no promises, no answers to prayers, no guidance for tough decisions, no comfort in times of trouble. They just sit there. Dumb and dumber. The same is true of mute Christians. They're also useless. Christians who are blessed abundantly by God with personalities and skills and health and wealth but don't use them are mute. Inability wasn't the problem in the mega-multi-talented congregation at Corinth. Indifference was.

We'd be naïve if we claimed that sinful indifference didn't threaten our ministry in our congregations. It does. We'd be more naïve if any of us claimed we are individually immune to indifference. We're not. It's one of the more deceptive tricks of the devil to stand side-by-side with Jesus on his right and the Scriptures on his left and agree that, indeed, we are not responsible for getting right with God, that we need do nothing to be saved and that Jesus did everything for our forgiveness. We can do nothing. Salvation is a gift of God. But then, when it comes time to put our faith into action once we have been saved, the devil keeps preaching that we shouldn't be doing anything because Jesus did it all, and successfully convinces us that we don't need to do anything when it comes to our faith. Watch out! The devil uses truth one minute and lies the next to devour your soul! It is true, only before we are saved, forgiven, and assured a place in heaven, that we need do nothing and Jesus did it all. It is a lie, however, that after we have come to faith there's nothing for us to do. There is much to do in living out our faith and acting in love full of thankful service to God and others, as much as there is for a husband and wife to show love to each other for many years after their wedding day.

With that in mind Paul brings his argument home, "*Therefore, I tell you 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.*" Believers don't curse Jesus, but that's what we're doing if we our faith is mute and activity-deprived! The Bible says we are not such pagans, however. We believe and confess, "Jesus is Lord!" We will tell anyone who wants to listen that we have only One who is our Master, only One to whom we pray, only One who has forgiven us by his death and resurrection, only One who loves us perfectly without needing a reason, only One Savior and Lord: Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is awake and active in each of us, because it is by the Holy Spirit that we don't want to curse but instead confess Jesus. It is with the gifts and skills given to us by the Holy Spirit that we put our faith into action. You are not dead! You are not useless! You are baptized and blessed by the Holy Spirit to make a difference! You are the beautiful bride of Jesus, dressed for service in his dying and rising love.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people." Promoting and promising the activity of the triune God in this threefold explanation of God's work for us, in us, and through us, the Bible cheers us on with this divine truth: God has created a variety of different people! God distributes many kinds of personalities, skills, and interests among the body of believers. That

means there's a place for anyone and everyone in the different kinds of service - no, there's a need for anyone and everyone in the different kinds of service because a screwdriver can't do a hammer's work and a shoe shouldn't think it can hold up your pants like a belt and a Christian gifted with the skill of connecting with people ought not be expected to balance the books and a Christian gifted with the skill of crunching numbers ought not be expected to be a worship greeter. Each of us is gifted differently so that a variety of needs can be filled when we use our spiritual gifts at home, at work, and at church. What is your gift, and how can you use it? *"To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."*

In 1966 McDonald's redesigned the original clumsy version of Ronald McDonald, gave him a makeover including floppy feet, and went public. He became such a hit that in 1972 they realized that they needed more than one Ronald McDonald. So McDonald's created a book: "Ronald and How." It details proper makeup application techniques and appropriate Ronald behavior – especially around children. Everything you need to know about being Ronald is in the book. The coveted clown job currently pays about 40 grand a year, but a busy Ronald can make up to \$100,000 by performing about 400 shows. The premier Ronald, who performs for national commercials, pulls in about \$300,000. Twice a year there's a secret gathering of the estimated 250 Ronalds – not visible, not open to the public. McDonald's policy forbids any two Ronalds from meeting in public lest the illusion of one Ronald be shattered. At the Ronald convention, Ronald trainers are present and each Ronald must pass inspection or go home without a job.

In A.D. 55 the Christian church in Corinth got a makeover because a professional consultant, namely, the apostle Paul, wrote a letter. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul is guided by the Holy Spirit to write, *"There are many parts, but one body."* This flies in the face of the Ronald strategy. Instead of producing Jesus look-alikes who imitate their Lord's mannerisms and voice with the passion of an Elvis impersonator, the Bible says that all believers are different and should rejoice in our distinctly given abilities. *"There are different kinds of gifts"* and God *"gives them to each one, just as he determines."*

So God, instead of advertising his saving love with one recognizable figure in today's body of believers, puts it into action using different people with different gifts. Wisdom. Extreme, dependent trust. Generosity. Compassion. Helpful service. Leadership. Listening. Talking. Praying. No one believer can do all this, as much as the human body cannot be just one significant body part like an eye or an ear. Paul quips, *"If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be?"* We each can do something. God created us that way. God saved us that way. God loves us that way. God equips us that way.

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." Always connected to the head of the body, Jesus, believers take up our roles using the different kinds of gifts we've been given and put them to use everywhere. That means in church and at home, at work and in the neighborhood, at bowling night and golf league and dance lessons, at the game, at the club, and on vacation, on Sunday morning and Friday night. Wherever we are, whatever we do, we take Jesus with us, or, I should say, Jesus takes us with him. More than that, our interdependence on the other parts of the body unites us with the whole Christian Church.

Discover more about your gift by meditating on the words of 1 Corinthians 12, exploring what it is you're really good at and have a passion for, and asking others to give you their advice. Then don't worry about not being good at everything else. A hand is worth more being a hand than trying to be a kneecap. Know who you are in Christ, and live as part of his body. Amen.