

All in the Family

I Corinthians 11:17-12:31 | Week Eight

Overview

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to take time to hear from each other (15 minutes), review the lesson (30 minutes) and to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes). Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

Where We Are Now

Last time we met we talked about idols—anything that distracts us from God or calls our attention away from our service to Him. We also discussed how important it is to live our lives well, otherwise we might cause problems for others.

This Week

The church is one big family, but like every family there's a lot of room for diversity. That's why Paul uses the illustration of the body to represent the church. All the parts of a body need to function the way they were intended to function in order for the whole body to "work." Even parts we might think are not that important really do have critical roles to play and tasks to accomplish.

The Big Idea

Communion reminds us of His sacrifice and our complete acceptance under the New Covenant. Now we are His body, to use the unique gifts God has given us, not for our glory but for God's. Understanding our function in the church lets us do what God has called us to do.

Memory Verse | Cor. 12:12

Looking at the Text

Ask someone to read I Corinthians 11:17-34 - *But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there*

- 1 | The Problem with Knowledge
- 2 | Wisdom of Man & Power of God
- 3 | Servanthood & Stewardship
- 4 | Sex, Holiness, & Worship
- 5 | Singleness, Marriage, & Calling
- 6 | Knowledge, Idolatry, & Surrender
- 7 | The Anatomy of an Idol
- 8 | All in the Family
- 9 | It's All About Love
- 10 | Spiritual Gifts & The Church
- 11 | The Resurrection & The End

Get Started

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

Don't Forget

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version.

are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, **19** for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. **20** When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. **21** For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. **22** What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. **23** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. **27** Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. **31** But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. **32** But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. **33** So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— **34** if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

1. What is the purpose of observing the Lord's Supper (Communion)? Despite the different ways some Christian traditions celebrate communion, what are some aspects of it that unite Christians?

The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of what Christ did for us. Christians are united in celebrating Christ's death and resurrection, generally using physical elements such as bread and juice (or wine) as symbols. A reminder of our forgiveness, eternal security, and grace available empowers us to live for Him.

2. The Corinthians were causing divisions in relation to the Lord's Supper. Paul told them not to approach communion "in an unworthy manner" (v. 27). What does he recommend they do in order to approach communion properly?

Paul recommends that believers examine themselves (v. 28), meaning that we should take stock of our spiritual condition to ensure that we are not taking communion in an unworthy condition. Come with open hearts to reflect on Him.

Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 - Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All

Think About It

Illustrate It

The Last Supper is recorded in three of the Gospels (Matt 26:17-30; Mk 14:12-25; and Lk 22:7-30). It sets the precedent for Christians observing the Lord's Supper. Just as the Israelites remembered a crucial time of deliverance from Egypt as they celebrated Passover, so, too, Christians remember Christ's ultimate sacrifice by observing communion. *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* describes communion as "a sacred meal that uses divinely sanctioned food and drink and commemorates the atoning death of Jesus."

Have various participants describe communion experiences they have had in different churches. How does the observance of communion help us as Christians?

Tie It Together

The Corinthian Christians failed to see the real purpose of spiritual gifts and, instead, were arguing about them. Some thought that certain gifts were better than others, which resulted in divisions. In 1 Cor. 12:1-11 Paul emphasizes that the diversity of spiritual gifts are "for the common good" (v. 7). We need to be careful about losing sight of what God intends for the church. It's not about gaining personal power or advantages over other Christians, but about serving together and building up the church for God's glory.

these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

3. Paul explains that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.” Which of the gifts that are listed resonate with you the most? How might they play a role in your chosen academic field?

Ask participants to share what they think is their unique gift. There are spiritual inventory tests to get “data” on our passions and gifts (available upon request). Another indicator is what peers observe as “your gift.” These strengths will probably be factors in what we love about our academic studies and the careers we pursue.

Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 - *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.*

4. Explain what Paul means when he uses the illustration of the “body.” Think about your academic studies. How do the “parts” of your chosen profession need to work together to form the entire “body”?

Paul means that even though the church is made up of a diversity of people, they are all part of one body, and as such should function together. The parts of any profession need to work well together. If the parts are divided or going in opposite directions, the purpose of the profession can break down.

5. Based on your reading of this passage, what are the purposes of the spiritual gifts in the church?

The *ESV Study Bible*, commenting on 12:25-26, reads: “The purpose of the gifts is

One Body: “A reason that the Holy Spirit distributes [gifts] as he wants is because the one body of Christ, made up of all true believers, is so diverse. Not everyone has all the gifts or the same particular gift as everyone else because not everyone needs the same gift or gifts. There is a beautiful and orderly arrangement in the body just as in the healthily functioning human body.”

Alfred Martin, *First Corinthians*

Tips for a Better Discussion

There are lots of differing views about the details of the spiritual gifts, with some Christian denominations emphasizing certain gifts and others not including some. Try not to get into arguments about the specifics of the spiritual gifts, but instead emphasize the need for Christ’s body to function together, allowing each person to utilize their gifts for building up the church.

to build one another up and to care for one another, not flaunt one's own spirituality." The *Life Application Study Bible* adds, "Too often, unfortunately, we are jealous of those who rejoice and apathetic toward those who weep. Believers are in the world together—there is no such thing as a private or individualistic Christianity. We need to get involved in the lives of others and not just enjoy our own relationship with God."

Wrapping Up

6. What can you do to encourage Christian unity in the church? How might your approach to unity apply to your chosen career path?

We can seek to use our gifts for the glory of God, the edification of the church, and the building up of others. In addition, we can seek to develop positive character attributes rather than falling into unnecessary divisions and petty disagreements. You should be intimately involved in a local church where your gifts can be used. You are also part of a grad fellowship that needs your passions and gifts engaged. Your heart for prayer, evangelism, deeper integrative thinking about academics, and social connections (yes parties are spiritual!), need to be reflected in the plans for the semester so that the group can meet the various needs of the believing grads and the broader grad community on campus.

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.

Illustrate It

Rupertus Meldenius (1582-1651) wrote, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." In everything Christians are to exhibit love (charity), which should form the foundation of our Christian ethics—how we live our lives (Matt. 22:36-39). Mark Ross observes, "But if we allow our divisions to become breaches of love and occasions for pride and rivalry, then we will have failed in our calling, and our witness for Christ will be marred" (Ligonier Ministries, "In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity"). Our spiritual gifts should unite us and help us further the cause of Christ.