



**151<sup>st</sup> Church of Christ**  
**Small Group Study Guide – 1 CORINTHIANS**  
by Richard Wolfe

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**AN IMPERFECT LOCAL CHURCH**  
*A Study in 1 Corinthians*  
**CLASS – Lesson 18**

**GENERAL OUTLINE**

**1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40, Unity and spiritual gifts**

**OUTLINE: Lesson 18**

**1 Corinthians 12:1-11, To benefit everyone**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Many members, one body**

In chapter 8, Paul introduced the topic of eating foods offered to idols, but then appeared to wander from that topic to discuss the exercise of personal rights. In reality, he had not wandered from the topic, but discussed at length a Christian's responsibilities towards his or her brethren even as we exercise our rights. Only in chapter 10 did he finally give a direct answer to the Corinthian questions of eating foods offered to idols and eating in pagan temples.

In chapter 12, we find a similar situation. Paul is going to respond to a Corinthian question about exercising Spirit-given gifts in the congregational assembly. But before addressing that question directly, he devotes chapters 12 and 13 to the matter of relationships in the church body. The purpose of any gift or talent, miraculous or not, is not to give star power to the person receiving and using the gift, but to edify the church and individual members of the church.

He opens chapter 12 by affirming the importance of the multiplicity and variety of gifts in the church, followed by the extended analogy of the church as a body in which every member is important, and every member is dependent on the other members. The proper use of any gift or ability is guided by our concern for each other in a context of service-oriented love (chap. 13). Only with this foundation firmly established does he speak directly about the assemblies of the church in chapter 14.

We should keep in mind that this is not primarily a treatise on spiritual gifts. He does not define the various gifts. That is not his purpose. His concern is the attitude of the people using the gifts. We should see the entire discussion as an expression of Paul's theme statement in 1:10. Church members should avoid division by being joined together in the same mind and judgment as members of one body.

**DISCUSSION**

We will deal more with the nature of certain gifts, especially "tongues" and prophecy, in chapter 14. For now, we will attempt to determine and appreciate Paul's immediate message.

- 1. Paul says three things about the knowledge of the Corinthian Christians. What does he say about what they didn't know, what they knew, and what he wanted them to know?**
  
- 2. Identify the irony in verses 2 & 3 about what idols couldn't do and what the Spirit of God did. What thought here is like the description Old Testament prophets gave of idols (cf. Isaiah 44:13-20)?**
  
- 3. It is possible to say the words, "Jesus is Lord," without having any gift of the Holy Spirit. To what did the Spirit of God lead a person to do that no pagan force would ever lead one to believe or do?**
  
- 4. What is the purpose of gifts given by the Holy Spirit?**
  
- 5. How many times does Paul use the words "to another" in verses 8-10, and what is the significance of this repetition?**
  
- 6. Paul has already mentioned baptism in 1 Corinthians 1:13-17. What was his topic when he introduced the idea of baptism there?**
  - Baptism is also used as a metaphor in 1 Corinthians 10:2. In what way was Israel baptized into Moses? Could this association help us understand the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian baptism?**
  
  - What is the value or result of baptism (immersion in water) if the Spirit of God is not involved?**

- 7. Paul makes a connection between the Spirit and spiritual gifts, and he makes a connection between the Spirit and being baptized into one body. What direct connection does he affirm between baptism and spiritual gifts?**
  
- 8. As part of his introduction to the discussion of the importance all the different body members who fill different roles in the church, Paul explicitly acknowledges some of the different groups of people in the congregation: Jews and Greeks, slaves and free (v. 13). In Galatians 3:28, he makes a similar point and mentions these same groups and adds male and female. What are the common points made in both passages? Is he saying that all members have the same role, or that they all have important value?**
  
- 9. Paul makes some important points about the nature of the body of Christ with a unique analogy that uses talking body parts. One attitude is presented in verses 15-16, and a different attitude is presented in verse 21. What are these two ideas?**
  - In what way does the attitude of the body member in v. 21 reflect the same problem that Paul discussed in 11:17-34?**
  
- 10. Through most of this passage (i.e., vv. 14-26) Paul described the church body in somewhat generic terms. What changed in verse 27, and what was the importance of this change to Paul's readers in Corinth? Hint: There is a similarity between Paul's approach and that of the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:1-7.**
  
- 11. Why has God composed the body with different roles, gifts and levels of honor (vv. 17, 19, 24, 25)?**

**12. There are 3 lists of gifts in the chapter: vv. 8-10, v. 28, vv. 29-30. What differences do we see between the lists and the order in which the gifts are listed in the different lists? What do these differences (or lack of uniformity) suggest about the composition of the lists and the importance of the gifts themselves in relation to each other?**

vv. 8-10 (NKJV)

v. 28

vv. 29-30

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**13. What is Paul's main message in this chapter? Considering the message, does it change anything if we are considering miraculous gifts or non-miraculous gifts in the church?**