1 Corinthians 12

One Body ...
Great Diversity
Outline of Chapter 12:

1. Transformed from pagan to unified faith (v1 – 3)
2. One God produces diversity of gifts (v4 – 11)
   - given for common good
   - given by God’s determination
3. Church at Corinth is single body (v12 – 30)
   **Proof:** one baptism (v13)
   No sense of inferiority (v14 – 20)
   No sense of superiority (v21 – 26)
   Church expresses unity in diversity (v27 – 31)
Introduction

1. Possible questions in 1 Cor. 12 - 14

- How do we know if a person has a gift from God?
- How many gifts are there and do all have every gift?
- Are some more important than others? If yes, which?
- Should tongues be used in public worship?
- Should tongues be restricted in public worship?
- How should public worship be conducted?

**Real issue:** What is the value and purpose of “spiritual” (*pneumatika*) in life of church?

**Key context:** Question is asked in context of impending division by immature Christians
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Introduction

2. Context of Corinthian church
   
a. Gentile members know Delphi oracles – ecstatic speech
   b. Common in Greek worship to get “caught up” in irrational mode of worship
   c. Syncretism: adopting similar styles of worship

Throughout the history of the church, in order for “worship” to be relevant in the minds of the worshipper, it has always had to be syncretistic; the ability of worship to reflect the philosophy and life-approach of men has traditionally been the yardstick by which the worship has been measured.”
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1 Cor. 12:1 – 3: 1st proof of their “oneness”

1. Paul is going to deal with “spiritual” things

   May refer to “people” or “gifts”

Test of “commitment” to Christ:

   “Jesus is cursed” – anathema (Not Spirit of God)
   “Jesus is Lord” (= Yahweh) (Always Spirit of God)

**Point:** No one in Church is saying Jesus is cursed;
All are confessing Jesus is Lord;
Therefore ... ALL are part of one body.
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1 Cor. 12:4 - 11: **ONE** source; many gifts

1. Paul is countering the tendency to measure a person’s experience of God by our own experience

   Conformity = heresy

   Conformity = control

   Conformity = “superiority”

2. Diversity expressed in the nature of God (4 – 6)

   - Same Spirit → Different gifts
   - Same Lord → Different ministries
   - Same God → Different works
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1 Cor. 12:4 - 11: **ONE** source; many gifts

3. The **purpose** of diversity: **common good** (7)
   - 1 Cor. 6:12: individual good = community good
   - 1 Cor. 7:35: individual good
   - 1 Cor. 10:23: community good (see vs. 24)
   - 1 Cor. 10:33: Paul seeks community good

4. Some of the variety (8 – 10) – not exhaustive or complete
   a. See list in 12:27 - 31
   b. See list in Romans 12:6 - 8
   c. See list in Ephesians 4:11 - 13
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- God
- Lord
- Spirit
- wisdom
- knowledge
- faith
- healing
- miracles
- prophecy
- Discern-
- ment
- Tongues
- showing mercy
- leadership
- contributing
- encouragement
- teaching
- interpretation
- service
- apostles
- prophets
- Evangel-
- ists
- Pastor
teacher
1 Cor. 12:4 - 11: **ONE** source; many gifts

5. All have same source (11)
   a. Emphasis: **ONE** and THE SAME
   b. God is giver ➔ Gift not a reward
   c. God is determiner ➔ God decides, not me!
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1 Cor. 12:12 – 13: **ONE** body

1. Metaphor of body: unit with many parts!
   a. Paul may have known Menenius Agrippa’s analogy
   b. Common for Paul:
      - Rom. 12:4 *(Body with different members)*
      - Eph. 1:23; 4:4, 16 *(One Body & one Spirit)*
      - Col. 2:19 *(Whole body grows as God causes)*

2. Common baptism “by **one** Spirit” (water baptism)
   a. Baptism of Holy Spirit **always** has “holy” in it’s phrase (see Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16)
   b. Paul associated life of the Spirit with baptism (see Rom. 6:3 – 4) and unity with baptism (1 Cor. 1:14 – 15; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27)
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Baptism for Paul

The Body Of Christ

One Baptism
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1 Cor. 12:14 - 20: **NO** inferiority

1. Some in church feel inferior because of attitude of others
   a. Each part has its function
   b. Each part has its value
   c. Each part placed there by God
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For Reflection:

How does what I do and say make others feel inferior?

How does what others do or say make people feel inferior?
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1 Cor. 12:21 - 26: **NO** superiority

1. “Weaker” parts are indispensable
   
   a. Given greater honor to parts that lack it – how?
   
   b. **Warning!!!!** Vs. 21 indicates this is **only** a metaphor and not theology by it’s use of “head”, a term normally reserved for Jesus

2. **Point:**
   
   **No division**

3. **Expression of unity:** *litmus* test!
   
   ➢ one suffers: all suffer
   
   ➢ one honoured: all rejoice
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1 Cor. 12:27 - 31: **YOU** are the body of Christ

1. Paul sees local christians as “Christ’s presence” in their community

2. As such, they collectively form the “body” of Christ

3. God has appointed all (in order?)
   a. Importance? (goes against flow of text)
   b. Chronological (possible for 1st 3 or 4 only)
   c. Problems at Corinth (wisdom & knowledge are problems there too – see 1 Cor. 1:27; 8:1)
   d. Emphasis is on God’s appointment not order!!!
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1 Cor. 12:27 - 31: **YOU** are the body of Christ

4. **Observations** about the list in vs. 28:

   1. Apostles, prophets, teachers are persons who play significant role in establishing church (see. Eph. 2:20)

   2. Next five are “gifted” ministries (NIV misleading)
      - 2 (helping and administration) not mentioned above in vss. 8 – 10
      - Tongues is last (probably because it is a problem)
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1 Cor. 12:27 - 31: **YOU** are the body of Christ

5. Vss 29 – 30 indicate not all have all gifts
   a. Question expecting the answer “no” in Greek
   b. Paraphrase: “not all are…. are they?”

6. Vs. 31 can be translated 2 ways:
   a. Seek the greater gifts (a command – imperative)
   b. You are seeking the greater gifts (statement of fact – indicative)

Paul will show them a “better” way!!
The way of Love - Chapter 13