

**I Am First Baptist Church:  
I Will Be a Functioning Church Member  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

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**October 13, 2013**

**Text Introduction:** In some circles the phrase church membership is a rather routine phrase. For most of you, members of First Baptist Church, are not uncomfortable with the term. Others, however, are. There is an increasing resistance to church membership. Some would even doubt the Biblical validity of church membership. For these reasons, I have it on my heart to deal with the issue of church membership for the next several weeks.

Some time ago, I happened upon a book by Thom Rainer titled, *I am a Church Member*. That's not a very fancy title, but the subtitle is what captures me—"Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference." The seed thoughts for this series come from this little book. At the end of each chapter, Rainer issues a challenge. We deal with the first challenge today—"I will be a functioning church member."

Our text is 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

**Text:** Now concerning what comes from the Spirit: brothers, I do not want you to be unaware.<sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, you used to be led off to the idols that could not speak.<sup>3</sup> Therefore I am informing you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit.<sup>5</sup> There are different ministries, but the same Lord.

<sup>6</sup> And there are different activities, but the same God activates each gift in each person.<sup>7</sup> A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial:

<sup>8</sup> to one is given a message of wisdom  
through the Spirit,  
to another, a message of knowledge  
by the same Spirit,  
<sup>9</sup> to another, faith by the same Spirit,  
to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit,  
<sup>10</sup> to another, the performing of miracles,  
to another, prophecy,  
to another, distinguishing between spirits,  
to another, different kinds of languages,  
to another, interpretation of languages.

<sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as He wills.

**Introduction:**

After FBC, Lafayette, burned to the ground in 1999, my predecessor, Perry Sanders, was quoted in the newspaper as saying, "The building is not the church; the church is the people." Amen and amen. So, if

this is true, and it is, we need all of the people of the church functioning together. This text before us today gets at this point by showing how the members function together by using their spiritual gifts.

Now, the subject of spiritual gifts is a rather broad subject. In fact, Paul's comments about spiritual gifts really reach across the next three chapters. It is impossible to say everything there is to know about spiritual gifts in this one message, but I hope to be able to address some basic issues in regards to this subject.

The Corinthians must have had a problem with using their gifts correctly. In this longer section on worship and use of gifts, Paul identified the need to be available to do what God has called each one to do. The problem seems to be that too many were neglecting their God given gift to desire a different gift. Paul writes that God has gifted all of us and we need to be available to God's unique call.

We've got time today to address three very important truths today in regards to spiritual gifts. Most of you know these things already, but it's always good to hear things again, especially if we are not making the appropriate application in our lives.

### **Functioning church membership means that I recognize that ...**

#### **My spiritual gift is an individual gift.**

Text Characteristics: There is much in this text that indicates that our spiritual gifts are individual. First there is the word translated "diversities" in verse 4 and 6 and "differences" in verse 5 according to the King James. The New American Standard translates this word "varieties" and the New International Version translates this word "different." Second, there is the recurring phrase, "to one" that occurs in verses 7-11. Finally, there is the word or phrase "distributing to each one as He wills" in verse 11.

Truth of these Verses: What does this mean? What is the application? Several things seem to be clear about the individual nature of our gifts.

1. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift.  
You might deny, disown, or not discover your spiritual gift, but if you are a Christian you have a gift.
2. God, Himself, gives us our gifts.  
Some people might try to seek a particular kind of gift (this was the case in Corinth), but God gives us our gifts. He gives them to us with us in mind.
3. There are a variety of gifts.  
There is a representative list given here in 1 Corinthians. There is also a list in Romans and also a smaller list in 1 Peter and Ephesians. None of the lists agree. I think there is a reason for that—the Bible is giving us a representative list, not an exhaustive list.

The point is this: you have a spiritual gift that is just for you. The idea for a Christian not to have a spiritual gift is foreign to the New Testament. You will never be happy unless you are exercising your spiritual gift in the context of the local church.

## **My spiritual gift is an important gift.**

Not only is your spiritual gift individual, but your spiritual gift is important. The issue in Corinth was that everyone wanted the gift of tongues. I suppose that a similar situation sometimes arises in our culture. In our Baptist heritage, it is usually not the gift of tongues that everyone wants, but rather something else—maybe it is teaching. There is a danger in not seeing every single gift of equal importance.

### The Progression of Gifts

Notice the progression of gifts in this passage. There are different gifts. Different gifts lead to different ministries. Different ministries lead to different activities or different effects.

Different gifts lead to different ministries which lead to different effects.

### The Purpose of Gifts

Verse 7 indicates that the purpose of a diversity of gifts is that there is “the profit of all.” Then, in verses 12-31, there is a lengthy illustration of how the body of Christ is like a physical body. Every part has its purpose and thus importance

### Two Common Pitfalls

1. Sometimes, there is the temptation of saying that my gift is more important than someone else’s gift.

Al McGuire was the basketball coach for Marquette University in 1976 when that team won the National Championship. Marquette had a star player on that team by the name of Butch Lee. He was a superstar and as some superstars are guilty, he knew he was a superstar. After the first practice of the year, Coach McGuire pulled his star aside and said, “Butch, the game is 40 minutes long. Divide that in half and each team will have the ball approximately 20 minutes. Divide that 20 minutes by 5 and that means that each person on our team is going to have the ball for approximately 4 minutes. Now, Butch, I know what you can do with the ball for 4 minutes. What I want to see from you is what can you do for that other 36 minutes.”

I think a principle like that one applies when we think about using our gift within the whole body of Christ. Can we use our gift with the same energy and excitement if we receive no applause? What if no one notices?

2. Sometimes, there is the temptation of saying that my gift is not as important as someone else’s gift.

Charles Plum, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plum ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a Communist prison. He survived that ordeal and went on to have a career giving speeches about lessons learned from that experience.

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.

"I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!"

Plumb assured him, "It sure did - if your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform - a Dixie cup hat, a bib in the back, and bell bottom trousers. I wondered how many times I might have passed him on the Kitty Hawk. I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you,' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor."

Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.<sup>1</sup>

All gifts are for the common good.

John Maxwell has said, "[In part] "the purpose of the church ought to be different people with different backgrounds using different gifts in different places to meet different needs."

### **Love is the necessary ingredient for using my spiritual gift.**

Chapter 12 introduces chapter 13, which mandates that I can have the Spirit's giftedness, but if I don't use it in love, with love, I am nothing. Do you think it is possible to be gifted and not Godly? I do. Let our text remind us to exercise our gift in love.

Conclusion: Some years ago two teenage boys walked into a crowded church meeting. They were late. There was no room left. They stood in the back surveying the scene for a few moments. Seeing no room, they turned to walk out, when an usher stopped them and said, "Boys, come down here with me, I'll find you a place." That same night, those two teenage boys surrendered themselves to Christ. One of those boys' names was Billy Graham. Thank God for a Godly usher using his spiritual gift in love.

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<sup>1</sup> Ozsermonillustrations.com