

# A Study of First Corinthians

## Week Ten

### 1 Corinthians 11:23-12:20

#### Day One

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

v. 23 – It appears that Paul received this particular revelation directly from the Lord Himself. How was it communicated? We don't know. I would think that the story of the Last Supper would have been common knowledge, circulated by the apostles who were there. I would further think that Paul wanted them to know that what he was writing wasn't conjecture; it was a directive from God. They were not to be recreating the Passover meal but rather the bread and cup ritual that the Lord instituted after the meal was over.

v. 24 – As you may know, I was raised Catholic, and Catholics have developed a rather bizarre doctrine of what occurred at communion time. They taught and still teach that the elements—the bread and wine—are actually turned into the body and blood of Jesus. I never understood that even when I was Catholic!

I will admit that there is some room for discussion on this issue, for the wording does seem to imply that this may be true—however that would or could happen. But my own conclusion after years of study is that this is a memorial ritual and not a partaking in divine substance! Jesus wanted His disciples then and wants them now to remember that He gave His life for them. I don't think it's any more complicated or mysterious than that.

v. 25 – What a sacrifice Jesus made! It is worthy of remembrance regularly. **How often do you participate in the Lord's Supper? Is it a regular event? Could you participate more often? Do you think you could participate as a cell group? As a family? Or do you think this can only take place in a church setting?**

v. 26 – I certainly like this remembrance better than a crucifix with a figure of Jesus hanging there. Notice that this isn't a celebration or remembrance of Jesus' resurrection, but of His death! We must never forget what Jesus did. This tells us that we must work to remember, drawing on this simple rite as our chief means of corporate appreciation and remembrance of Jesus.

## Day Two

27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

v. 27 – This verse indicates that there are some additional spiritual ramifications to the Lord's Supper. It isn't just a memorial service. Those who come to the table and acknowledge that Jesus died for them, and then live as they want, doing what they want, are guilty in God's presence. They are trivializing and trifling with the sacrifice of the Son of God. I wonder if this was what the writer of Hebrews was referring to in this passage:

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:26-31).

It seems that it is dangerous to play with spiritual things if you aren't a serious disciple ready to carry out your public confessions.

v. 28 – I try to use the moments before I partake of the bread and juice to do some self-analysis. I confess any sins of which I am conscious and ask God to reveal any of which I am not aware—or those I have conveniently forgotten. I also ask if there is anyone I need to forgive at that point as well. That is how I have interpreted and applied this particular verse over the years.

v. 29 – The Lord's Table isn't an isolated event or rite. We do it with other brothers and sisters. When we do, we must acknowledge that we are not alone. Jesus' death created a family and we are part of that family. Therefore we have duties and responsibilities to those other members of the body. I think this is broader than just making sure we don't have offense with anyone. I think we are to acknowledge that there are people with differing interpretations about doctrine, people who don't resemble us or act like us. Yet they are part of God's family and we must treat them as such, if we eat of the Lord's Table.

v. 30 – This is a startling statement. Those who don't properly discern God's body are subject to illness and death! I don't understand how Paul knew this or how he would know whether or not someone had "sinned" against the Lord's Table if they died or were sick. I also wonder if we could ever apply this verse to our modern context. How would anyone know for sure if someone had profaned the Lord's Table? So I will leave this alone and not develop any doctrines from this one verse.

### Day Three

31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 32 When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. 33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. 34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

v. 31 – This is an interesting concept. If I perceive myself correctly, then I will not be judged. I think this is the lesson from one of Jesus' parables:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

So I suppose the best question to ask at this point is: **Are you judging yourself correctly?**

v. 32 – The judgment here is not in a final sense, but one that determines whether we are faultless or not at any given moment in time. If not, then God will open our eyes to see that reality so we can repent and not be judged with the rest of the world. I am sure you have experienced this at some time in your life.

Perhaps you said something and then you found yourself in a situation that caused you to think about what you said. You then realize it was wrong and you deal with it, maybe even asking forgiveness. In a sense, you were judged in what you said since you did not judge it for yourself. God then helps you confront it and judge it properly so you can be forgiven and move on.

v. 33 – The idea for the Lord's Table was not to have a meeting that divided but rather united the Body. So Paul urged that each one do what they must do at home—eat and drink—and then come together to fellowship and remember the Lord's death.

v. 34 – This is the first mention by Paul that he would be paying the Corinthians another visit. He obviously had more teaching to do, and he perhaps had more practices to describe and outline for them. Paul’s work was ongoing with the churches. There are some modern “apostles” whose work with “their” churches consists of speaking from the pulpit. This seems to be only part of apostolic work, but some have made it the whole. I don’t know why some churches settle for the weak assistance and oversight they receive from their governing bodies, whether denominational or non-denominational. In many cases, these churches contribute to the overall operation of their governing organization and get very little in return.

#### **Day Four**

12:1 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. 2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 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. 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

v. 1 – Where did Paul get his revelation? Much of it had to be directly from the Lord. Here he embarked on teaching about spiritual gifts, something with which he had no Jewish doctrine from which to draw. Paul’s motive was to teach the Corinthians so they would be knowledgeable and not ignorant. If one is ignorant, then one cannot fully enjoy or employ something from which there could be harm or benefit. Lack of knowledge can be a serious spiritual dilemma:

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children (Hosea 4:6).

That is why I always read and study to get more insight and knowledge. I know that my spiritual ignorance can be a great hindrance to the Lord using me for His purpose. I therefore want to heed the warning that Paul gave Timothy:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

v. 2 – Paul assumed that the Corinthians believers were all once idolaters. Somehow or other they were influence and led astray.

v. 3 – Now the same was true for their faith in Christ. They were led by something, but this time it was the Spirit of God. No one who is led by the Spirit can say anything except that Jesus Christ is Lord. Paul was imparting knowledge concerning the Spirit’s role in the life of the believer. First, that Spirit woos and draws a person to Jesus.

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned (John 16:8-11).

v. 4 – The next thing that Spirit does after salvation is to impart spiritual gifts to the believer. Paul went on to describe these gifts in later verses, but assigns this benefit to the Spirit's work. **What are your spiritual gifts, do you know? Are you sure? There are many good gift profiles that you can use to help you identify what they are. You may want to make that your goal as we proceed through this chapter.**

v. 5 – It is the Spirit's role to give gifts. It is Jesus' role to give assignments, as stated in Ephesians:

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-13).

Paul only mentioned five of the possible assignments in Ephesians, so there must be more that aren't mentioned. Could this be your purpose that Paul was referring to there?

v. 6 – It is the Father's role to give specific assignments:

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do (John 17:4).

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

I know my gifts are teaching and administration amongst others. I know my purpose is to do some pastoral and apostolic work among the churches at large. I also know that my assignment in large part is Africa. **Do you have that kind of clarity? Do you want it? How can you be more effective with what you have been given and at doing what you have been assigned to do?**

### Day Five

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy,

to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

v. 7 – Then Paul continued the discussion about the Spirit’s role, especially concerning the gifts that He imparted. First Paul said that every person receives some manifestation of the Spirit. This gift is given for the common good. In other words, gifts are to be expressed on behalf of other people, especially believers. **How are you using your gifts to benefit others and to add to the common good? Can you give specific examples?**

A few years ago I sensed that God wanted me to use my administrative gifts in ways that would benefit the poor, something I had not been doing. Since then, I have made efforts to do just that. After all, my gifts are from Him and should be used as He directs. So I should be pleased to use them in whatever way He directs. **Are you doing that? Are you sure?**

v. 8 – The first two gifts that Paul mentioned were wisdom and knowledge. I have always considered knowledge to be special understanding and insight into some truth, like the grace of God, church government, administration, or prayer. I have then considered wisdom knowing how to apply those special insights. For example, I have knowledge about purpose, but I meet with many people to give them wisdom of how to apply the purpose principles to their lives at any specific point in time.

Furthermore I think that knowledge is something you study to obtain and wisdom is something that you seek from God. While the Spirit is the source of both, both require cooperation from the recipient. **Are you doing your part to be the recipient of God’s spiritual gifts? Are you using those gifts in ways that will glorify Him?**

v. 9 – All have faith or else they could not be saved. So this faith must represent something else. I would suggest that there are some who have faith for miraculous expressions of God’s power. I work with one man in Africa who has great faith. God has used him to build a big church, to build a big church building and to start many ministries. He has led many to the Lord and always commits to big things before he knows how they can be done or paid for. To me, that is an example of one who has a gift of faith.

The gift of healing is mentioned after that and it makes sense to group faith and healing together. It takes great faith to believe for someone’s healing. I am always surprised that some don’t believe that God heals today. They may say He can heal, but they don’t believe He will heal. So I suppose that faith is an integral part of the healing gift. I’m not so sure that a healing gift is what we have made it out to be—someone who prays for people publicly and sees them throw away their crutches. I have known people who bring a sense of healing and wholeness to people and situations just by their very presence.

v. 10 – Here five more gifts are mentioned. We could spend a whole study on these five, but prophecy is discussed more later in this letter. Tongues and interpretation are the most controversial gifts without a doubt. I can't understand why people who are so strongly biblical would fight the possibility that tongues may exist. After all, it's not like tongues isn't mentioned at all.

I will concede that Paul's teaching may not always be clear or easy to understand, but it would seem to me that some people, if not all, in the body of Christ will have something to do with some kind of tongues. I will leave it up to you to decide if speaking in tongues is for you. My own belief is that speaking in tongues is for some, and I am among the some.

v. 11 – While the gifts are diverse, they come from the same source: the Spirit of God. And He distributes them as He chooses to whom He chooses. So gifts aren't about the people who use or receive them—they are about the Spirit who gives them. I think therefore we have spent too much time studying the gifts and not enough time studying the giver. If we study the giver, we would have a better understanding of the gifts. **Does that make sense?**

### Day Six

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

v. 12 – Paul then used one of his most quoted and famous analogies for the Church and that analogy is the human body. Our physical body is a single unit, but is composed of many individual parts and functions. Paul has more to say about this in a few verses, so we will wait until then to say more.

v. 13 – Our unity of purpose and function isn't a matter of anything but the work of Christ and the Spirit in us. We were baptized into one body and this is regardless of race, kindred or tribe. I have no choice when I receive Christ and am baptized—I am made part of a larger body. My gifts and life are not my own; they are merged into the larger body for the common good.

v. 14 – As we begin to look at the analogy of the human body and the Church, I am always impressed with how we have limited God's diversity in the Church. In doing so, we have limited our list of possible gifts and ministries. The human body, on the other hand, is so complex, intricate, and composed of so many different parts. If God isn't intimidated, so to speak, by the human body and its complexity, then He would not be by the Church body. Yet we have simplified our concepts of the body not for God's sake but for our own.

For instance, many churches have a pastor, an assistant pastor, a youth pastor, a worship leader and some other staff members. Where is the diversity and creativity in that? Why does every church staff look the same wherever you go? This is to due to the fact that we have not grasped the fact that the Body is made of many different parts, just like the human body.

v. 15 – The example is so ludicrous. How could the foot decide that it is no longer a part of the larger body? It is physically impossible! And so it is with a member of Christ's body. They cannot declare their independence. They are part of the Body of Christ and there is no choice or other option. That is why I have repeatedly emphasized that you must be a functioning part of a local church. You really don't have an option in the matter.

**I know the local church can be a difficult place in which to function at times. That is no excuse for not being part of a local body of believers. Are you a functioning member of a local church? If not, why not? If so, how can you be even more effective at building up Jesus' body?**

### Day Seven

16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

v. 16 – We don't get to choose our role or function in the body of Christ. I am an administrator and teacher. That was God's choice. It is not my duty to function as such and the responsibility of others to accept me as such.

v. 17 – This is the dilemma I feel the Church has in modern times. For example, many believe that they must be pastors to be in ministry. Therefore we have many who are trying to be "eyes" when their function is really something else. We must work to release and appreciate the tremendous diversity that God intends for His Church. So far, I don't think we have done a very good job. **Do you agree or disagree?**

I don't mean that many more should be on the church payroll. I do mean, however, that many others should be recognized and even ordained as medical pastors, business chaplains, educational missionaries and military servants. **Where is our creativity? Where is our recognition of God's sovereign choice of roles for people in His body?**

v. 18 – God has arranged the parts just as He wants them to be, not as we want them to be. So I wonder how that fits with some churches who vote in and then vote out their pastor? Are they recognizing the parts as God set them in or as they prefer them to be?

Are the parts and members subject to Body approval? Do the feet have any choice in whether the eyes are colored blue or brown? I think not! I don't think my American democratic ideals have any place in God's church or Kingdom, do you?

**vs. 19&20 – What part or function do you play in the body of Christ? What parts do other people play? Do you know? Do you value your role and that of others? Are you part of an effective ministry team, where each knows how to work with the others on the team?**