



CrossRoads Notes:

Turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Title: Grasping Your Value

Theme: Exercising True Church Membership

Series: Essentials for Church Growth

Introduction: *The passages of Scripture I am about to read is one of the most meaningful descriptions of the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, is it one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture that can be expounded upon in times such as these. Satan has used the flesh and the world's view to convince many that they have no value in the Body of Christ. Many sit in the pews convincing themselves that they play no important role in the building of the kingdom of God or in the act of public worship. Others have withheld their presence, their Spiritual gifts and their support because things don't go the way they had hoped.*

Proposition: *I would propose to you that each and every born again Christian has gifts from God that can be exercised under the anointing of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Regardless of how you feel or what you have been told you have great value in the Body of Christ and when you are not exercising your gift out of sacrificial love, the Body of Christ cannot reach her full potential in the building of the Kingdom of God.*

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Transitional Sentence: *God's heart desire is that we not be ignorant about spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12 :1) and He longs for everyone to be an active member in the "Great Commission."*

1 Corinthians chapter 13 tells us the way of exercising our Spiritual gifts is through sacrificial love and 1 Corinthians 14:40 gives us this exhortation as we search for understanding about true church membership that is pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ, "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." 1 Corinthians 12-14 holds truths about active church membership that opens the door to Holy Spirit revelation and empowerment for the operating of the church (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

The Holy Spirit of Christ has this question for all who desire to be seen or recognized as an active member of a local church, "Do you fulfill your position and play your part in a Bible believing Christ honoring church?" The signing of a church membership card is not the endorsement that benefits the whole Body of Christ and empowers the church to fulfill the "Great Commission," but faithfulness to exercising your Spiritual gifts does.

Transitional Sentence: *The first truth to grasp in being useful in the Body of Christ is to cling to the truth that you are found valuable because of what Jesus Christ has done, not because of what you have accomplished.* (Revelation 5:9-10)

Christians become active members of a local church because they grasp the value of Christ's blood shed for them. Illuminated Christians become active in service to God and Christ because they know that the blood of Christ offers a universal salvation. No person is beyond God's reach. He is able to save people from every tribe and language and race and nation. There is no prejudice or discrimination with Christ, no favorites and no partiality. God so loved the world He gave His only begotten son so that whoever believes in Christ will be saved. (John 3:16)

R.A. Jaffra wrote about the Apostle Paul who was active in the church with joyful zeal. He writes, "The Apostle Paul was one of the greatest [laborers for the Lord in his day]. He did travel to many different places yet his writings were not about the scenery he passed through, nor about the architecture of his day and not one line set its focus on the customs of the people. Since his life changing experience with Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul's vision was focused upon the glory of Christ and the passion of his heart was to speak and teach Christ to all who would hear."

For application's sake: Have you allowed the Holy Spirit of Christ to illuminate your spiritual heart of the fact that Christ paid the ultimate price for you and is your vision to make sure Christ is proclaimed? The more you allow the Lord Jesus to place His love within you, the more active you will be in the Body of Christ.

Transitional Sentence: *Active members in the local Body of Christ have revelation of their value through Christ.* The second key truth to becoming and staying an active member is to understand these gifts come from the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:11) The Holy Spirit gives on the merit of what will bring the glory of the Lord into the child of God's life, on the merit of what will accomplish the most for God and for the edification of the church. Holy Spirit gifts cannot be solicited nor bestowed on basis of personal merit, gifts come only according to the will of God. Grasping the truth of the Holy Spirit working in and through Christians takes all the pressure of getting results off of them and places full trust in what God can and is doing. (Read 1 Corinthians 3:7)

For application sakes: Do you understand that it is the Holy Spirit who has gifted you and do you trust in Him for the results? One man can plant the seed in the field, another supply water, and another keep the weeds out. However, none of them can say they are the one who makes the seeds produce, that is completely in God's hands. Christians are human instruments and God alone awakens the hearts of men to the seed of God's Word.

Transitional Sentence: *Active members trust completely in the work of the Holy Spirit and they grasp the necessity of being involved, exercising their gifts in the Body of Christ.* (1 Corinthians 12;12-14)

It is imperative that you understand that 1 Corinthians 12-14 is about Holy Spirit gifts given for the Body of Christ for edification and in today's key text the Apostle Paul is using the illustration of the human body to show us the necessity of the gifts working with one another in a Biblically healthy way.

When church members feel they are not needed or become angry for some reason and walk out of the Body of Christ, the effectiveness of the church of Christ at the very least becomes hindered. The message of Christ is hindered or even stopped when one person who has a spiritual gift feels he does not need the involvement of other Christians who have different gifts.

The Holy Spirit wants you to ask yourself this question, "Do I make time to discover my spiritual gifts, develop them and exercise them for the common good of mankind and especially for the edification of the Body of Christ?"

Transitional Sentence: *Christians who are active in true church membership know the necessity of their Holy Spirit gifts being exercised in the Body of Christ.* The fourth truth to grasp is the necessity of knowing the functions of the Holy Spirit gifts. Paul writing about the gifts, and comparing them to the human body writes, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church, God has appointed..." (1 Corinthians 12:27-28)

The Apostle Paul sums up the whole matter of Spiritual gifts explaining that each gift must work under the Headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:22) and each child must fulfill the responsibility of exercising his gifts out of sacrificial love. (1 Corinthians 13)

No one would say that every church must exercise every gift of the Holy Spirit every week, they know the Lord God will give to each congregation the gifts she needs at the time she needs them.

Once the Body of Christ learns about the service gifts; administration, leading, encouragement, giving, helps and showing mercy, the more open she is to letting the Holy Spirit have freedom to do a work. Once the Body of Christ understands the sign gifts; distinguishing between spirits, healing, miraculous powers, tongues and interpretation of tongues the more hungry she will be to see God do a work among the children of God, much like in the ministries of the apostles and in the great revivals of early America. Once the Body becomes hungry and understands the support gifts; the Word of knowledge, the Word of wisdom, and prophesy which includes the teaching of God's Word, the more she will be able to respond to the Christ apportioned gifts of Prophet, Apostle, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher.

The Body of Christ who harbors hard feelings or unbelief to any of these gifts becomes hindered in her work.

Those who have the gifts to preach and teach God's Word need Christians with hearts made ready for the teaching of God's Word. Those who need to get direction from the Bible need those who have the gift to preach and teach God's Word. Those who need help need those who have the gifts of helps. Without givers the work of God cannot go on, without the Christ apportioned gifts (Ephesians 4:7-11) the Body of Christ can never be prepared for works of service to Christ, be fully built up and made mature and obtain the full measure of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-13)

The entire Body of Christ needs each other because each child of God has her or his gift. Without the use of these gifts or Christians' exposure to their Holy Spirit gifts, it is impossible to achieve God's best for the Body of Christ.

Transitional Sentence: *Christians need to be exposed to the gifts of others and active members stay faithful.* The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Do not neglect your gift... Be diligent in these matters; give yourselves wholly to them, so that others might see your progress." (1 Timothy 4:14-15)

Many have taken Paul's phrase "I have become all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22) out of context and have put undo pressure on Christians to do what they are not called to do. Christians have been pressured to teach Sunday school when their gift is helps or administration. Christians have been forced to preach when they have not been given a word or the gift for "prophesying." Many have been pressured to fulfill a position, draining them of strength, hurting their self-esteem and abusing time, thus keeping them from developing their God given gifts.

Illustration: "Once upon a time, the animals decided they should do something meaningful to meet the problems of the new world. So they organized a school.

They adopted an activity curriculum of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all the animals took all the subjects.

The duck was excellent in swimming; in fact, better than his instructor. But he made only passing grades in flying, and poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to drop swimming and stay after school to practice running. This caused his little web feet to be badly worn, thus, dropping his skills to only average in swimming. But average was quite acceptable, so nobody worried about it -except the duck.

The rabbit started at the top of his class in running, but developed a nervous twitch in his leg muscles because of so much make-up work in swimming.

The squirrel was excellent in climbing, but he encountered constant frustration in flying class because his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the treetop down. He developed "Charlie horses" from overexertion, and only got C's in climbing and a D in running.

The eagle was a problem child and was severely disciplined for being a non-conformist. In climbing class he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using his own way to get there." (He Gave Gifts, Charles Swindoll)

The moral of the story as it applies to our Holy Spirit given gifts is, we as individuals can only excel in the gifts that we have received from the Lord for His purposes and for the good of others. When Christians are forced or expected to train for things they are not gifted in, they become less affective in the gifts they once mastered. Pride of being better than others creeps in while watching those without certain gifts trying to learn the God given gifts of others. Scripture is very clear, not everyone has the same gifts. It is very damaging to expect others to develop gifts or exercise gifts that are not placed in them. It is equally wrong to expect those with Holy Spirit gifts to exercise their gifts just like someone else exercises a certain gift.

This causes a critical spirit and causes Christians to become inactive in true church membership. Just as each child of God has his gifts, each Christian can only develop and exercise his gifts according to the faith given them. (Romans 12:3-8)

Christians who become and stay active in true church membership do not try to play the keyboard and lead the music ministry if they are not trained and skilled for music for the Lord in the house of God. (1 Chronicles 25:1-8) These faithful humble servants do not instruct Christians how to exercise their Holy Spirit gifts, they have learned the joy of letting the Holy Spirit do His work in Christians lives and ministries. He is fully able to raise up the right trainers at the right time.

Brain surgeons do not tell heart surgeons how exercise their skills. Mayo Clinic is one of the best hospitals in the world because they let specialists do their job. The Holy Spirit is the specialist, let Him appoint, teach and correct. Great Spiritual Hospitals have learned to trust in the Holy Spirit gifts given to their church members and they take time to rejoice in what God has given.

In Closing: *Active church membership begins with the right response to Christ giving His life upon the Cross for your redemption.* It cost God His one and only Son. It will cost you the price of dying to self before you can become an active member in the Body of Christ. Second, active members in the church of God know that only the Holy Spirit can give and anoint gifts that will have an eternal value. Thirdly, active members know that they have a responsibility to be involved in a local Body of Christ and lastly they do not neglect their gifts. They sacrificially train, prepare and exercise their Spiritual gifts for the common good. The Holy Spirit has this challenge to all who want their name on a church membership role. Are you a true church member faithfully and humbly exercising your Holy Spirit gifts in sacrificial love? A signature on a membership card is not the endorsement that brings the anointing of the Holy Spirit of Christ and empowers the church. Faithfulness to Christ and sacrificial exercising of your gifts in the Body of Christ will enable you to enjoy the Holy Spirit doing a great work in the local Body of Christ you worship with.