



BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Studies in 1 Corinthians

TOGETHER^{IN} FAITH SERIES
Learner Session Guide

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 AUGSBURG FORTRESS

BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST: STUDIES IN 1 CORINTHIANS
Learner Session Guide

Together in Faith Series
Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies

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SESSION ONE

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Learner Session Guide

Focus Statement

The Spirit of God activates generous gifts in each of us. Together in Christ, we are God's gift to the world!

Key Verse

"Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6

Do We See Ourselves as the Gifted Body of Christ?

Focus Image



"Wow!" Surprised by God's generous gifts! © RubberBall / SuperStock.

Gather

Check-in

Take this time to connect or reconnect with the others in your group. Fill out a nametag and draw on it something that represents a very memorable gift.

Pray

Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (Prayer of the Day for Second Sunday after Epiphany/ Lectionary 2, Year C, ELW, p. 22)

Focus Activity

Describe the emotion being expressed in the Focus Image. Have you ever experienced that emotion when receiving a gift? As a group, use a whiteboard or chart paper to brainstorm ideas and images the group associated with the word "gift". What makes a gift truly a gift?



Notes

Open Scripture

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

- What particularly jumps out at you, grabs your attention, or speaks to you in this text?
- What are some of the gifts of the Spirit listed here? Which ones intrigue you the most?
- Reflect upon the variety of ways God appears in this text. Share with one another what you notice about these descriptions of God.

Join the Conversation

Historical Context

Paul walked into a vibrant, cosmopolitan city around 50 C.E. to establish the church in Corinth. 1 Corinthians is a passionate letter written by Paul probably two years later in response to conflicts and concerns in this fledgling congregation. By chapter 12 the people of Corinth have heard Paul's instruction and admonition on many topics. But now Paul picks up on a new concern affecting the church's well-being.

In the first century, the seaport of Corinth was a city thriving at a commercial crossroads. Bustling with trade, ethnicities and spiritualities from all corners of the Mediterranean world gave Corinth its multicultural flavor. Christianity was only one small slice of a much larger spiritual pie served up in Corinth. But in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes the spiritual gifts that would empower Corinthian Christians to invite their world to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:38).

1. One of the challenges we have reading this letter today is that we only hear Paul's side of the argument. Based upon your reading of verses 4-11 in chapter 12, what do you think this particular controversy



The Temple of Apollo constructed in 550 b.c.e. represented the city's wealth. Travelers and visitors would pass this spiritual monument on the road leading into the ancient city of Corinth. © John and Melanie Kotsopoulos.



Notes

was all about? Imagine with one another what may have been happening in the Corinthian community. Scan chapters 1-11 for some indication of the challenges facing this community.

2. How does 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 serve to lay some common ground for this diverse and impassioned congregation? Explore the ways Paul's creedal statement might have encouraged unity and oneness within a divided and conflicted Corinthian church.

3. Now imagine yourselves as members of this baby church, living in the cosmopolitan ferment of Corinth and activated by the Holy Spirit God. List ways Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 would better equip you for ministry.

Literary Context

Paul's letter to the Corinthian church is not written in a stream of consciousness style; rather he crafted it in a very particular way for its Corinthian recipients. Paul's attention to the way he is presenting his argument becomes very clear in the first few verses of chapter 12.

In the first verse of this chapter Paul uses the Greek word *pneumatikos*. Your Bible may note that "spiritual gifts" can also be translated as "spiritual persons." New Testament scholar N.T. Wright