

# THE COOPERATION OF A DISCIPLE

(How You Personally Fit Into God's Corporate Agenda)  
I Corinthians 12:1-27



## I MUST UNDERSTAND

- ◆ Spiritual Diversity
- ◆ Spiritual Unity
- ◆ Spiritual Community

“The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee” (I Corinthians 12:21)

Bill Kirk

# “THE COOPERATION OF A HEALTHY DISCIPLE”

**Text:** I Corinthians 12:1-27

**Subject:** How You Fit In-to A Kingdom Of Disciples

## Introduction

**Question:** Why is I Corinthians 12 in your Bible?

**Answer:** Because a controversy was brewing in the Corinthian Church over spiritual gifts.

**Fact:** God had blessed the Corinthians with an abundance of spiritual gifts.

**Fact:** God did this to reach the pagans in the city of Corinth.

**Fact:** God became displeased because believers were misusing and misunderstanding His gifts.

- ◆ Some felt that their gifts were more important than others. (A **superior** spirit)
- ◆ Some became proud and arrogant over their giftings. (A **conceited** spirit)
- ◆ Some became envious over what others were doing. (A **jealous** spirit)
- ◆ Some felt inferior to those more visible and notable. (A **minimizing** spirit)
- ◆ Still others were weak and feeble and felt unimportant. (A **rejected** spirit)

**Question:** What did the Lord do when He saw what was happening?

**Answer:** He inspired a word through Paul to your heart and mine:

- ◆ He knew what you would sometimes **think**.
- ◆ He knew what you would sometimes **feel**.
- ◆ He knew what you would sometimes **be tempted to do**.

**Question:** What is the message to your heart and mine?

**Answer:** It is a message that brings **health** to our spirit (and) **blessing** to our relationships.

**Question:** What is it that makes us a healthy cooperating disciple?

**Answer:** A spiritual understanding of 3 things:

### I. I Must Understand Spiritual “Diversity” (Vs. 1-11)

**Question:** “Pastor, how does God reveal healthy differences in His church?”

**Answer:** He spells it out 3 ways.

- #1. In (v. 4) there are different gifts,
- #2. In (v. 5) there are different ministries,
- #3. In (v. 6) there are different activities. (**In Other Words**)

#1. In (v. 4), there are different gifts, but they all come from the same Holy Spirit. (Which means:)

- ◆ The Spirit determines the gifts you possess and the gifts manifested through you.
- ◆ It is the Holy Spirit’s choice (not yours or mine).
- ◆ It is never earned or deserved (gifts are gifts, freely bestowed from the Lord)

#2. In (v. 5), there are different ministries (or ways of serving) but it is the Lord who gives the authority to minister in His name. (Which means:)

- ◆ We all have different functions,
- ◆ We all have different burdens,
- ◆ We all have different responsibilities,
- ◆ We all have the joy of finding our place in the body, (and serving to contribute to the whole).

#3. In (v. 6), there are different operations (or activities) but it is the same God who is working in power to enable us to serve. (Which means:)

- ◆ No one can ever claim to be superior,
- ◆ No one can ever claim to be inferior,
- ◆ No one can ever claim to be more (or less) important in the community life of the church. (**Why Not? – 2 Reasons**):

#1. In vs. 4, 5 & 6, every gift, ministry and activity is a gift on loan from God. (And)

#2. Every gift on loan from God is not for our purpose (but for God's purpose).

(V. 7) "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man **to profit withal**". (His Church)

**Question:** What does it mean to "profit"?

**Answer:** The Greek word for "profit" is (SYMPHONIA) which means:

- ◆ Edification
- ◆ Advantage
- ◆ Benefit (**In other words**)
- ◆ Every gift and ability we have on loan from God – is not for our own gratification, (but it is given by God so that we can contribute something to the body of Christ). (In other words)
- ◆ Every gift that God has given us is to be exercised to benefit another.
- ◆ Every gift on loan from God is to be used to advance another.
- ◆ Dr. David Dippold in our leaders retreat said, everyone must answer this question:

"What will I do with the gifts God has given me"?

#1. "Will I see what I can make for myself out of my gifts?" (or)

#2. "Will I see what I can do for others out of my gifts?"

**Question:** "Pastor, should I ever be nervous over God gifting and using me in service?"

**Answer:** (V. 11), "But all these (gifts) worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing severally as he will".

- ◆ The Greek word for "severally" is (IDIA)
- ◆ It means "that which is adapted to one person". (**In Other Words**)
- ◆ The Holy Spirit gives your (IDIA) according to your temperament, intellect, will and emotions.
- ◆ Your make-up is considered when the Holy Spirit bestows His gifts. (CHARISMATA)

#### Illustration – True Story

A father and his son stopped at a fast-food restaurant for something to eat one day. Dad wasn't all that hungry, so he ordered french fries for his young son and only a drink for himself. However, soon the aroma of the fries reached his nose, and he decided to sample a few.

He asked his son if he could have some. "No," said the child. Dad thought this was cute at first and asked once again. The child refused, pulling the bag of fries close to himself, protecting it with his arms. The father contemplated this experience: *Doesn't my son remember who gave him the french fries in the first place? Doesn't he realize that I have the physical power to take them away from him? Doesn't he see that I can give him more fries than he could ever imagine? My son is being selfish!*

Do you suppose that God has had similar thoughts about our churches? He has given us everything that we need. He has provided us with money, opportunities, talents, and relationships. He has given us spiritual gifts to do the work of the ministry. He even has given us time. But we fail to give some of our resources back to God when He asks. We have lost our perspective. **Everything we have has been given to us by Him and He can take it away any time He wants.**

#### #1. I understand spiritual diversity

## II. I Must Understand Spiritual "Unity" (Vs. 12-20)

(V. 12), "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ"

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- ◆ (In V. 12), we've all been placed into one body.
- ◆ (In V. 13), we all drink of the same Spirit.
- ◆ (In V. 14), we are all so different, yet unified and tied together by one purpose.

**Question:** What was happening to Corinthian Christians?

**Answer:** Some believers, were entertaining unhealthy thoughts (as many do today): feeling...

- ◆ ...less gifted
- ◆ ...less able
- ◆ ...less worthy
- ◆ ...less significant
- ◆ ...less important
- ◆ ...less valuable

**Question:** What does God have to say to every heart?

**Answer:** In V. 15, you might not be a hand (That's OK)

In V. 16, you might not be an eye (That's OK)

In V. 17, you don't want to be like somebody else (or) want somebody else to be like you).

**(Why Not?)**

- ◆ (V. 18) "But God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him"

**(In Other Words)**

- ◆ It is by God's design you are who you are.
- ◆ It is by God's design you are where you are.
- ◆ It is by God's design you do what you do.
- ◆ It is by God's design you function in His body exercising your gifts on loan from God!!!

**(In Other Words)**

- ◆ Healthy Disciples never decry their ministry.
- ◆ A healthy disciple knows they belong no matter what.
- ◆ A healthy disciple is satisfied and joyful over others who are different from themselves.
- ◆ A healthy disciple never compares themselves unfavorably with someone else.
- ◆ A healthy disciple doesn't look down upon another who is less visible than themselves.

**(Why Not?)**

- ◆ Because healthy disciples understand unity (in the context of diversity)
- ◆ And healthy disciples understand that it is the Lord who presides over His church and orders a Divine arrangement.

**Illustration**

A clergyman once remarked to Sir John Barbirolli how he wished he could fill his church building the way Sir John and the Halle Orchestra filled every seat of a large concert hall. The conductor replied, "You could, if you had a hundred members who worked together as well as the members of this orchestra."

Have you ever seen a performance of a symphony orchestra? I say "seen" because the harmony of the musicians is clearly visible. The white cuffs of the violinists stand out against a black background and make a bold horizontal line across the left side of the stage. As they play, those white cuffs remain an almost perfectly straight line which often moves up and down very quickly. It is a splendid demonstration of how the members of a great orchestra not only play the right notes but play them together.

A great church is somewhat like a great orchestra. The members will not only make the right moves but will make them together. The members must learn to decide upon a task and execute it with perfect harmony. A musician who always wants to play a favorite piece (which may be exceptionally beautiful) and refuses to play, or else plays very half-heartedly or slowly when another composition is chosen, will hurt the whole orchestra and may destroy its appeal. And a church member who is out of step with others, and who approaches tasks carelessly or reluctantly, may generate more sour music than the sweet notes that all the rest can draw out.

### III. I Must Understand Spiritual "Cooperation" (Vs. 21-27)

**Question:** What do healthy disciples never say?

**Answer:** In (v. 21), a healthy disciple never says to another "I have no need of you".

**Question:** Why this instruction?:

**Answer:** Because some Corinthians felt more significant than other Corinthians.

**Question:** What does God say?

**Answer:** That the least gifted member is as important as the most gifted member.

**Question:** Why this theology in church life?

**Answer:** Because it is the foundation of all cooperation.

- ◆ It allows you to cooperate and appreciate those different from yourself.

#### (So Much So Says Paul)

- ◆ In V. 22, "Members who seem to be more feeble, are necessary".
- ◆ The word "feeble" (ASTHENES) means: "sickly and weak"

#### (In Other Words)

- ◆ The unseen workers behind the scene,
- ◆ And the broken member who is struggling,
- ◆ Are both equally important as the visible and notable.

#### (In Other Words)

- ◆ Quit applauding the top dog, super-star, showmanship, entertaining Christian,
- ◆ And start honoring the meek, quiet, behind the scene faithful saint who is never in the lime-light.

#### (Notice Verse 24)

"God has tempered the body together"

- ◆ The word "tempered" (SUNEKERASEN) means: "to mix, combine and blend together"

#### (In Other Words)

God has tempered the body together so that you can complement (and never compete) in serving Jesus.

#### Illustration

At the bottom of the heart there is a wee small thing, everyone always thought it was of no use, but they have found that it secretes less than a drop of something everyday, that without this we would die. Not noticeable – but vitally important.

#### (Vs. 25 & 26) Is Supreme Cooperation

(V. 25), As the physical body takes care of the physical body.

**Example:** White blood cells are on "stand by" (why?) to attack any infection when it comes into your body.

So the spiritual body of believers are on "stand by" (to come to the rescue of those in need)

(V. 26) – Two questions:

- #1. Can you cry when someone else cries? (Or do you feel indifferent?)
- #2. Can you rejoice when someone else has cause to rejoice? (Or do you feel envious & jealous?)

AMEN!  
Bill Kirk, Pastor  
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