



Results of Unity

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Corinthians 12:1 through 16:24

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“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.” (1 Corinthians 12:12)

BACKGROUND

Instead of building up and unifying the Corinthian church, a misconception regarding spiritual gifts was dividing it. This misconception revolved around some members thinking they were more “spiritual” than others because of their gifts.

In chapter 12, verses 1-11, Paul described many spiritual gifts given by God. He then explained how essential each gift was in unifying the Body of Christ, the Church. Imagery of the human body was common in the ancient world, although Paul used it in a special way. He stressed both sides of the picture—first, the oneness of the body, and second, its diversity. Paul compared the necessity of each gift in the Church to the necessity of each part in the body; each part has its own function and all must work together for the good of the whole.

Chapter 13 reveals the greatest of God’s gifts, which is charity (love). In morally corrupt Corinth, the word *love* had little meaning. Four Greek words which translate into the English word “love” are:

- 1) *Agape*—selfless, sacrificial love that acts in conformity to the character and nature of God.
- 2) *Phileo*—endearing love that cherishes, such as the husband/wife relationship, the love of a brother/sister, or dearest friend.
- 3) *Eros*—passionate or physical love.
- 4) *Storge*—affectionate love, such as the loyalty of an employee to his employer.

Of the four, 1 Corinthians 13 describes *agape* love. Translators had no proper word to use when attempting to convey the true meaning of Christian love. Hence, in this chapter, the English word chosen to represent *agape* love was “charity,” which is related to “cherish.”

The misuse of the gift of speaking in tongues by some individuals was also a concern in the Corinthian church because it had caused disorder in worship. Paul instructed that speaking in tongues was a legitimate gift from the Holy Spirit, but should not be used as a sign of spiritual superiority. Rather, it should be a means to spiritual unity.

Chapter 14, verses 34-35, address the practices of women in the church. It is clear from chapters 12 through 14 that women had spiritual gifts and were encouraged to exercise them in the Body of Christ. However, in the Corinthian culture, women were not allowed to confront men in public. Apparently, some of the women who had become Christians thought their Christian freedom gave them the right to question men in public worship. This was causing division in the church. In addition, women of that day did not receive formal religious education, as did the men. Paul was asking the women not to flaunt their Christian freedom during the worship service. He did this to promote unity, not to teach about a woman’s role in the church.

In Chapter 15, Paul reviewed the subject of resurrection. Corinth was a Greek city. Greeks generally believed in immortality of the soul, but not physical resurrection of the body. Christianity, in contrast, teaches that the body and soul will be united after resurrection. Because the church at Corinth was in the heart of Greek culture, Paul addressed this point of confusion and disbelief among its members. He lovingly but fervently emphasized to the Corinthian believers, the importance of their belief in physical resurrection, giving detailed examples of what Christians’ resurrected bodies will be like.

At the conclusion of this epistle, Paul offered brief comments about his travel plans and the plans of his co-workers, Timothy and Apollos, and then made his closing remarks. He directed the Corinthian believers to be alert to spiritual dangers, to remain true to the Lord, to behave maturely, to be strong, and to do all things with kindness and love.

QUESTIONS

1. What does 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 reveal about the unity and diversity of spiritual gifts? Consider what unique talents God has given you. How might they be used to benefit the Body of Christ?
