



## Renewed Life Church

JESUS > RELIGION • COMMUNITY > CONFORMITY • 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-26 • 6/29/2020

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### MAIN POINT

You were created for community—to be in the diverse family of God.

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### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Think back to our group last week. What was one thing that you heard or learned that stuck with you?**

**This final session focuses on life in community, a word that comes from the word “common.” What do you share in common with the people in this group?**

**What differences do you have from people in this group?**

In Jesus, what we have in common is greater than our differences. This idea is at the heart of community. Both the unity and diversity of the church should be beautiful realities. Unfortunately, church is one of the most misunderstood aspects of a relationship with Jesus today.

Each session of this Bible study was intended to help us set aside preconceived ideas and experiences with religion so that we could gain a clearer picture of Jesus, the Bible, worship, holiness, and our purpose in life. In today’s session, we will re-imagine the church, seeing that we were created for community—to be in the diverse family of God.

**WATCH THE SESSION SIX VIDEO FEATURING JEFFERSON BETHKE.**

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### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**What was your biggest takeaway from the video?**

**Jefferson opened by saying that by God’s design we were created for community. What are some of the major obstacles to true community that you have faced?**

Life is not meant to be lived alone. The common point of true community in the church is our shared experience with Jesus Christ, and this community isn’t optional. If the church is the body and bride of Christ, then we can’t

love the Head without loving the body. But a healthy church isn't a club for clones, forcing conformity. It's instead a vibrant and diverse community brought together by Jesus.

**HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-26 AND GALATIANS 3:28.**

**What encouragement does Paul's description of diversity and unity give you as part of Jesus' body—His church?**

**As a valuable part of the body, how have you experienced growth through the church? Or if not involved, where could you plug in?**

When we think of church, we often think of a building when we should think of a body. Our culture sees church as an organization, but the Bible says it's an organism. As this passage from Paul reveals, the church is wonderfully diverse with each of us playing a vital role. This means not only do we fit in the church, but also the church needs us. Whatever part you are, the body works together and needs every member to be fully alive, healthy, and functional.

**HAVE THREE VOLUNTEERS READ ROMANS 12:10, GALATIANS 6:2, AND HEBREWS 10:24-25.**

**What do these verses have in common?**

**What actions are explicitly taught in each of these verses as characteristic of true Christian community?**

**When and how have you experienced any of these actions?**

**How can this group help you or others in any of these areas?**

Life without community is like trying to sit on a stool with only one leg: it's exhausting and misses the point of the design. We were made for relationships with God and His people. The Bible gives us practical instruction about life in the church because Scripture assumes we will be actively engaged in Christian community.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 16:13-18.**

Various opinions have always existed about Jesus' identity. Confessing the truth of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is the common ground on which the church is built.

**How would you explain to someone who Jesus is?**

**How has this study helped you know and love Jesus more?**

Jesus is building His church on this confession of faith, by the grace of the Father. This is who we are as His followers—we don't go to church; we are the church. We are the light of the world. And the darkness is losing.

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## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What is one way God is calling you to a deeper involvement and commitment to the local church?**

**What is one relationship in which you need to speak some of the truths of this study?**

**What's one way our group can pray for you based on what you've learned from this study?**

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## PRAYER

Using the last question as a guide, pray specifically for each individual in your group as your study closes.

**Visit [LifeWay.com/JesusIsGreater](http://LifeWay.com/JesusIsGreater) to purchase the Bible study book of Jesus > Religion for more in-depth individual and group study.**

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## COMMENTARY

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-26

12:4. Apparently the Corinthians were bickering over the relative value of gifts, whether all Christians had gifts, and whether all spiritual gifts were from God. Paul affirmed a wide variety of different gifts. However, his main point in the first three verses of this section was that all spiritual gifts come from the same Spirit.

12:5-6. Paul altered his terminology slightly in verse 5 from the previous verse. Instead of “different gifts,” he described these manifestations of the Spirit as different ministries. Instead of “the same Spirit,” he wrote that these ministries came from the same Lord.

12:7. A spiritual gift and a manifestation of the spirit refer to the same reality, but Paul’s continued use of the word Spirit is significant. As the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is fully God. The Spirit is portrayed in Scripture as active, whether participating in creation (see Gen. 1:2), giving eternal life (see John 3:8), comforting believers (see John 16:7), or interceding for us (see Rom. 8:26). The Spirit’s actions are many; therefore, so are there a variety of spiritual gifts. But the number and diversity of gifts must not become an excuse for members to stir up disunity in the church. All spiritual gifts are to be received and used to produce what is beneficial to the church and its unity. This unity amid diversity is consistent with the triune nature of God, who through the Spirit grants spiritual gifts to each person.

12:8. The phrase message of wisdom recalls an issue Paul addressed earlier in the letter. Some church members viewed wisdom as a means of discerning secret truths not accessible to most Christians. Those who claimed this wisdom thought they were more spiritual than members who demonstrated other gifts. Paul rejected that view and its attendant arrogance. However, he affirmed there was indeed a spiritual gift of delivering a message characterized by godly wisdom. Such a message, if genuine, would unify and build up the church, not divide it. The gift of a message of knowledge would follow the same pattern. These first two spiritual gifts highlight the value of a Christian’s speaking wisely, graciously, and correctly to bring unity to the church.

12:9. The gift of faith may come as a surprise to some people. However, Paul wasn’t referring to saving faith that is expressed when someone receives Christ as Savior. The spiritual gift of faith is a God-given capacity for a believer to trust God boldly in extraordinary circumstances. Such a gifted believer often spurs a congregation facing challenges to move forward together in their ministry. Gifts of healing reflected the ministries of Jesus, Peter, Paul, and some other early disciples. Miracles of healing served to affirm that Jesus was the Messiah.

12:10. The gift described as performing of miracles covers various kinds of miracles other than healing. The gift of prophecy refers not only to foretelling but also to “forth-telling.” It is a speech gift given by the Spirit for instructing the church and proclaiming the gospel. Paul later indicated that all Christians would do well to desire this gift above any other. The gift of distinguishing between spirits probably refers to an ability to discern whether a spiritual activity is genuinely divine or demonic.

12:11. This verse summarizes the main point of the previous section and is a bridge to Paul’s analogy of the church as a body. All gifts come from the same source, the Spirit. Thus all spiritual gifts need to be respected and appreciated by the church. Additionally, each member’s Christian service is not merely a matter of

personal effort or individual acquisition of a gift. The Holy Spirit is the One who distributes gifts to each as He wills. We are to receive the Spirit's gifts gratefully, not scramble for ones we judge to be more impressive than others.

12:12-13. Paul used the Greek word for one five times in verses 11-13 because of the continued disunity in the Corinthian church. The Source of our unity is the one Spirit through whom we were baptized into the one body, that is, the church. Paul cited two of the great spiritual dividers in the world of his day: Jews or Greeks—a racial-religious division—and slaves or free—a social barrier.

12:14-17. The dispute of the Corinthian church appears to have been directed towards individuals who were seen as less gifted members of the church. In order to address the importance of proper regard for all parts of Christ's body Paul turned to the human body for his illustration. Encouragement is given to those who might have thought that their gifts were not as needed as the spectacular, public, attention-garnering gifts. The respective functions of the differing body parts (foot, hand, eyes, and ears) are detailed by Paul in such a way as to show the needed contrasts. Functions of hands, feet, eyes, and ears each play an assigned role in the human body. Indeed, the human body would collapse into dysfunction without coordination of the body parts. The eye needs the hands to accomplish its objective, and the head needs the feet to reach its destination. Each part of the body is integral to the whole, for a human body cannot fully function as God originally designed without even the weakest member.

12:18. That God placed the parts of the body where He wanted them emphasizes why all believers are important to the church, whatever their spiritual gifts. To elevate one Christian over another because of gifts is to call into question God's design and decision. This verse reflects the same emphasis as in verse 11.

12:19-20. Paul's final application calls attention to the importance of the diversity of gifts. The body needs all its different parts to function at maximum effectiveness. Therefore, each part is important. The same applies to the church and its members. All are needed. It is a sign of spiritual maturity in a church when it honors all contributions and does not seek to spotlight certain members who manifest particular gifts.

12:21-24. Paul moved from the inescapable diversity of members within the body (12:12-20) to the inescapable interdependence of members of the body (12:21-26). Stating the obvious, Paul asserted that those parts of the body which are considered weaker are necessary. The weaker members of the body, whether they be external parts we generally cover or inward organs (heart, lungs, kidneys, stomach, etc.), are regarded here as unpresentable but yet are shown a special modesty and greater honor. Although the weaker parts are not visible they are intimately vital for the human body. Likewise, those in the body of Christ who may be deceptively ordinary or unimpressive in their giftedness are as necessary as the most prestigiously gifted member in the congregation. Within the church all members are crucially important to God no matter what others may think, and should be to one another as well. The Christian community at Corinth was charged to care for its own individuals within the body.

12:25-26. In contrast to the Corinthian behavior of exclusivity, Paul noted that God has put the body together. Here Paul used the language of combining or blending of elements, colors, hues, or composing a musical melody in order to create a harmonious whole. Clearly divisions such as jealousy, scorn, or strife have no place within the community of Christ. Paul was clear that God has structured the body in such a way that the members have the same attentiveness for one another as for themselves. Naturally, members would have the same concern for each other, so that if one part of the body hurts every member suffers with the stricken one. However, the converse is also true of the body of believers, if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. The gift which God has given to the church is a mutual dependence on Him as well as on our fellow congregants. When we honor those members of body with the weaker or unpresentable gifts, we have the opportunity to practice the love of Christ!