



Nov 13, 2022 – Your Personal Style – I Corinthians 12:12-26

## OPEN

Are we “God’s Servants At Work”? Are we aware and active in our God-designed place of service? He does not assign us randomly but puts us into a place of service that reckons with our **personal style**. What does the world around us when they look at our church? Do they see us meaningfully at work?

This is the second of three sermons in our series, **Your Place Of Service**. Are you comfortable in the way God has equipped you to serve? Do you know **freedom and joy** in your contribution? For our series we are borrowing the framework of Bruce Bugbee & Don Cousins’ study, called **Network** (Zondervan, 2005). This approach to spiritual gifting offers three lenses: gifting, style, and passion.

Last week we looked at some foundational truths which ground us in our **Christ identity**, so that we approach our spiritual gifting maturely and meaningfully. We noted that there are three main listings of spiritual gifts – the texts for our series: Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, and I Peter 4.

An exploration of specific gifts is available in a workshop. Today we are looking at the fact that the Holy Spirit is equipping believers, each of whom have a **unique personality**. One of the best ways to express this is by means of a metaphor. In I Corinthians 12 Paul employed the metaphor of the **human body** – “*All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.*” (v.27 NLT)

## DIG

Let’s look first at the **big picture** of Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. Paul had preached the Gospel in Corinth (see Acts 18:1-18). However, he had received a report “*from Chloe’s household*” (1:11) and in response, he wrote this epistle filled with correction and cautions. Corinth was a powerful and prosperous city. It was also steeped in paganism, which included idolatry and immorality. To this struggling family of believers, what did Paul say about their place of service? Consider five statements:

1. **Enriched** – You have been enriched by God in every way so that you are not without spiritual gifting so never pridefully think that you are the author of your gifting. (see 1:5,7; 4:7,18)
2. **Entrapped** – You have become entrapped in dissention and disunity which has created divisions that are even expressed in sacred moments, like communion. (see 1:10-11; 3:3; 11:18)
3. **Entitled** – You have become spiritually elitist and entitled even God has rescued from the most unrighteous and unlikely position to be His children. (see 1:26,28-29; 2:2; 6:11)
4. **Exposed** – You are exposed to a hyper sexualized and pagan culture so you must be diligent and intentional to honor God with your body which includes the way you serve. (see 6:20; 9:27)
5. **Envision** – You must envision God’s glory and honor when you serve for the benefit of others, especially the Body of Christ. (see 10:24,31; 12:7; 14:12)

To address issues as significant as this we need the Holy Spirit to repair to our **ego-system**. Yet, by God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live the life of Jesus with respect to our spiritual gifting, expressed by our unique personal style.

Now let’s look at the **body picture** as Paul gave it in **I Corinthians 12:12-26**. The metaphor of the body wasn’t the only word picture used by Paul to correct the Corinthians. He used “fellow workers”, “God’s field”, “God’s building”, “temple of God” (3:9,16). But the body metaphor helps to communicate the reality of the Church as unity in diversity, that is, many parts, yet one body.

### 1. Individuality

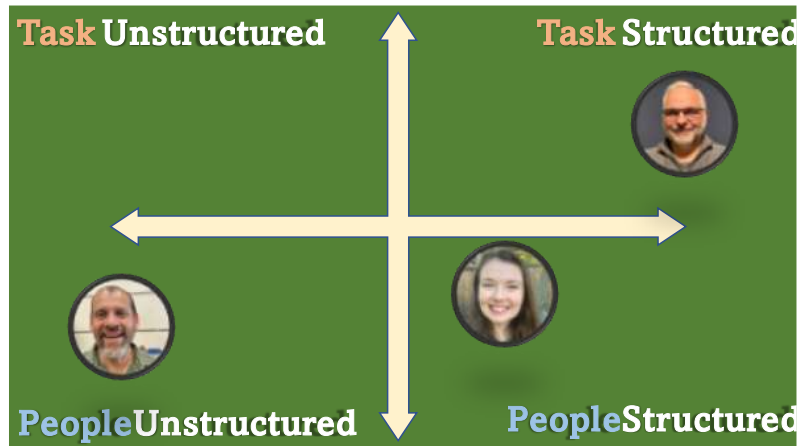
Many members to make up one whole body (vv.14,15). Paul follows this statement with some rhetorical questions which point to the **struggle with significance**. What was happening in the Corinthian church? There was elitism and sensationalism rather than building up the body of Christ (14:12b). God did not create some spectacular gifting and others to be mundane. This principle of individuality affirms the equal value and contribution of “*different kinds of gifts...of service...of working*” (12:4-6).

If the body metaphor illustrates anything it is that **every contribution is significant!** “*God has arranged the parts, each one of them in the body, just as He desired*” – distributed by the Holy Spirit’s wisdom (12:11). Even when we think a part of our physical body is unimportant, it still has significance (vv.22-23). I remember visiting someone who had recently suffered an amputation and was dealing with phantom pain. Marginalized or missing members of a church causes suffering.

What is your style? This **chart** shows two factors:

- Are you more people or task oriented in your style?
- Are you more structured or unstructured in your style?

Consider examples from our church leaders: Pastor Brent, Rebecca, Jorge.



We must not just focus on **what** has to be done. We need to take into account **whom** God has placed in our church family. This means appreciating **how** God has uniquely designed each member to serve, based on His amazing creative design – see Psalm 139:13-14.

Two cautions:

- First, just because you need to concentrate on serving according to your gifting and style, that doesn't mean you cannot **stoop to serve** when needed.
- Second, do not become like Granny in Tim Lovelace's song "[Don't Sit In My Pew](#)". This is a fun yet sober look at people who **over-function** in church life. We must not assume so many roles that another member feels unnecessary.

## 2. Interdependence

We also need the principle of interconnectedness or interdependence ("*the same Spirit...same Lord...same God*" (12:4-6). The essence of the physical body is that parts are not only interconnected, but they are **dependent** upon one another. Paul's rhetorical questions border on the ridiculous!

A body just composed of an eye!? A body comprised of an ear!? The point is obvious. We face the constant danger of elevating one gifting above another and thus causing division. All too often, such conflict is centered around issues of interdependence.

There is a wonderful example of this in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and resumed their ministry after the first Church council. There was interdependence – "*they and many others preached the word of the Lord.*" (v.35). But there was also conflict – "*they had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.*" (v.39)

God has created us to serve in the **crucible of community** – "*that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same care for one another*" (v.25). In verse 26 we read that when "*one part of the body suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if a part is honored, all the parts rejoice with it.*"

Your toenail may seem rather insignificant until it becomes ingrown! Your arms and hands may shoot the winning basket, but it will be your whole body the team will embrace in celebration!

### REFLECT

In his book ***Fearfully And Wonderfully Made*** (Zondervan, 1987, 20) Dr. Paul Brand comments very candidly about the body metaphor found in I Corinthians 12.

That analogy conveys a more precise meaning to me because though a hand or foot or ear cannot have a life separate from the body, a cell does have that potential. It can be part of the body as a loyalist, or it can cling to its own life. Some cells do choose to live in the body, sharing its benefits while maintaining complete independence – them become parasites or cancer cells.

That is a sobering statement! We dare not fail to value individual design linked to interdependence!

- Do we make room for different serving styles at Cornerstone?
- Are we creating space for all members to contribute?

Two workshops are available...contact [Pastor Brent](#) if you are interested!

**S.H.A.P.E.** can be done one-on-one in an evening

**Network** six sessions, ideally done with a group