

Series: Debunking Lies that Disrupt Intergenerational Community

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

(**App** to get lesson/slides, ask

questions. Color Pg)

In this series, we're debunking untruths we've come to believe that disrupt intergenerational spiritual formation. We're doing the uncomfortable work of unlearning, which for some has the appeal of starting an exercise routine (i.e., we know it's necessary, but ugh!). We've discussed Satan being "*the father of lies*" (cf. John 8:44) who employs a variety of warfare (e.g., spiritual, physical, psychological) to **trick every generation into forgetting what God deems essential**. We've dug into how **Church is a family before we're anything else** and unpacked the term "*family*" to find **We have much to relearn after being born again**. From **Romans 12** we learned that **Informed Worship erodes our exclusivity and comfort** and that **Every child of God has been gifted to contribute**. Today, we'll explore this...

BIG IDEA: Spirit-led churches will continually grow and change.

Before we read, let me ask: "Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?" The word **spiritual** gets overused and applied to personal philosophy/ethics, communing with nature, relationships that feel good and various non-specific pleasurable feelings. Let's read how it's used in **1 Corinthians 12:1-2: Now concerning spiritual gifts** (the Greek root word just means **spiritual things/matters/people**), **brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans** (didn't worship the true God) **you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Idols** are false gods/beliefs produced by our imaginations. They are **mute** in the sense of being made up and therefore having no divine revelation to communicate. So, the phrase **however you were led** may refer to our desires or the false teachers who give false gods or fake **spirituality** a voice. Romans 8:6-9 NLT reveals why this matters, "*Letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have*

the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.).” The point is that becoming a Christian doesn’t simply sanctify (bless, make sacred/holy) what we already believed about everything. In other words, Christ’s sacrifice didn’t purchase a “move-in ready” home for His Spirit to reside in--we’re more of a “long-term fixer upper” project!

For this reason, **verse 2 informs** us not to keep practicing **pagan spirituality** which technically refers to religions lacking Jewish roots. The church, like our Savior, was born out of Judaism (God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12). Faithful Jewishness was about becoming a worthy member of an ancient community God established to be a light (different kind of kingdom) to all nations. The intergenerational Old Testament feasts taught in [Bill’s prior lesson](#) function as 7 annual reminders of their communal identity. Central to that is how those who convert from **pagan** to **spiritual** will prioritize collective needs over individual interests and independence. So far, we’ve identified 2 tests for whether our **spirituality** is real or fake: 1) Am I just asking God to bless all I already am/believe? 2) Am I becoming more about “we” and less about “me”?

Verse 3 also tells us how to spot fake and real **spirituality**: **Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.** The point here is that truly **spiritual** people submit to **Christ’s Lordship** (authority) over all things **spiritual**. Biblical **spirituality** is objective--the true sovereign **Lord**, who is not **mute**, HAS communicated what it means through His **Spirit**-inspired Word. Thus, it isn’t about who we imagine/desire God, self, and others to be. In other words, God alone determines the value and purpose of all things, including **spiritual** gifts, **spiritual** matters, and **spiritual** people. So, this gives us 2 more tests for whether our spirituality is real or fake: 3) Is my **spirituality** making me more or less generationally and globally minded? 4) Am I growing in submission to Christ’s Lordship (authority)?

To claim **Jesus is Lord** in the 1st century was like saying, “*The emperor is not Lord, and his empire is subject to God’s kingdom.*” The same is true today...**spirituality** has real-world impact. It’s not merely a private experience and

often involves resisting ungodly empires/rulers. We're told this in **verses 4-6: Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.** The phrases **same Spirit**, **same Lord**, and **same God** suggest that true **spirituality** will be lived in ways that reflect the unity of the divine community--Father, Son, and Spirit who are always in sync. Professor NT Wright (p. 157) noted how *"The Corinthians were in danger of looking at spirituality as an area of personal growth and experience. Paul wants them to see it as the place where the one true God, known in the three ways he outlines in verses 4-6, equips people to advance his kingdom in the face of the principalities and powers of the world."* That's test #5: Is church more about my personal journey or discovering my role on God's world-renewing team? The gospel shows me how personal journey fits into God's grander story. According to this text, truly **spiritual** people will function in unity like the Trinity and use their **gifts** in **service** to **activities** that affirm **Christ's Lordship**.

Now read **1 Corinthians 12:7** which says: **To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good** (i.e. to benefit the church AND all creation). In Ephesians 4, this author also added that *"(Jesus) gave gifts to men...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."* As people debate whether churches should be inward or outward focused, Scripture argues that healthy community in-reach improves community outreach! Like Israel's annual intergenerational **activities**, regular togetherness keeps us rooted in Christ who lived, died and resurrected to empower a world-changing family. That's test #6: When have I made decisions based on the impact to anyone outside my household? **Verses 8-10** list a few diverse gifts that we can bypass for now to help us see the point they set up in **verse 11: All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills.** This verse is brimming with truths like how: the **Spirit** is the **power** behind what we do (not us), we **each** get a portion of that (every believer without exception--not a select few), and His **will determines** what we receive (which makes **the Spirit** a person not merely some force + His **will** always coincides with the Father and the Son).

Since **gifts** are given according to the sovereignty of the Spirit, human beings have no basis for boasting in the gifts they exercise (cf. 1 Corinthians 4). Likewise, how each church looks and functions is up to God's Sovereign Spirit, not the sovereignty of people. Furthermore, as it says in the next chapter, which we won't read...everything we do must be governed by the standard of God's love! For example, then...I must play my part in Christ's body/kingdom in ways that never imply I matter more than all the other parts. I must be careful with my expectations or demands because even our most well-intentioned ideas can inadvertently disable the body of Christ. In his book, "[Life Together](#)", the old German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: *"He who loves his dream of a community more than the...community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial."* We'll call this test #7: Am I more concerned with my ideals, or the people God put in my life? Never care more about your church blueprints and systems than you do about your church brothers and sisters! **Not everyone is required to care about everything you care about but caring for one another is non-negotiable.** Too often, we act as if our giftings and ideals are superior and that everyone should love them and bow to them. This text implies, however, that our grasp of **spirituality** will remain shallow until we learn to be in the same room and collaborate with those who aren't exactly like us (e.g. generationally, politically, racially, socio-economically). Next time we'll see how our human longings can turn Christ's body into a cyclops or something weird looking that's incapable of exercising His will. For now, wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, remember that you don't have to work through anything alone. Please reach out.

Sunday to Monday Connection: Usually on the first Sunday of the month, we've been highlighting a non-profit agency doing amazing work in our community, however, today's guest had to reschedule. Instead, we did a write up in the app of our Wrapping Clermont Together Adopt-a-Basket program and included the rich history of it along with a handful of photos. You can read all about it by clicking on "highlights" in the app. As we close and carry Sunday into Monday, I'd love to hear...

- **Question:** What was your takeaway from today's service? For me, it was the big idea that Spirit-led churches are always growing and changing. And since

“we” are the church, that means we, as individuals, should be continually growing and changing if we want our church community as a whole to do the same. So, here’s the challenge for the week...

- **Next Step:** Take some time to reflect on where you were in life 5–10 years ago. In what ways have you grown or changed spiritually over the past 5–10 years? Where might God be inviting you to keep growing or changing in this current season? Share your insights with your group, family, or close friends. They might notice things you’ve overlooked and offer incredible encouragement to keep moving forward with Jesus—who, incidentally, has been walking with you every step of the way.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. How should the Lordship of Christ factor in when we’re talking about spiritual things?
2. Verses 4-6 speak of the same God giving varieties of gifts, service, and activities. Why did Paul keep emphasizing the word “*same*”? What do the words “*service and activities*” imply about the way God wants us to use our gifts?
3. Why should churches not be cookie-cutter copies of one another? What sorts of things can cause churches to all look the same? What might help them grow in God’s rich diversity?
4. You could read and discuss these articles ([here](#) and [here](#)).

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Context:** “Chapter 12 thus insists on the need for diversity of gifts within the unity of the body. Chapter 13 stresses that without love the gifts are worthless. Chapter 14 then focuses on two of the more controversial gifts—prophecy and tongues—telling the Corinthians to prefer the former to the latter because of its more immediate intelligibility (vv. 1–25) and giving guidelines for the use of each so as to promote order in the church (vv. 26–40).” (Blomberg, 242)
- **Spiritual gifts:** “Whether gifts should be added after spiritual (as NIV, AV, etc.) is not certain. Paul’s word (pneumatikōn) might be masculine, ‘spiritual men’, or neuter, ‘spiritual things’; most take it in the latter sense and understand ‘things’ as ‘gifts’. There is not a great deal of difference in this context, for both Paul and the Corinthians are thinking of the men who exercise the gifts.” (Morris, 162)
- **Idols:** “The readers are reminded of their pre-Christian lives, when they were pagans (ethnē). The word may be translated as ‘Gentiles’ (KJV, NKJV), suggesting again that Gentile believers are no longer pagans but are part of the true Israel, the true people of God (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1; 10:1; Rom. 2:26–29; Gal. 6:16). In their pagan days they were driven by and led astray to dumb idols. Many interpreters understand the leading here to be some kind of

ecstatic experience, but Paul nowhere uses this verb to convey ecstasy, and terms that would signal ecstasy are lacking. What is communicated is that unbelievers are under the control of idols and false gods. Descriptions of the futility and powerlessness of idols are typical in Jewish polemic. Idols ‘have mouths but cannot speak’ (Ps. 115:5). Jeremiah 10:5 sums up the ineffectiveness of idols (cf. Ps. 135:16; Isa. 41:23–24; 44:9; 45:20; 46:7; Jer. 10:14; Hab. 2:18–19). (Schreiner, 253)

- **Verses 1-3:** “The Corinthians wrote concerning spiritual gifts—the Greek is ambiguous and can be rendered ‘spiritual people’. The opening discussion would suggest that the Corinthians’ question in v 1 related to the way in which those who possessed the Spirit exercised their ministry in the church meeting. Paul’s first concern is to clear up their ignorance. 2 He reminds them how, when they were pagans, they were influenced and led astray to mute idols lit. ‘were led astray as you were continually led’. Their rejection of the general revelation of God in their lives led them into idolatry and into the downward spiral of idolatrous practices (Rom. 1:21–23). Mute is used in the same way OT writers used it when pointing out to Israel the foolishness and futility of bowing down to handmade idols (Hab. 2:18–19). 3 Pagans believed that the gods were capable of influencing their objectives against others in areas of life such as athletic competitions, matters of the heart, business and politics. This was done in pagan worship through the use of curses against their opponents. Sometimes they were written on lead, deposited in the temple and wells and sworn in the name of a god. A curse tablet found in the temple of Demeter in Corinth read, ‘Hermes of the underworld [grant] heavy curses’. Jesus be cursed can be translated ‘Jesus [is] a curse’ or ‘Jesus [grant] a curse’ for the two words are lit. ‘anathema Jesus’. Cf. 16:22 ‘let him be anathema’ where the verb is in the present tense. Were the Corinthian Christians using the name of Jesus as a curse against opponents in the same way pagans did with their gods? Is Paul saying that no person speaking by the Spirit of God curses others with ‘anathema Jesus’ in order to disadvantage them? Only those led by the Spirit will affirm that Jesus is Lord. Christians were meant to be using their gifts for the blessing and the welfare of others (cf. v 7).” (Winter, 1180)

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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