

Maintenance Required
Lesson 10
How Selfishness Subverts a Church's Mission
1 Cor. 12-14

Intro: When was the last time you were selfish and it not only accomplished God's desire for you but also others around you?

Selfishness- The quality or state of being selfish: a concern for one's own welfare or advantage at the expense of or in disregard of others: excessive interest in oneself.¹

As we have journeyed through our study, we have seen Paul exhorting and admonishing the Corinthians about many issues: division, sexual sins, lawsuits against each other, misunderstanding marriage, socio-economic prejudice, and flippancy towards the ordinance of the Lord's table.

At the core of each, we continue to find people doing as they please instead of submitting their desires to king Jesus.

Tonight, we will get an overview of his correction about not only their spiritual gifting but also its usage, motivation, and impact when abused selfishly.

The overarching idea we will address is how harmful selfishness is upon the collective whole of a church body and how it disrupts Jesus's plans for His church.

I. Selfishness limits God's intentions for each member- 12:1-11

- **GROUP LEADER Ask:** Can someone please read these verses?
- Given the importance of spiritual gifts, Paul wants them to be fully aware of their value and purpose- vs. 1-3
 - You no longer are living for idols, and you should be informed about your spiritual gift!
- He then outlines the reality of how they received and are to employ their spiritual gift- vs. 4-7
 - The Holy Spirit assigned you your gift.
 - Jesus assigned the application of your gift.
 - The Father empowers your gift.
 - **Group Leader Ask:** How much anxiety should you have about your spiritual gifting considering vs. 4-7?
- He reminds them that gifting is not only evidence of one's salvation but also critical to the church's mission.
 - The moment someone becomes a child of God, they are indwelt by and gifted by the Holy Spirit.

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/selfishness>

- Your gifting and usage are unique to you; your church desperately needs you to employ it.
- **Group Leader Ask:** Does your gifting matter? Is it ok for a church member not to utilize their gifting formally or informally?

II. Selfishness devalues and harms God's intentions for the body- 12:12-30

- A body- Paul likens the church to a human body to help us grasp the functionality and value of each member's gift.
 - **Group Leader Ask:** How vital is your liver? How often do you even consider it?
 - This concept should continue to aid a church in eradicating prejudice of any sort and create unity.
- Selfishness is either not content with the gift they have or want to be in the spotlight more than their gifting requires.
 - Paul criticizes their longing to have a different gift or self-promote their gift as the most valuable to the body, requiring special treatment.
- Selfishness must submit to the reality that it is God who gifts believers and then places them together to accomplish His work of edification for the body to accomplish the mission for evangelism outside of it.
 - This allows us to celebrate one another, rejoice with one another, weep with one another, and submit to one another.
 - **Group Leader Ask:** You do not have to answer it now, but I want you to think of someone at Faith that God has used, with their gifting, to edify you?

III. Selfishness can be detected and filtered- 1 Cor. 13

- Having given a “tongue in cheek” comment at the end of chapter 12 to covet the “best gifts” (due to their graceless ideology about gifting), he gets to the “why” behind the “what” of spiritual gifts in chapter 13.
- Vs. 1-3- Paul deconstructs their misunderstanding and pridefulness regarding “front facing” gifts like tongues, prophecies, etc.
 - The issue was their motivation to be seen by others, valued by others, be above others, and be served by others.
 - Paul's critique- if you all the languages, all the knowledge, miraculous faith, and extreme generosity but it is not grounded in the pursuit of Christ's glory and other peoples' spiritual wellbeing, then it is worthless in Jesus' economy!
- Vs. 4-13- Paul outlines what biblical love is in essence and practice.
 - It confronts the way we would cater to ourselves and think unbiblically about others in our thoughts.
 - It gives us a baseline of how biblical love moves from motivation to actions with others through our choices.
 - It, as a virtue and expression of God's character, will outlast anything done in this realm.
 - The Corinthians were thinking about themselves, this realm, their benefit, their wants, etc.

- Paul undermines all of their faulty thinking and functioning as a church by calling them back to God's eternal love for each other.
- **Group Leader Ask:** Given this list of how God's love is expressed internally and externally, are you encouraged about the possibility to be changed to be like Him and are you willing to continue giving up bad motives and choices?

IV. Selfishness is unity's greatest enemy- 1 Cor. 14

- Vs. 1-20- Paul unpacks the idea of "what is motivating you" from chapter 13 with real life examples within the congregation's life.
 - He is not "anti-languages" but wants them to understand what is the most important motivation when they come together- unity!
 - His two themes throughout the chapter are edification and unity.
 - You want to use your gift? Great! Is it edifying the body? If not, stop it!
 - He over emphasizes it in vs. 19 by declaring he would rather speak 5 intelligible words than 10,000 in a language no one knows.
 - Consider what a sharp point this is! The Corinthians are largely consumed with self-importance and the most "prominent" gifts.
 - By their wisdom, Paul the apostle should be using the "best" gifts and speaking the most in church and here he is stating the opposite.
 - Why? He, as a mature believer, understands what matters most in God's economy- edification and unity.
- Vs. 22-39- He then demonstrates how crucial this is practically in church for both unbelievers and believers.
 - Tongues were used to get the Gospel to a language group miraculously by the work of the Spirit as evidence of Jesus being risen.
 - Prophecies (forthtelling the Word of God) confront believers and unbelievers about what God's Word has said to accomplish His work in their mind through the power of the Spirit and the Word.
 - Among the church family, Paul again emphasizes the order of the church and family by encouraging husbands to take on spiritual leadership in their homes and wives to seek that aid through them instead of the church exclusively.
 - Vs. 40 is the capstone by reminding them how we are to accomplish the goals of the gathering: to hear the Word of God, to build up the faith of the members, to confront the unbeliever about their need for Christ, to use our gifts through God's love, and reenforce the structure of Christian homes.
 - How do we do this? By submitting to Christ's expectation of order and unity in each of those areas.
- **Group Leader Ask:** How are we prone to get this wrong in our thoughts about church (some gifts, ministries, people are more valuable than others)? How are we prone to devalue unity because of our Western individualistic ideology?

Conclusion: The Corinthians were sabotaging their wellbeing individually, collectively, and missionally by their selfishness. Not only did they harm themselves and each, but they also

hindered their Gospel effectiveness. God has freed His followers for far better than anything selfishness attempts to offer.