

"Are we meant to be one or many?"

"What gifts do I have?"

"Are they God's gifts or mine?" "If I use my gifts, what about the gaps?"

"Who else is part of the same body?"

"What about those strange 'spiritual' gifts?"

In the Autumn, we looked at Nehemiah, and what it means to be working together as a church. You may (!?) remember 'The Wall'. Through to Easter, we're looking at things that distinguish us from one another –being different parts of the church. These are the spiritual gifts that God has given us –things that should distinguish us, rather than divide us!

Action

NOT

Theory

...is what these notes are all about. Much has been written and said about spiritual gifts. No doubt there will be a variety of different positions within your group and for some these may be very strongly held. However, during this course, I would encourage you each to consider honestly where you are now and what the next steps are, rather than agonising over your past journey. In Romans, 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, Paul places discussions of the gifts firmly in the context of unity, but also emphasises action.

The purpose of this course is therefore **gift discovery not gift discussion!** Hopefully, we will have some good discussions along the way, but the aim is firstly that we all discover or reconsider the gifts that God has graciously given both us and the other members of our group. However, discovery on it's own is not enough either!

God has given us gifts for a purpose and he longs for us to hear that purpose and to respond in action. Are we ready to openly try and hear his voice? Are we willing to respond by stepping out in faith and testing what we think he's saying? Has God given us gifts, and with them responsibilities to him and to others, that we are not fulfilling? Or are there other things that we are doing that we hang on to either through habit or a fear of letting go?

These are some of challenging questions that we hope to wrestle with during these sessions. Hopefully through doing it, we will grow as individuals, as home groups and as a church, increasingly becoming the people that God is calling us to be, and fulfilling the functions that he is calling us to as his body here on earth. *Have fun!*

Toby

'You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it'

1 Cor 12:27

1: One or Many?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this...

If you could give any one thing to one person, what would it be and who would you give it to?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God.

You could try this...

Take a few moments in silence to think of a couple of things each to thank God for. Then read out Psalm 100 together. Now speak out one-line thank you prayers –Thank you God for... After each prayer, all join in with 'Thank you God'. Finish by re-reading Psalm 100.

WORD 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Read through the introduction to the month's notes first.

Read 1 Cor 12:12-27 (but also consider the context of chapters 11 & 13)

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Paul had a problem. The church in Corinth was divided over the use of different spiritual gifts and had asked for help. In replying, Paul emphasises the importance of both unity (being one) and diversity (being different) in the church...

- How does Paul do this?
- What other illustrations could you use to make the same point?
- Do we over-emphasise either diversity or unity within our church?
- What do you think Paul would write to us as a church about the need for both diversity and unity?
- What functions should we be carrying out as a healthy body –as a group or church?

WHAT NEXT?

Each take a piece of paper & draw on it a part (or several parts) of the body that you think you function as personally within your group or within the body of the church. Explain to the group what you've drawn & why.

In the light of these, pray for one another, your group & the church.

2: God's Gifts or Mine?

NOTE: Everyone needs a copy of the next page to use for this session. If people are missing this week, please encourage them to do the exercise, ideally with one or two others.

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. If you want an ice-breaker, you could try this...

If you could do someone else's job for one day, who's would it be and why? What would the consequences be?!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God.

You could try this...

Put on some appropriate music. Place (or draw) a cross on a table, each take a slip of paper, write your name on it along with something very important to you, fold it over and place it on the table. Pray a silent prayer, offering yourself to God as you do it.

WORD 1 Corinthians 12:7-13, 27-31

Read 1 Cor 12: 12:7-13, 27-31

This week is different! Please don't get side-tracked! The focus is on an exercise, rather than a wider study of the passage. We will return to discuss particular gifts in later weeks...

In these passages a number of different spiritual gifts are mentioned.

There is a longer list on the next sheet (including some taken from Rom 12 & Eph 4). None of the lists are exhaustive.

- Are there any others that you think should be added?
- Are there any that you are confused or concerned about?

Do discuss these, but not for too long as there will be time for more discussion of specific gifts in later weeks.

Do the exercise on the next 2 sheets

WHAT NEXT?

You may want to re-group after the exercise to pray for any wider requests/thanksgiving.

Exercise -page 1

If you only do one thing in these notes, do this!

Individually for 10 mins in quiet, look at the list of spiritual gifts on the next page. Some of these things we are all called to, but here we are thinking of people being especially gifted in certain ways. Note: the list is not a complete one –you can add others.

- Which of these do you think God has given you?
- Think in particular about comments that people who know you well have made about what you're good at. Note: Sometimes people outside the church recognise our gifts more readily than those inside.
- Are there any here that you have used in the past but don't use now? If so, why not?
- Are there things that you do, but that you think you don't actually have the gifts to do?
- God gives everyone gifts, so mark at least 1, but not more than 4 that you think that God has particularly given you.
- Now, are there any gifts that you're not sure about, but would particularly like to ask God for? Mark these differently.

Now break into groups of 3-4 people.

In each group:

- For each person in turn, let the others in the group spend a few moments thinking about what gifts they think that person has. If you don't know the person very well, then you may not be able to do this for them –just pray or ask for God's help!
- Now, each person share their thoughts.
- It's important that all comments are encouraging. The idea is to encourage the person to explore the gifts that God has given them, not to mull over the ones that he hasn't!
- Write down things said about you.

When everyone's had a turn:

- Share, if you can, any thoughts or feelings about what you've marked. How do other people's views of you compare with your own?
- Talk about any gifts that you would particularly like to have.
- For each person in turn, pray that God will bless and guide them as they explore the gifts God has given them. Pray that he would give them the gifts they long for.

Exercise -page 2

1 Gift List

This is a list of gifts taken from 1Cor12, Rom12, & Eph4. It is not complete, only a starter, so you may want to add more. Note also that many are gifts that we are **all** called to use –but we are looking here at those that God seems to have particularly given to us as individuals:

- Prophecy
- Serving
- Teaching
- Encouraging
- Giving
- Showing mercy
- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Faith
- Healing
- Miracles
- Discerning between Spirits
- Tongues
- Interpretation of Tongues
- Apostles
- Helping others
- Administration
- Evangelism
- Pastoring
-
-
-

2 Gifts God has given me

Think carefully about what gifts God has given you –they may not match what you actually do or don't do. Think too about gifts that you'd like to have.

A: What I think...

B: What others think...

3: Gifts or Gaps?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. Please don't ignore this –even if you normally do!

Scatter the pieces of a large jigsaw puzzle on a table. Make up part of a central section (no edges!) of the puzzle together. Now remove a few pieces, leaving a few gaps in the part you've made. Also, if possible, try replacing a few correct pieces with incorrect ones. Leave the puzzle out for later in the session. Puzzled?!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God.

You could try this...

Thank God for one another and other members of the church and the part they play in your group or the church.

WORD Romans 12:1-10

Read Romans 12:1-10

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Consider your gifts in the light of this passage. What **attitudes** does Paul imply that we should have towards our gifts?

Look at the way Paul discusses gifts in verses 6-8. Think about your gifts and substitute them for the gifts Paul lists here. e.g. If a man (or woman)'s gift is serving, let him/her serve. Then discuss as a group:

- What needs to happen in the church for this to happen?
- What needs to happen in you for this to happen?
- How do you feel about the responsibility that these verses place on each of us to use our gifts?
- Do you feel that you are fully using the gifts that God has given you? –Why/why not?

Now look at the jigsaw puzzle & use it as a picture of the church. Paul writes about gifts rather than gaps in the church. Individually, imagine yourself as a piece of the puzzle. The following questions might help...

God's Gifts for Growth

Christ Church, Alsager
Home Group Notes
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- Where are you?
- Are you in the right slot?
- Are you not yet really part of the puzzle?
- Does the space that you seem to fit already seem to be taken?
- Are you a piece that could make the puzzle bigger?
- Do your gifts fill any gaps in the church?
- Do your gifts fill any gaps that are currently filled by the wrong people?

If you can, discuss your feelings about this with the group (you may want to do this in smaller groups again)

WHAT NEXT?

Pray for one another in the light of your discussions and that you would be 'able to test and approve what God's will is' (v2) for you.

Pray for the church –that we would all be responsive to God in using the gifts that he has given us. In particular, that people would find the right roles that God is calling them to, so that we are a more complete and effective body.