

# Vive la difference

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you'd like to turn to 1 Corinthians 12.! Very good reason.

So I think I will do 1 Corinthians 12 and 13. And then we'll come back again to this argument in the autumn I believe. That's what's planned. But I haven't got a date for that yet.

And if you remember we saw last week that Paul has been discussing what can drive a church apart. And how these forces can be resisted.

And what makes a church united. And one in the Lord. And so we're going to tackle this in the order Paul does. Which is the overview of chapter 12.

In chapter 12. And then we have this beautiful presentation of Christian love next week. Well it is a beautiful presentation. But it's also put there for a reason. We sometimes I think possibly take it out of context.

[ 1 : 21 ] And forget that it is part of this one argument. If a bit of a digression in one sense. And of course there are a lot of technical issues about this.

What is prophecy? What is a prophet? And is anyone. As I said at Munchkin on Wednesday. Is anyone who prophesies for such as a woman. Can a woman be a prophet for instance?

Because it does. I think the only named prophet in the New Testament is Agabus. But certainly women are described as prophesying in the New Testament. And what are tongues?

And what are they for? But actually I'm going to dodge all that tonight. And leave all that stuff for chapter 14. I will have a go at it.

But I think that rather delve into all this technical difficulty at this stage. It's better first of all to focus on what's clear here. And what Paul really has to say to us.

[ 2 : 19 ] And what we can all agree on. And all benefit from.

And I suggest that actually nothing divides a church like the spirit of unity. This was obviously the case in Corinthians. And happens so much today.

Christians are always accusing Christians of being unspiritual. It happens within local churches. Let's go to the next slide there.

It happens between churches of course. And fosters competition between them and factions. Of course the charge might be true.

That there have to be divisions sometimes. I have even heard it said. That people have been said. Oh don't come to Calvary. Because they don't believe in the Holy Spirit here.

[ 3 : 18 ] Well if that were the case. If that were the case. They could very truly accuse us of heresy. But I can assure anybody who's worried about that. That we do believe very much in the work of the Holy Spirit here.

But it's how that works out. That is sometimes a cause for discussion. And it's maybe even disagreement. So it's.

So there are dissensions and factions sometimes. But sometimes there have to be. But perhaps not for the reasons that Paul would approve of. It's true in the early church.

And it's true today. And I'm sure that even Paul is conscious. That actually by raising the issue at all. In some ways he's just going to promote controversy. And we might do the same.

But it is necessary to tackle this. Because if not. We do land up with the chaos. That's described in chapter 14. And that's what we need to look at.

[ 4 : 21 ] When we get there. But Paul's fundamental point here. Is that the Holy Spirit is a spirit of unity. But not one of uniformity.

In the first verse he says. I don't want you to be ignorant. Brothers. About. Well. The New International Version. Translates spiritual gifts.

But actually the word there is not charisma. The usual word for spiritual gifts. It's actually pneumaticon. In other words. Just spiritual issues. Or spiritual things.

So he's saying. I don't want you to be ignorant. On spiritual things. Or spiritual issues. So the work of the Holy Spirit.

Is to make us all like Christ. I'm sure we could all agree on that. But that's not the same. As saying the work of the Holy Spirit. Is to make us all the same. I think it's a natural human tendency.

[ 5 : 23 ] For us to want other people. To be like us. We feel more comfortable with that. Don't we? And often. We often don't see.

Why what we find easy. Is a problem for other people. Some people find it easy. To talk to outsiders. Cold. I must say.

That's a thing I find very difficult. Other people have that gift naturally. Other people. As Ben was telling us. Have been empowered by the Holy Spirit.

To do it. I always thought you heard. What I've seen. I have a real gift Ben. Of being able to talk to outsiders naturally. But okay. This is a work of the Holy Spirit. But others have not been so gifted. Some have particular insight. Into spiritual matters. In fact. Distinguishing between spirits. In verse 10. Is described. As a spiritual gift. Others find these things. Much more difficult.

[ 6 : 23 ] They find it difficult. To distinguish. Between what is true. And healthy. And what isn't. Whatever we find easy to do. And even more.

What we've achieved. Through struggle. We tend to think. That others ought to be able. To do as well. And that if they can't. It's either because. They don't have enough faith. Or they're not filled enough.

With the Holy Spirit. And we all. I think. Think like that sometimes. But Paul says. This is not the way it works. And it's not even desirable.

That it should be. He says. In what. Verses. Chapter 12. Verses 4 to 7. There are different kinds of gifts. But the same spirit. There are different kinds of service.

But the same Lord. There are different kinds of working. But the same God. Works in all of them. In all men. Now to each one. The manifestation of the spirit.

[ 7 : 21 ] Is given. For the common good. Note that he emphasizes. To each one. Not to some super spiritual elite.

He clearly means. To every believer here. To every Christian. The spirit. And then he says. The spirit is manifested. What does that mean?

Well it means made visible. In each believer. But that manifestation. If you like. What is made visible. The appearance. Is different in each case.

Because he says at the end. Are all apostles. Are all prophets. Are all teachers. Do all work miracles. Do all have gifts of healing. Do all speak in tongues. Do all interpret. But eagerly desire. The greater gifts. And now I will show you. The most excellent way. So. Paul says. It's actually right. That we should all be different. And then.

[ 8 : 21 ] In the rest of this chapter. He's going on. Really to expand. This point. And work it out. And see what it means. In practice. So. He actually addresses.

A number of questions. Sorry about the spelling. Spelling error. In the second one there. I mean. He doesn't. State the. Questions explicitly. But if you look. He's kind of answering. These questions. And. First question is. Are all spirits. The Holy Spirit.

And then. He says. What are spiritual gifts. And what are they for. And. Is there some. Order of importance.

In spiritual gifts. And then. Does the possession. Of some gifts. Perhaps. The more spectacular ones. Or.

[ 9 : 15 ] More obvious ones. Imply. A particular. Filling of the spirit. On the part of. The person who holds it. And I'd suggest to you. That's why chapter 13. Is there. And we'll come back to that.

And. If these gifts. And this is the really. Tricky question. But this is the one. We're going to leave. Till. Chapter 14. If these. Gifts. Are really from the spirit.

Surely it's unspiritual. To try. Control. Or organize them. Well. As. If you look in. Chapter 14.

That Paul is saying. That's exactly what. You should be trying to do. But I'm not going to look at that question. Tonight. We'll come back to that. When we come to. Question 14. So. First things first.

Are all spirits. The Holy Spirit. And that's the first thing. That Paul reminds us. That. Just because an activity. Seems spiritual. It does not necessarily.

[10:16] Mean that it comes. From the Holy Spirit. And it's important. To keep this in mind. And I think. What he said here. Is very brief. Dear friends.

Do not believe. Every spirit. But test the spirits. To see whether they are. From God. That's actually. John. Sorry. That's John's. Version. Of the same thing. Sorry.

In verse 3. Paul says. It's. Every spirit. That's. No one speaking. By the spirit of God. Says Jesus be cursed. And no one can say. Jesus is Lord. Except by the Holy Spirit.

I think we need. To be a bit. Careful. How we interpret this. If we look at other things. That other writers say. So. So. John says. Do not believe. Every spirit. But test the spirits.

To see whether they're from God. Because many false prophets. Have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize. The spirit of God. Every spirit. That acknowledges. That Jesus Christ.

[11:10] Has come in the flesh. Is from God. But every spirit. That does not acknowledge. Jesus. Is not from God. This is the spirit. Of the Antichrist. Which you have. Heard is coming. And even now.

Is already in the world. So he is saying here. It's not just a matter. Of mouthing the words. Jesus is Lord. Or something like that. Because the father of lies. Is quite capable.

Of telling the truth. When it suits him. But it's really. What does the spirit. Attest to. And just to think of.

A couple of examples. Of that. First of all. In Acts chapter 16. We read the story. Of a fortune teller. And this girl. Followed Paul.

And the rest of us. Shouting. These men. Are the servants. Of the most high God. Who are telling you. The way to be saved. She kept this up. For many days. And you might have thought. That Paul thought.

[12:04] That was rather useful. To have somebody going around. Shooting. Shouting this. But he didn't. He obviously thought. That this spirit. Really was dishonoring. The Lord who was preaching. And so it says.

Finally Paul became. So troubled. That he turned around. And said to the spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ. I command you. To come out of her. At that moment. The spirit left her.

So that spirit. In a sense. Was actually telling. The truth. But in a way. That was not. Honoring the. The words. That it was. Purporting to say. And we might think.

Of the words. Of Jesus himself. Who said. Not everyone. Who says to me. Lord Lord. Will enter the kingdom. Of God. Of heaven. But only he. Who does the will. Of my father. Who is in heaven.

Many will say to me. On that day. Lord Lord. Did we not prophesy. In your name. And in your name. Drive out demons. And perform many miracles. Then I will tell them.

[12:59] Plainly. I never knew you. Away from me. You evil doers. So the real question. Is not. Whether. Somebody mouths.

The words. Jesus is Lord. But whether. The spirit. Or spiritual gift. Honours Jesus. Or dishonours sin. And we need to distinguish. Between spirits. And in fact.

As I've pointed out. This is itself. A spiritual gift. In verse 10. The ability. To distinguish. Between spirits. But I think. Paul's saying. We all need.

To be clear on this. Perhaps. We will need. To seek guidance. From those who. Have this gift. Of discerning. The spirits. But. We each need. To be convinced.

In our own mind. In verse 1. He tells everyone. In the Corinthian church. That they cannot afford. To be ignorant. In these matters. Now of course. Even the discerning.

[13:50] Between spirits. Can be a problem. Of itself. When you come on. To something like. The Toronto blessing. Which. It's going to cause. A lot of argument. One way or the other. But.

Anyway. That we need. At least. To first of all. Bear in mind. That. Not all spirits. Not all things. That seem to be spectacular. Or spiritual. Actually.

Are works of the Holy Spirit. And we need to. Bear that in mind. But then you. Think. Okay. Paul has given himself. A let out clause here.

And you might expect him. To demonstrate. That the more troublesome gifts. And he seems to be. Having a particular problem. With tongue speaking. In chapter 14. Um. Um. Well. Not in fact.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit. At all. You might have thought. He might say that. But he doesn't. In fact. He emphatically. Does not do that. He takes an entirely. Different tack. And he says.

[14:50] That in fact. We should expect. The spirit. The gifts of the spirit. To be. Different. Diverse. Is described in Revelation.

As the sevenfold spirit of God. Um. We actually have two. Lists of gifts here. In verses 8 to 10. And then. Another one in verse 28. The lists are not the same.

And they're not. Neither are they the same. As the lists that are given elsewhere. For instance. In Ephesians chapter 4. Which focuses more. On pastor and evangelistic gifts. Um.

Both lists. Lists in Corinthians. Contain not seven items. As we might have expected. But actually eight. Um. I would have expected there to be seven. I thought. I bet there's seven. If I count to them.

But then I did count them. And there were actually eight. In both lists. Um. But the two lists. Do have a similar structure. Um. Firstly are the word gifts. And secondly the help gifts.

[15:49] And thirdly. Tongue seems to come at the end. Under a kind of others. Um. But. The structure is clearer. Actually in the second list. And prophecy is in a different place.

In the first list. So we'll. Come back to that later. But. What I want to point out. In the first list. And the verses that proceed. That have come before it. The emphasis is actually on the diversity.

And in fact. Even the term gift. He thinks. Charismata. Is not. Enough. To describe what he's thinking of. So he uses actually three different words.

He says in verse four. He talks about gift. Charismata. In verse five. He talks about service.

Diakonos. Like Phil was. Teaching us about a few weeks ago.

Was it last week? Or the week. Two weeks ago. And in verse six. He uses yet another. Word.

Energima. From which we of course. We get our word. Energy.

[16:50] He's saying. Perhaps. That the Corinthians view. Of what was spiritual. What is a spiritual issue. Is actually. Too narrow. If we think of just. Gifts.

Spiritual gifts. In a very narrow sense. We need to. Be thinking of a broad. Range of workings of God. What we might call. Charismata. What we might call service. What we might call workings.

At the same time. It's clear. That he is actually. Basically describing. The same thing. But he seems to give it. So we've got to give it. Three different names. In order to get a. A broad enough view.

Of what I'm actually. What he's actually. Talking about here. So it. Can be spiritual gifts. It can be service. It can be workings. But the important point.

Is of course. That. Say there is this. Diversity. To each one. The manifestation. Of the spirit. Is given. So to each one. The manifestation.

[17:46] Is given. For the common good. And that's the point. He's making. This diversity. Is not so that everybody. Can do their own thing. But that they're for. The common good. That these gifts.

These workings. Take place. So then he goes on.

To spiritual gifts. And. As. What are they for. As I said. There are lists. That he's given. But the point.

He makes. That all these things. Are operations. Of the same. God. And of course. He introduces. His famous picture. Of the body. I'm sure we're all. Familiar with this.

But it's. So I won't actually. Go through it. In detail. If the whole body. Is an eye. He says in verse 17. What use would it be. It simply.

[18:41] Wouldn't function. At all. And Paul uses. This is the. Analogy of the body. Actually to make a. Variety of points. About the. Spiritual gifts. And so the first one.

Is that. All these things. Are operations. Of the same spirit. We all have. One spirit. It's not that we were. All baptized. Into different spirits. Or in different spirits.

We were all. Baptized. Into one spirit. The same water. Of life. It says we all drink. Of the same spirit. The same water. Of life. Is the same drink. That feeds.

All the parts. Of the body. And a body. That has more than one spirit. In it. Is schizophrenic. Isn't it. Or demon possessed. A body can't have. More than one spirit.

In it. Because if it does. It will never. Function effectively. It's a split. It should just. Just won't work properly. We say it's.

[19:34] Mentally ill. Or damaged. It's just not right. A body needs to have. One spirit in it. And we do have. In the body. One spirit. And that's what we remember. We need to remember.

And the second point. He makes. In verse 22. Is that. Those parts of the body. That seem to be weaker. Are indispensable.

I thought about this a bit. And thought well. We might consider. A poet. To be more gifted. Than a plumber perhaps. Certainly in everyday life. We talk about.

Poets being gifted. We don't talk about. Plumbers being gifted. Usually. But on the other hand. I might ask. When did you last need. To call out. An emergency poet. Probably you never have. But we've all had to call out. A plumber in a hurry. On occasions. I'm sure. God actually gives. A special honour. To those parts. Which seem less presentable. Whereas we tend to do.

[ 20 : 35 ] The opposite. Don't we. Without poets. Certainly our cities. Will be impoverished. But without plumbers. They'd probably unravel. All together. And we'd all be dying.

Of cholera. Or something. So yes. God does. Give particular honour. To the bits. That we sometimes. Think are the least. Significant.

And the third point. Is. He makes of course. Is that we need. To take care. Of the whole. Body. In verse 26. The eye. Can't say.

That a pain in the foot. Is nothing to do with me. I mean. It's just. Crazy. It just doesn't make sense. If you hurt your foot. Then. Your whole body. Is in pain.

Isn't it? The other way around. As well. If it says. If one part rejoices. Then. If. If one part is on it. Every part rejoices with it. If you. If you win.

[ 21 : 29 ] A medal. At athletics. It's not just your. Legs that. Celebrate. You. The whole of you. Celebrates. If you saw some of those. Interviews and the athletics. On Saturday. He didn't interview.

Just the. Runner's legs. Or whatever. He. Interviewed the whole body. And. They rejoiced. Or. That they'd won. Or. Explained what had gone wrong.

Why they didn't win. The whole body. And the final point. He makes of course. Is this is all. As God. Planned it. And. I hope you'll forgive me.

I've got a couple of. Well. Let's read the verse first. 1 Corinthians 12. 18. In fact. God has arranged the parts. In the body. Every one of them. Just as he wanted them to be. I'm afraid I've got a couple of.

Engineering. Illustrations tonight. Sorry for the. Two ladies present. But I think you'll know. What they're about. Yeah. Think of an aircraft. An airplane. A modern aircraft.

[ 22 : 27 ] Is a very deeply complex. Piece of machinery. There's a whole branch of engineering. Called system engineering. Which is just about the way. In which. Systems work together.

And. An aircraft. Doesn't. Just consist of wings. If the aircraft. Is to remain in the air. Each part. Must do its job. Properly. And.

Also. They've all got to work. Seamlessly together. If the wings. Are working. Somehow in competition. To the. Tail or something. Then it's never going to fly properly. They all have to work. Seamlessly together. And the thing about a system. Is that. If one part. Breaks. Then at least the system. Is very much degraded. It won't work nearly as well.

And. Murphy's law says. If two or three things. Go wrong at once. Usually the result. Is disaster. So. Yeah. Think of an aircraft.

[ 23 : 23 ] Perhaps. Each part. Has to do its own job. Properly. And they all have to work. Properly together. Well. Of course. It is the same as a body. I once heard Richard Vincent. Describe a human.

As a. What was it. I can't remember the exact phrase now. But basically. As being made up of interlocking systems. And. That's right. That is.

How a body works. Every bit of it. Has to work. Properly. For the body to be. Healthy. It's not just a random. The church isn't just a random. Collection of individuals.

Of course. It's a complete body. That's been. Created. By God himself. Now.

You might ask then. Are. All gifts. More important. In fact. You might have thought. That. Since Paul. Is trying to emphasize. The unity. Of gifts.

[ 24 : 18 ] The unity. Of the body. That he might have said. That in fact. They're all equal. But actually. He doesn't. He does give an ordering. In the second list. And.

You know. We kind of know. He means that. Because in verse 31. He tells us. To desire. The greater gifts. And the word here. Actually. Is quite a strong one.

I think. It's. Zeluah. If that's the correct pronunciation. In fact. The authorized version. Translates. That word. Covert. Earnestly. Covert. The greater gifts.

And. Actually. I think that's a more. Accurate. Translation. Of the. Greek. It's a very strong word. It means. Be zealous. In seeking. It can even. In envy. And he's saying.

You really need to. Really be. Looking out. For the. Greater gifts. And the gifts. Might not arrive. Just arrive. We might need to. Seek them.

[ 25 : 16 ] Earnestly. I suppose. There is where. The body. Illustration. Perhaps. Breaks down. Because. Normally. Bodies. Are. Born.

Complete. And if they aren't. There's not much. You can do about it. But. In the church. God tells us. To seek. Out to those. Who. Perhaps. We need. To complete.

The body. If there's some ministry. That needs. Needs. Fulfilling. We either. Seek within the church. Or maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Try and get. Somebody. From outside. But. We do need. To be seeking.

The highest gifts. But if we're going to do that. Then at least. Let's concentrate. On the gifts. That really matter. And so. What are they? And that's where. This second list.

Comes in. So. If you look at this second list. Which is. Let's get the right verse. Yeah. In verse 28.

[ 26 : 13 ] So in verse 27. Says you are the body of Christ. And each one of you is part of it. And then in verse 28. He says the following. In the church. God has appointed. First of all apostles.

Second prophets. Third teachers. Then workers of miracles. Also those having gifts of healing. Those who are able to help each other. Those with gifts of administration. Those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

And so on. So the first three of these at least. Are numbered. And it's clear. Since he's talking about desiring the higher gifts. That he does mean at least some sort of ordering here.

Whether he just regards the first three as ordered. And then. The then word. The word that's translated then. Means then in the sense of after that.

So following on from that. So you can. Perhaps he means the first three are singled out. Because he gives them numbers. And then the others are regarded as equal. Or perhaps the ordering is intended all the way through.

[ 27 : 16 ] But certainly the structure hinted in the first list. Is more explicit here. Because the first three are word gifts. Apostles. Prophets. Teachers. And then there are four help gifts.

Miracles. Healings. Helping others. Administration. And then on the end. Tongues. And perhaps we shouldn't push the ordering too hard. But certainly there is an ordering here.

And of course there are other gifts. E.g. music. I don't think music actually comes in any of the gifts. Lists of the gifts of the spirit. And yet. Certainly in Ephesians.

Paul tells us to address each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. So they must have had. Some sort of worship leaders. Or something of that. Nature. To lead the singing.

But. So of course there are other gifts. But the ones given here I think. Would serve to make the point. That he's trying to make. And why does he list these first three first?

[ 28 : 16 ] Well I think it's because. Let's just check where I need to change the slide. Sorry. Sorry. I'm just wondering if I've not marked my. No. No. That's right.

No. That is the last slide. Yeah. So firstly. Christianity is a religion of the word. Isn't it? Jesus is the word. And he tells us.

His words are the words of life. He doesn't tell us. In a sense. Yes he tells us to abide in the vine. But he says you do that by keeping his commandments. And he says that it's the words.

The word of life. In the parable of the sower. The seed is the word. So those who administer the word of God. Are honored first. In the church.

It says in 1 Timothy 5.17. The elders who direct the affairs of the church. Well. Are worthy of double honor. Especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

[ 29 : 14 ] Now whether double honor means they get a payment bonus. Or something else. Again people argue about. But certainly. It does say that the work of preaching and teaching.

Is especially honored within the church. But also vital to the church. Are those gifts. Who is to help others. In various ways.

And keep things. Running smoothly. And we remember that the Lord is also described. As the one who went about doing good. And in Acts 6.

Of course. As again we looked at. When we were looking at deacons. Acts 6. Verse 1 to 5. Says the following. In those days. When the number of disciples. Was increasing. The Grecian Jews among them.

Complained against the Hebraic Jews. Because their widows. Were being overlooked. In the daily distribution of food. So the 12 gathered all the disciples together. This is the 12 apostles. Of course.

[ 30 : 09 ] Who regarded. Said it would not be right for us. To neglect the ministry of the word of God. In order to wait on tables. So let me make the point there. That the gift of apostle. Is a word gift.

One who administers the word of God. In a special way. And takes it. Is sent to teach it. Brothers. Choose seven men from among you. Who are known to be full of the spirit. And wisdom. We will turn this responsibility. Distributing the food. Over to them. And we'll give our attention to prayer. And the ministry of the word. So the ministry of the word. Does take the first priority. But the church must be organized. And the suffering of those. Who need it. Must be alleviated. So these are also jobs. For those full of the Holy Spirit. And wisdom. They're certainly not meant. To be left to the feckless. And worldly minded. So returning to 1 Corinthians 12.

[ 31 : 08 ] At the end of the list. Paul mentions tongues. Now I'd suggest to you. This serves as a representative. Of a gift. That except in special circumstances. And there are special circumstances.

Where it's different. But except in special circumstances. It's mainly a gift. Of personal benefit. That's what he says. In chapter 14. Verse 5. I would like every one of you.

To speak in tongues. But I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies. Is greater than one who speaks in tongues. Unless he interprets. So the church may be edified. The thing about the gift of tongues.

It is mainly one of personal benefit. Except to say in certain circumstances. In other words. It's. In a sense.

You can take it or leave it. That's what he's saying. Again. I think you might. I've got another engineering. Application. Illustration here. But I think we're all familiar with this one. Think of a motor car.

[ 32 : 10 ] There are some parts of the car. That are actually. Absolutely fundamental. To its operation. If you don't have engine. And gearbox. And transmission. And wheels. And steering.

Then that car is not going anywhere. And we could perhaps think. As far as the. As a car is concerned. That the word gifts. Are the car.

The engine of the car. The bit without which. It's not going to move. But there are other parts. To the car. Which are not quite as fundamental. But which it's certainly.

Not safe to do without. And so one can think of. Brakes. Or lights. Or windscreen wipers. And we could think of these. Perhaps as representing.

The help. Gifts. And of course. The church can't operate. Properly without these. Any more than the car. Can operate properly. Without these. If a policeman. Notices. That your.

[ 33 : 04 ] Seat belts aren't working. Or your headlights aren't working. He's going to stop the car. Because. He can see that you're not. Able to drive safely. The car cannot operate safely.

With. If you haven't got headlights. But then there are other parts. Of the car. Which are really not vital. But which do. Make your journey. More.

Comfortable. And. Or more pleasant. And you can think of the. Air conditioning. Or the car radio. No one was ever stopped.

By the police. For having a faulty car radio. I don't think they ever were. And perhaps. That's from what Paul is saying. Is that tongues. Come into this category. Then generally speaking.

They are. Might be a nice thing to have. But. They're not really vital. To the operation. Of the church. And I think that's what. Paul's actually getting at here. Except. In certain circumstances.

[ 33 : 58 ] And he does mention an exception. In chapter 14. 21. And I think. When we come to 14. We'll look at. When. How tongues can be assigned. For unbelievers. But in.

As far as the general operation. Of the church is concerned. They're not really vital. To it. And. Therefore. If you do what the Corinthians were. And make tongues.

Too important a gift. As. Unfortunately. Some. Christians have done. Then it's only going to cause splits. And dissension. And. Of course. As I say. There may be. Times when it's different.

I think. You can envisage times. When a car radio. Would be extremely useful. If you get news of. You know. An accident on the road. Or a flood. Or something. Or that a bridge is down. Then. You know.

The car. But in that sort of circumstance. Then. It would be very useful. But these are special circumstances. Not. In the way that the. The car normally proceeds.

[ 34 : 53 ] And not in the way that the church normally operates. Because. The point Paul is making. Of course. Here is that. These gifts are not. For personal. Benefit. But they are.

That we should be concentrating. On those gifts. That build up the church. And. So he tells us. To covet. The higher gifts. Those that are most vital.

To the church. I'm sure. Is what he means by that. And. If we are not sure which. Then. Paul tells us. First. Word ministry. Secondly. Helping others. And you'll notice.

In 1 Corinthians 14. He. He picks up for the list. Eagerly desire spiritual gifts. Especially the gift of prophecy. He doesn't say. Apostle. Possibly.

Suggesting. You can't really aspire. To be an apostle. Because. They are specifically. Those who have seen the Lord. And are. Appointed by the Lord. Directly. But.

[ 35 : 48 ] He says. You can aspire. To be a prophet. He says. Eagerly desire. To be a prophet. A prophet. Now then. Of course. You wonder. You have to worry about. What this actually means. And we'll think of that.

But certainly. If we think. In at least. The job of a prophet. Is to declare. The word of God. To people. So. It's not wrong. To aspire. That. To that gift.

In fact. It's something that. Paul says. That you can. Eagerly desire. That gift. But. Paul. But. The spirit doesn't. Make everybody. A prophet. And it wouldn't be good.

If he did. He. Says that all the parts of the body. Are vital. And. That. I say.

We often need to give special honor. To those. Which. Are perhaps less. Obvious. Because that's what. What God does. But still. He does tell us. To be. To seek the.

[ 36 : 43 ] Higher gifts. And I'm sure. What he means by that. Those are the most. Benefit. To the church. Um. But. Even here. At this point. Paul.

Realizes. Perhaps. That a word of warning. Is needed. Um. He's told us. To be zealous. In seeking the gifts. That's probably. The best translation. Of zeal. Zeal. Um. But zeal.

Can be a dangerous thing. Can't it? And. Paul. Wants to make it clear. That he's not. Instigating a rat race. He's not saying. You should all be. Climbing over each other.

To be. The head prophet. Or whatever. And neither. Does he want fanatics. Some kinds of zeal. Can be very dangerous. Indeed. And fanatics.

Who. Ignore. Everybody else. Who are so convinced. They're right. That. Um. You know. They take no notice. Of. What anybody else says.

[ 37 : 39 ] Common sense. Even. He doesn't want that either. Who are so. Full of their own importance. That they won't listen. To anybody else. Are not. What are wanted. And again. In 1 Corinthians 14.

He says. About. About prophets. Another one stands up. The first should sit down. And two or three. Should be considered. What. Consider what is said. So. He's.

Needs to be cautious. About this zeal. That he's asking. He says. Yes. Desire the higher gifts. But. You need to do it. In a particular way. It's a particular. Kind of zeal.

That's required. And it's that zeal. Which is characterized. By love. Follow the way of love. And eagerly desire. Spiritual gifts. Is what he says.

So. For that reason. We have this. Chapter 13. Interpolated there. As it. As it were. To explain. What he means by that. How. We should be.

[ 38 : 34 ] Desiring the. Gifts. In the way. That it's done. Well. I won't preach. Next week's sermon. Because we're going to look at this. Next week. But that's what. Paul is telling us to do. That we are bound together.

By love. We are bound by the spirit. But. In practice. That binding. Is a binding. Of love. And. If we. Do it any other way.

Then it's not. The. It's not the spirit. Who is the spirit of unity. So. Let's. Say.

We'll pick this up next week. And then later in the autumn. And we'll look at some of the. Technical issues. But. Let's. Sing. This is the same hymn. Let's.