

How Christian Community Works

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 13. Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. Now, there are a variety 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.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom.

And to another, the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit. To another, faith by the same Spirit.

To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy.

[1 : 06] To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues. To another, the interpretation of tongues.

All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit. Who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body. So it is with Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves or free. And all were made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body.

[2 : 02] That would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing?

If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body. Each one of them as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need for you.

Nor again the head to the feet. I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

And on those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor. And our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more representable parts do not require.

[3 : 13] But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing?

Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? Do all, are all angels. Do all give us a prayer for our children. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

[4 : 26] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind.

Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.

It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things. Believes all things. Hopes all things. Endures all things.

[5 : 34] This is the word of God. Great. Thanks, Angie and Celeste. I have a new microphone today. It's not new.

It's old but it's new. And I said I feel like I look like Britney Spears. I feel like that. It is making some strange noises so I'm just bear with me and it is what it is.

But I'm sorry. Oops, I did it again. Sorry. Thanks, Leo. We may not pray now but I feel like it's hard to pray.

How do we pray off that low base? So let's lift our sights a little higher and let's try and I'm sorry I messed it up. Let's pray. Let's come before our Heavenly Father.

Sovereign Lord, Majestic God, Great and Wonderful Savior, we've come to praise you and to worship you this morning. We've come to adore your great name because you are God and we are not.

[6 : 37] You are the Creator. We are created. You are the one true God and Father, you are perfect in all your ways. God, how quickly we forget you.

How easily we find ourselves engrossed in our own worlds and our own lives, fixated by our own dreams and agendas. And Father, if we honor so often you have pushed to the margins or the sidelines of our lives.

Father, how quickly and easily we forget your goodness and your profound, profound faithfulness to us. God, at the end of our lives, one day we'll look back or when we get to eternity, we'll look back at our lives and we'll marvel at the millions of ways which you are so faithful and of which we were completely ignorant.

God, this morning we want to take a moment to remind ourselves of that and to return that to you as an offering of praise. And say all glory to you, God, for your profound faithfulness to us. Father, we often think it's our own goodness and our own brilliance, our own devotion to you, which has gotten us to where we are.

But how foolish we are. Forgive us this foolishness and this self-centeredness, we pray. And so, Father, this morning we ask you to open our eyes to see you again. Do a divine renovation of our hearts, God.

[7 : 50] Lord, we pray that you will help us, Christ, as individuals and as a church and as a city to be more aligned with your heart. More prone to love you and trust you and follow you, to obey you.

God, this morning we've come to worship you not out of obligation or duty, but out of delight, God. Because in you we find life and truth and peace and strength. Oh, Lord God, more than all the gold in the world, this morning we need you.

God, more than the protection from the coronavirus, God, we need you, Lord. Father, more than the dream job or physical health or a marriage partner, God, we need you.

So, come and lift our eyes onto you this morning, we pray. God, as we consider this passage that we read this morning, we ask you to impress it deeply upon our hearts. God, help us not just to be hearers of your word, but also doers of your word.

Those who are convicted and respond appropriately. Lead us to repentance where necessary. Help us to see our own hearts. Father, where we've been too individualistic, forgive us.

[8 : 55] Where we haven't considered the importance of the well-being of the body, show us our hearts, we pray. God, make us not just a strong community, but one that is formed by the gospel.

He knows how to love and serve one another. And then finally, Father, this morning we want to pray for our city and our world. As we deal with the coronavirus, we bring our brothers and sisters in China before you.

We bring our brothers and sisters in Hong Kong and across Asia. Father, God, those that are sick, we pray be with them and comfort them. Give them excellent medical care, we pray.

Pray for Christian brothers and sisters to come around them. God, for those that have already seen loved ones pass away, we pray won't you comfort them. Make known to them your peace and your love in this time.

Father, bring followers of Jesus around them who will comfort them and point them to the hope of Christ. Father, we pray for government officials and leaders and medical staff and medical officials who are needing such profound wisdom, God.

[9 : 57] How to handle a situation. Give them wisdom. Give them insight. Let them make brilliant decisions, we pray, Lord. Father, we want to pray for doctors and nurses. Those that are right at the front lines.

We pray for their safety. Pray for their protection. Pray for those that are tired and overworked and are pouring out their lives. We thank you for their service. God, be with them, we pray. Even this morning, strengthen and encourage them, Lord.

And God, we pray for followers of Jesus. Help us to be salt and light in our city at this time. Not to think of ourselves, but how we can serve and love our city. Christ, fill us with your spirit, we pray. Lead and guide us in your wonderful name. Amen. Amen. Well, this morning, we are continuing working through our series called Watermark Essentials.

If you are new to us as a church, we are talking about our values. The things that are printed on banners and bulletins and websites. The things that we talk about a lot.

[10 : 58] Carla, would you rather I use that one? Okay, there we go. Sorry about that.

That didn't last very long. One minute in. Okay. So, we are talking about our values. These things that we talk about a lot, but what do they actually mean? And how does it really affect us?

And the three things at Watermark we talk about a lot are the gospel and community and mission.

And so, the beginning of the year, we spent four weeks talking about the gospel and what is that.

And then we've been talking a bit about community recently. And Chris, two weeks ago, looked at Colossians chapter 3. And we saw there that the Christian community is formed out of the gospel.

What forms the Christian community is not just common interests or similarities, but a common identity that Christ has formed us. So, remember Colossians 3 says, you then, chosen and beloved children of God.

[12 : 00] That's what forms us. But then Chris also showed us that it's not only that the gospel forms community, but community helps get the gospel deeper into our hearts.

Because when you live in community, let's be honest, there are times when you rub against each other. There are times when maybe you bother each other or you can take offense. And those are great opportunities for us to explore our hearts and to get the gospel deep inside of us.

So, the gospel forms community, but then community also helps us get deeper into the gospel. And then last week, it was just great having Paul here from Holy Light Church.

What encouragement just to hear the story after story of how God has used him and used those in his life to change so many people's lives. And so, this morning, we come to this well-known passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Now, in order to understand this passage, we need to zoom back a little bit and understand what's going on in the Corinthian church. So, what happens here is the Apostle Paul goes to the city of Corinth.

[13 : 00] He plants this church a couple of years, number of years beforehand. And he then writes back to this church. And the church, at the time that the book is written, is not in a very good state.

There is all sorts of things going on. So, the church is not very healthy. But if you ask the people in the church, they would say their church is amazing. They would say they are a very mature church. The Christians are all very mature. They would say this is a wonderful church to be part of. And the reason is because the Corinthian church was very prolific, very abundant in their use of spiritual gifts.

Especially supernatural spiritual gifts. And so, many people in the church would be praying in tongues. People in the church would receive a prophetic word and then share that with someone else.

Maybe somebody else had incredible faith to trust God for miracles. And they prayed and their healing is taking place. And so, the church in Corinth was very prolific in their use of spiritual gifts.

[14 : 00] It's supernatural spiritual gifts. But for the Corinthian church, these spiritual gifts, for them, were seen as a sign or an indicator or a badge indicating how spiritually mature they were.

And so, the more you exercised or used one of these spiritual gifts, the more you thought, yeah, God must be really pleased with me. Now, I must be a really mature and strong Christian because look at how I prophesy.

Look at how I speak in tongues. And the more unusual or the more supernatural these gifts, the more that those people thought they were mature in their faith. Okay? So, for the Corinthians, this was one of the primary indicators or markers of spiritual maturity.

Now, one of the reasons why this was the case is because in the city of Corinth at the time, the cults, the religious cults or the temples in the city valued mystic spirituality.

And so, there were people around the temples that would go and be involved in all sorts of spiritual trances. And this started to influence the church. And so, just like we read in the book of Revelation at the end of last year, what's happening is that the culture of the city of Corinth is influencing the Christians, the followers of Jesus, and their view of how the church should operate more than the other way around.

[15:22] More than the followers of Jesus saying, this is the gospel and they're asked, now going to influence the city. And so, they adopted this practice, brought it into the church, and similarly thought, well, those that speak in tongues must be really spiritual.

And those that prophesy or have faith, they must be amazing Christians. And those that don't, well, they're kind of not really that dedicated. And so, what this meant, of course, is that there's this subtle division in the church.

Some people would subtly, maybe even subconsciously, look down upon other people in the church that didn't really exercise spiritual gifts or supernatural gifts and didn't see God using them in that way.

And so, those who did speak in tongues would kind of look down at those who didn't. Those who did prophesy would look down at those who didn't and think, you know, they're just baby Christians. They're not really very spiritually mature. But at the same time, those who maybe weren't very prolific in spiritual gifts would look up at those that did and think, wow, God must be really pleased with you.

[16:29] You must be a really strong Christian that you get to do these kinds of things. Maybe subconsciously, they would think, well, God must be really pleased with you that He's giving you these gifts.

And so, it made some people, especially those that weren't very prolific, think less of themselves or think of themselves as not very strong and mature Christians. Now, what do you think happens to a church community that thinks like this?

Well, what happens is that there's all sorts of divisions in the church, okay? So, there are those that are, there's hierarchies, there's camps, there's those groups of people that do that stuff, and there's these groups of people on this side, and there's those that think, oh, we're not really that mature, and there's all sorts of camps and divisions emerging in the church in Corinth.

And we actually see this throughout the book of Corinthians. So, in chapter 1, there's also divisions because some people are saying, well, you know, I really like Paul's teaching. He's my apostle. And then others are saying, no, no, Cephas, he's the real guy.

And then others are saying, no, no, Paulus. And so, there's all these camps and divisions. Then in chapter 11, we see when they come and take communion together, there's more divisions.

Because they would come to communion, and they'd all bring their meal, and they'd have a big feast together.

[17:42] And around the table, they would break bread and drink wine. But those that were maybe a little wealthier would bring, you know, their cordon bleu, five-class meal, and their nice roasted bread, and their French wine.

And they would take communion together. And then those that maybe weren't as financially empowered maybe arrive a little later because they're working late. And they just brought what they could.

And there were all these divisions. And then they wouldn't wait for one another. And so, these guys would take communion by themselves, and those guys would be left out. And there's just divisions all over the church. And so, in chapter 6, we see that Paul says, some of you are even suing one another.

You can't even sit down and talk about these things. But someone's got a problem with someone else, and they go to the courts and get involved in litigation. And so, the church in Corinth was actually very divided.

Now, one of the divisions, of course, was the use of spiritual gifts. Now, what does Paul tell them to do? How does he address the situation? Well, the one thing he doesn't do is to say, guys, spiritual

gifts are causing divisions.

[18 : 48] I think, just cut it out, let's just stop that, and let's just get on with the rest of life. That's not what he does. Just because some people are abusing the use of spiritual gifts doesn't mean that we should cut it out completely.

We should just find out what the Bible says, how we should really use them, right? And so, Paul, rather than saying, okay, just forget about that stuff, he calls them to a higher view of spiritual gifts, firstly, and secondly, to a higher criteria of spiritual maturity.

That's really important. A higher view of spiritual gifts and a higher criteria of what it means to be a mature follower of Jesus. And so, look at what he does here. Okay, this is just all background.

We're going to jump into the passage in a second. In chapter 12, he writes this chapter on spiritual gifts and what their purpose is. Okay, that's what we're going to look at in a bit. In chapter 14, he writes this chapter on spiritual gifts and how to use them.

Okay? And then sandwiched in between these two is 1 Corinthians chapter 13, which is one of the most famous chapters in the whole Bible.

[19 : 54] What does 1 Corinthians chapter 13 talk about? Love, right? It's that passage that everybody reads at their wedding. Anyone here have 1 Corinthians 13 read at their wedding? Okay, just a couple of us.

Which is actually not really about marriage at all. It's about gospel community. And so, Paul writes this. And look at what he says. Squeeze between these two chapters on spiritual gifts.

He says, If I speak in the tongues of angels, okay, that's speaking spiritual in tongues, but I have not love, I'm just a noisy gong.

I'm a clanging cymbal. I'm an irritating noise. If I have prophetic powers, and I can understand all mysteries and all knowledge, if I have faith that I can move one mountain from here to there, so imagine someone comes in here, God's given them the gift of faith, and for some reason, they have the gift of faith, and they pray, and the piano gets up and moves across the room, we'd be pretty impressed.

Yeah, I'd be pretty impressed. First, if someone comes in and says, I really feel like God is saying this, and this, and this, and they read exactly what's going in my heart, this direct word of knowledge, Paul says, If that's the case, but I have not love, I don't love the brothers and sisters around me, and the church family, it's all for nothing.

[21 : 14] That's an incredible statement. He says, If I'm generous, and I give away everything that I have, in fact, I give up my body to be burnt in flames as a martyr, but actually, I don't care about my brothers and sisters, I gain nothing.

And so Paul's writing here, and he says, Yes, spiritual gifts is good. They're a gift from God. We should utilize them, but don't make that the marker of spiritual maturity. Actually, if you want to know what a healthy church family looks like, it's your church that knows how to love one another.

Do you see that? Does that make sense? Okay, so that's the context of what's going on here. Now, let's dive into chapter 12, and see what Paul says. Look at chapter 12.

Look at verse 12 with me. He says this, For just as the body, he's talking about a physical human body, just as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Okay, so what's Paul saying here? He's using the analogy of the human body, and he's saying that's a good analogy for the body of Christ, which is the church. He says, Just like a human body consists of many parts, okay, like arms, and legs, and the spleen, and all sorts of other interesting things, so the body of Christ, the church, consists of many various parts that aren't all exactly the same.

[22 : 36] They're not equal in function, but they are equal in importance. And so Christ's body, just like the human body, has all these various parts that are also not equal in function, but they're equal in value and importance, and they ought to be a unity because together we form the body of Christ.

Now, just as a side note, look at what word he uses when he describes the body parts. What word does he use there? He uses the word member, okay, and that's actually where we get the word church member from.

So in Hong Kong, sometimes when we think of someone being a member of the church, we think of like being a member of a club, right? You know, you pay your subs, and then you get to use their facilities. That's not what Paul is talking about at all.

Where we get the word church member from is this passage here. Paul says, just like your various body parts are members of your body, okay, my arm is a member of my body, and the various members contribute to the well-being and the health of my physical body, in the same way, the various members, those that contribute and sign up and say, yeah, count me in.

I'm part of this body here form the body of Christ. And what that means is that actually being a member of a church is really important. It's a way of saying, I'm part of this body and this body is part of me.

[23 : 56] I'm committing to this body and this body is committing to me. I'm not just part of the body for when it suits me, but when it doesn't, I'm going my own way. Actually, I'm connected. I'm unifying. I'm joining myself to this body and I know that I'm looking out for them and they're looking out for me.

Okay? Now, Paul's now going to make two points. His one point is how he's going to emphasize the need for diversity in the body.

So we're all not just the same. And then he's going to emphasize the need for unity in the body. And so in verse 14 to 20, first thing, he emphasizes the need for diversity.

Look at what he says here in verse 14. He wants to show them that Christ's body, just like a human body, needs a diversity of gifts and contributions. So look what he says, verse 14. He says, for the body does not consist of one member, but of many.

If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body, that wouldn't make it any less a part of the body. If the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that wouldn't make it any less a part of the body.

[25 : 02] If the whole body were just eyes, that would be a monster, okay, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were just ears, where would be the sense of smell? So he's saying, just as the human body is made up of this complexity of millions of various parts, but together, all of them unify the body, so a healthy church body needs a variety and a complexity of parts.

A church body that just has a preacher and one or two other people and everyone else is just sitting back observing is not going to be a healthy church body. Now, in the Corinthian church, what they valued were certain gifts.

So there were a couple of spiritual gifts, particularly the supernatural gifts, and those ones they really elevated and said, okay, these are the important ones. This body really needs those kind of people, those that can pray in tongues and prophesy and words of knowledge and gifts of healing. Those guys are the really important ones and everyone else's contribution was kind of like, oh, well, you know, sorry for you that your gift is just that you can greet people or have a smile or something like that, right?

And Paul writes to him, he says, no, no, no, not at all. Not at all. Paul says, don't think that just because your contribution isn't the same as another, it isn't equally valid.

[26 : 26] That's like the foot saying, oh, I guess I'm not a hand, I guess I don't really, I don't have a role in this body. But actually, we need every part, every member to play its contribution. Now, what does this mean for us?

Well, one thing it means is that a healthy church is one in which people don't attend as consumers, but everyone sees themselves as a contributor. And not just in a general sense, like, I contribute my money and then you guys do the work of ministry, okay?

But everyone brings the gifts and the wiring that God has given them and says, here, let me bring my gift to serve the body because as a church family, we need a diversity of gifts.

And so, let me ask you this question. If you consider yourself a part of Watermark family, if this is your church, how would this affect the way that we come to family worship on a Sunday morning? You see, the one way to do it is to say, I'll run in here at 10.30, 10.35, actually, because I know there's the countdown and that's extra five minutes to sleep. So, 10.35, I'm going to run in to church and I hope the preacher's well prepared and I hope he's got something good and I'll receive what he has to give.

[27 : 36] That's thinking like a consumer, right? But there's another way to think. There's another way to come, which is to come to church saying, today I've got some contribution to bring. And that may be like we had earlier, somebody came to Ed with a piece of paper and said, I feel like God's put this in my heart for the church, right?

And Ed said, hey guys, it feels like God's got a word for us. Don't be discouraged in this time. Keep doing what you're doing. Could be that. It could be that somebody comes and during times of worship says, I feel like I've got the scripture in my heart that I want to read over us as a church just to encourage us.

It could be somebody coming and saying, the person I sit next to, I'm going to pray for them throughout the service. I'm just going to pray that God speaks to them, that God encounters them. It could be that you come and you just give a listening ear and pray with someone that's going through a difficult time.

It may be just extending a warm welcome to someone you don't know or taking somebody out for lunch after church. But what would it look like for the church body to come every Sunday saying, I'm here today to contribute to serve this body in the role that God's called me to?

Here's another practical application for us. At Watermark, one of the things we're really fortunate to have is a whole bunch of outstanding young people in our church and young leaders.

[28 : 53] Henrika and the ICF team have done an awesome job. Our ICF students are amazing. A bunch of people that have recently graduated from ICF. We've got a whole crew of amazing young people in our church.

Now one of the challenges for that is that sometimes if you are, let me say, more seasoned at life, more experienced at life, if you are 50 plus, it's very easy to think, oh, this is just a young person's church.

There's no place for me anymore. There's no contribution. I don't have a role to play. And I just want to say that is not true. Don't buy the lie. At this church, because we're a body made up of many parts, we need everyone to come and play their role and their contribution.

And so, for everyone in our church, for those especially maybe who have learned a thing or two in life because you've been around a little longer than some of our ICF students, I want to say we need you in this church.

We need you to disciple some of the young people and to show them what it looks to live a life of faith, trusting Jesus. We need you, as Paul says, to admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, show patience to those that are struggling.

[30 : 04] Maybe some of us that are a little older, you might never preach or be on the stage or lead a CG. That's okay. But what has God called you to? What is the contribution that you can bring?

Don't think, oh, this is just a young person's church. We need every member to play their part. And so this is what Paul is saying to the Corinthian church. And it's just as applicable to here, that the church body is a diverse body of gifts and contributions.

Each one is needed, not just the pastors or the staff or those on stage. Everyone that comes to church has a gift and a contribution to bring. Okay, does that make sense?

Now, look at the second part. Look at what he says in verse 21 to 26. Here, Paul emphasizes the need for unity. So he just said, listen, we're not just all one.

We're not just all ears or eyes or, you know, 17 hands. Okay, that's not going to be a healthy body. We all, God's so composed the body, bringing each one as he desires.

[31 : 05] But now he's saying, if you overplay that thought, so if you overemphasize the fact that we're all unique, we can become individualistic. And we can easily think, oh, you know, I've got a gift, but it's my gift and I will contribute it when I want, how I want, because I am so uniquely wonderful, there's no one else like me.

Right? And Paul's saying, it's true that you are diverse, but don't forget the fact that you also won. Just as the human body has a diversity of members, but actually they're all part of one body, so it's true in the church.

In other words, how weird would it be if you're standing by the bus stop and you just see two pairs of feet just walking down the road, right? And I'm just, you know, I'm just so unique and it's just me, my pair of feet.

That would be weird. The feet have a unique role to play, but they're part of the body to contribute to the well-being of the body. Imagine you're about to sit down at lunch with your girlfriends, parents, or your in-laws and your hand just says to your mouth, no, I don't feel like working today. I'm taking a Sabbath. Just eat your own dinner, right? That's going to be a messy meal. It's not going to look too good, right? In other words, every member has a unique contribution, but they're part of the body for the unity and the oneness of the body.

[32 : 22] And so look at what Paul says here in verse 21. He says, the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you today, nor the head to the feet. I don't need you.

On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and those parts of the body that we think are less honorable, we actually bestow the greater honor.

So what Paul is saying here is that in the human body, there are parts of the body that may be physically weaker or that we don't give a lot of thought or attention to. So like your organs, internal organs, how many people have thought about your kidney or your intestines this week?

Okay, so thank you Dr. Sam. If you're a doctor, maybe you have. But not a lot of us give a lot of thought to these parts that are physically weaker and we don't give a lot of attention to.

But just because they may be physically weaker doesn't mean they are any less valuable to the health or the well-being of the body. In fact, some of our external parts may be even stronger.

[33 : 29] They can put up with a little bit more toughness. And we spend far more time and attention on those things but they actually, they may be not as vital, right? How much time and money do people spend looking after their hair?

But actually, let's be honest, it's not the most vital part of your body. And that's what Paul's point is here. He's saying there's some parts that we think just because something is invisible, we don't see it or give a lot of thought to it, doesn't mean it's less valuable.

And Paul's point is the same is true for Christ's body. There are members of the body that may seem hidden, they may seem weaker, they're not as prominent, they're never going to be on stage or lead a ministry, but their apparent hiddenness has no relationship to their value or the necessity of their church.

And so some person, maybe the gift that they bring is that they are the most wonderful welcomers and they make people feel welcome. And it's easy to think, oh, you know, that's a cute gift, that doesn't really help.

But actually, that's a vital gift. Maybe, Charles Spurgeon, greatest preacher of the 19th century, okay, just the most outstanding preacher, 25 years old, he's preaching to 10,000 people, hundreds and thousands of people came to Christ through his ministry.

[34 : 46] He sent out hundreds of church planters all over the world. And one stage, someone said, Charles, what's the secret to your ministry? How is it so successful? He said, the secret to my ministry is that there are a bunch of ladies who pray for me every day.

Now, nobody knows those people's names. There's no history books that write about those people's names. But that actually was one of the most vital parts that brought revival to London in many ways.

Because some old lady decided we're going to pray. Paul's point is that there's some parts of the body that are less visible, less apparent, maybe don't get the limelight, but that has no bearing on their usefulness or their value or the necessity of the body.

And so look at what he says here in verse 24. For God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it. Now that's really interesting. God in his wisdom has somehow chosen to give greater honor to the parts that apparently don't seem very honorable.

In God's upside down economy, the first are last and the last are first. The overlooked are often the most important. The least is often the greatest.

[35 : 57] As Paul says in chapter 1, God chooses to use the weak things of the world to shame the strong. The foolish things in the eyes of the world to shame that which seems wise.

And God has so composed his body like this that to God sometimes the most valuable and honorable parts of the body are actually those that in our eyes don't seem very valuable or very honorable at all.

Verse 24. For God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there may be no division, but that all the members may have the same care for one another. For if one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. So friends, what that means is that for every person that calls Watermark home, God has given you a gift, a contribution to bring to the body.

But it can turn into a curse when we see that as our own, as that's my gift that I bring when I want. God has so composed the body that if one member suffers, all suffer together.

[37 : 02] If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now, what does that actually mean?

Okay? So we see the two things. Paul emphasizes the need for diversity. Now he's emphasizing

the need for unity.

What does that actually mean? Well, in some ways, what it means is that my spiritual well-being is some way dependent upon you. And your spiritual well-being is dependent upon me and vice versa and the people around us.

In other words, in biblical culture, your life never entirely belongs to yourself, but partly belongs to the community that you're a part of. In other words, in the Bible, those that you choose to align yourself to, those that you choose to find solidarity with, to some extent, you're responsible for them and they're responsible for you.

And that's why in chapter 5 in Corinthians, Paul actually says something really pretty hectic. He says, sin is like yeast or like cancer that can actually spread throughout the body.

And that's why he says, you guys are responsible for one another. And so in the Corinthians church, there's this guy and he's having sex with his stepmom. And the Corinthians church is all saying, yeah, well, you know, that's your life and we've got our life, we're not going to interfere.

[38 : 16] And Paul says, what are you talking about? Don't you realize that that's like a cancer that's going to affect your body? You're responsible for him and he's responsible for you. And if you let that thing go unchecked, it's going to grow and it's going to consume all of you.

And so Paul says, someone go and speak to him. And if he doesn't change, someone else go and speak to him. And if he still doesn't change, it's time to cut him off and to say you can no longer be a part of this body.

That sin cannot affect this body otherwise it will destroy all of us. Do you see the importance of that? In some ways, when you commit to a church family, it's saying I'm responsible for you and you're responsible for me.

And that means, friends, that committing to a church is very important, but it's also important what church you commit to. And so can I just say that for some of us who will one day move on from Hong Kong, move to another city or another place, when you choose a church, choose a healthy church.

Choose a strong church. Don't just go to church where the music's good and the pastor tells good jokes or he's got good social media following. Choose a church that's going to tell you about Jesus. Find a church that's going to preach the Bible.

[39 : 28] Find a church that together you can commit to them and they can commit to you and together you can point one another to the hope of Jesus. The church that you join is going to have a direct impact on your spiritual journey and you on theirs.

Now, as we come to a close, we need to acknowledge that this is really hard. This is really hard to do. And it's hard because being committed to a church family is costly and it's inconvenient, right? It's so much easier just to live for ourselves. Every one of us by nature, because of the reality of sin in our lives, our hearts are turned into ourselves and by nature we love to live for ourselves.

There's a tendency in every human heart to think about me primarily and my own desires and my own needs. We like to be served rather than to serve.

We naturally like to consume rather than contribute. contribute. And we tend to give ourselves to things that work the way we want to rather than things that don't work the way we want them to. And ultimately, sin is so deceptive that we can even deceive ourselves and oftentimes we can serve others but even if I'm honest there can be a selfish motivation behind that.

[40 : 45] I serve others because it makes me feel good about myself or because what others will think of me. Friends, almost everyone likes the idea of community as long as it doesn't cost me too much.

But being part of Christ's body necessarily involves a cost and inconvenience. Jesus in Ephesians 4 says we are to forgive one another in the same way that Christ forgives us.

That's a radical call to forgiveness. In John 13, Jesus says serve one another in the same way that I have served you. Isn't that amazing? The same way that Jesus serves us, he calls us to serve one another?

Jesus calls us to a radical level of community and laying down our lives for one another. Now the question is, how do we do that? How do we become the kind of people that see ourselves as part of this body and lay down our lives and serve one another?

The answer is it's almost impossible. It's very difficult. So how do we do that? Well, for those of us that are believers, I want us just to take a few minutes and just think about our salvation for a

second.

[41 : 49] Think about what does it mean to be a Christian? A Christian is someone who deserves God's judgment because of our sin, but who gets God's favor and acceptance instead because Jesus died on the cross for us.

A Christian is someone who was once outside of God's family and the God's judgment, but now has been included into God's favor, into God's family, someone who was once an outsider, but is now an insider because Jesus, because our sin was credited to Jesus.

Friends, a Christian is someone who knows that he's a sinner saved by grace alone and therefore has no reason to either elevate some or look down on others. A Christian is someone who has been, who knows his acceptance before God is based on Jesus' righteousness, not his own.

Friends, a Christian is someone who knows they have nothing to bring to God except their sin and yet has been given a righteousness from Christ instead. Friends, given that definition, are you a Christian this morning?

Given that definition, do you know that your only hope is in Jesus, that he is your perfect righteousness? Friends, if you are a Christian this morning, think for a moment how Jesus so committed himself to us, even though we had nothing to give him, nothing to bring him.

[43 : 07] Jesus so aligned himself to us that he took on our sin as if it was his own and he gave us his righteousness as if that was our own. Jesus found such solidarity with us that the perfect righteousness of Christ is given to us, not because of what we could give him, but because of what we would get in the process.

Friends, the gospel reminds us that we, our righteousness is not our spiritual gifts. Our righteousness is Jesus alone. The gospel reminds us that all of us are broken and sinful and yet Christ has welcomed us into his family.

And out of that, we are given the resources to love and serve and lay down our lives for one another. Remember how we started off this year looking at the gospel and we looked at this passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

And it says this, this is straight after, you know, the second chapter on spiritual gifts. Paul says this, he says, Friends, in the gospel, you and I are given such security, such an identity.

We are bestowed with such an honor. We don't need to look out for or look after ourselves. In Christ, we are given all the resources we need to put ourselves out there and to spend ourselves for the sake of one another.

[44 : 33] Friends, how do we become the kind of community which really do give ourselves? We don't elevate certain gifts or look down upon others. Think of some as superior or others as inferior.

How do we become the kind of community that really does love and serve one another for the common good? Paul says, I want to remind you of the gospel. The gospel I preached to you. The gospel in which you now stand. The gospel in which you need to keep on believing. And melting your heart. And changing you. The gospel reminds us that all of us in the same boat. And yet Jesus died for the brother and the sister next to us as much as he died for us.

Friends, this is the way we will become a kind of community that we want to be. By holding fast to the gospel. By preaching the gospel to ourselves each and every day. Friends, by arriving at church each Sunday with our hearts full of the gospel.

Saturated with the gospel. Because we've been holding on to Christ. Friends, hold on to Christ.

Friends, look to Jesus. Remind ourselves each and every day that you are in Christ and what you have in Christ is enough.

[45 : 36] And he'll make us the kind of people who don't look to ourselves and look after ourselves, but who live for others. Live for Christ. Pouring out ourselves for the sake of the rest of the body.

Let's pray together. Father. Let's pray. Oh Lord God, when we look at these scriptures, Father, and we see what is happening in Corinth, we must confess that our hearts are not too far or too dissimilar.

God, it's so easy to elevate some people and to look on others with inferiority. Father, our sinful hearts still want to have hierarchies, God.

We tend to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. Oh Father, forgive us, we pray. God, I pray for each one of us here and we pray for us as a church. God, we pray that we will be a healthy body with a diversity of gifts.

Each one of us bringing the gifts that you've brought. And yet, God, also knowing that it's not about us, but it's about the community. It's about you and your glory. And so God, help us, we pray.

[46 : 46] God, change us and transform us, God. Make us a radical community that really can make a difference in our city because you've made a difference in our hearts, Lord. Father, I pray that just this verse that says, you have so arranged the members of the body as you desire, that God, that will sit in our hearts, that each one of us will know what it is that you've called us to, the gifts you've given us, the contribution that we bring.

God, we pray through this very ordinary and simple church called Watermark Church. God, do something extraordinary. Glorify your name. Put your glory on display, God.

Because you're at work within us, we pray. We pray these things in your powerful name. Amen. Amen.