

1 Cor 12:12-31 Bible Study

1. How would you define “individualism”? How do you see it expressed in your daily experience? How is it expressed in churches? What is the impact?

Some definitions: “the pursuit of personal happiness and independence rather than collective goals or interests” and “the belief that society exists for the benefit of the individual, who must not be constrained by government interventions or made subordinate to collective interests”

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2. Read 12:12-13. Is this how we innately think of ourselves as Christians? Why / why not? What shows that Paul expected all Christians to think of themselves in this way?

*Often the problem begins when we first hear and understand the gospel – faith and repentance is a **personal** experience, but Paul refers back to conversion as a baptism by **one** Spirit into **one** body – all Christians from conversion on are members of the body of Christ.*

3. What are the implications of this for how we explain the gospel to people?

*We need to emphasise **both** the personal response **and** the corporate identity we are given when we confess, “Jesus is Lord.”*

4. Read 12:14-20. Who is being addressed in these verses? Have you ever encountered this attitude (in yourself or others)? What is the significance of the words, “it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body”?

*The person who **feels** they don't belong, because they lack what someone else has. The key here is that we **belong**, regardless of feelings of inadequacy – if we confess “Jesus is Lord” we **are** part of the body – this can be great comfort to those struggling in this area.*

5. Read 12:21-26. Who is being addressed in these verses? Have you ever encountered this attitude (in yourself or others)? The word “cannot” is not about not having permission but rather *not being able* to say those things. What is the significance of this?

This is similar to vv14-20 – what you feel about others does not change the reality of their belonging to the body – and yours to them!

6. How do you know if this attitude is present in a church?

Apart from what answers people might give, vv22-26 indicate it would be not identifying with ‘weaker’ brothers and sisters, not ‘suffering’ or ‘rejoicing’ with others. We are to have “equal concern” for all members of our church.

7. Read 12:27-30. Remember that Paul is still addressing their question about what they call “spiritual gifts” v1. He still hasn’t directly addressed their question though. Why is it taking so long to get there?

*Their whole framework of understanding was faulty and unless they get that corrected, they will never understand this issue; eg The Spirit's work is about Jesus, not them (or even the Spirit!) 12:1-3; The Triune God is at work in many ways, not just in the giving of gifts, and all of his ‘manifestations’ are given so that the whole church benefits, not merely the recipient 12:4-11, and Christians must **expect** that God will work in each person differently, so each person will work **together** to build the body of Eph 4:16.*

8. Are we supposed to try to work out who in our church is each particular ‘body part’, or which specific manifestation of the Spirit we (and others) have been given? Why / Why not?

*Paul's lists are illustrations of the broader principles (see notes to Q.7), the point is that **we** are the body of Christ – each one a part. It misuses the analogy to pin specific people to specific giftings, and in the end we will fall into the trap that Paul is trying to get the Corinthians out of!*

9. Are there any specific things you have found encouraging, challenging or confronting in this chapter. Write something below, share it and pray about it.