



SPIRITUAL GIFTS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 CORINTHIANS 12

The Spirit and the gifts are given to build up the body of Christ.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The Spirit of God and His gifts exalt Christ – The Corinthian church was struggling. In the church there could be found immorality (see 1 Corinthians 5:1), lawsuits among believers (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-11), and divisions (see 1 Corinthians 1:11-12, 3:1-4). Instead of being an interdependent, connected family of believers, the Corinthian church was competitive and divided.

In addressing spiritual gifts within this church, Paul first reaffirmed the solid foundation upon which the Spirit of God operates. First, the Spirit of God testifies to Christ. No true Christian testimony can come except by the Spirit of God. Secondly, all gifts come from the same Spirit and are therefore given for the ministry of Christ. Third, the manifestations of the Spirit, though given to individuals, are for the common good-- that is, the good of the body of Christ, which is the church.

Every Christian is a dependent part of the body – One of the most helpful pictures of the church is Paul's analogy of the church as a body. Though each member is different, we are all important for the effective functioning of the body. None of us can say we don't need others in the church. Since we have all been given different gifts, we need each other. Our gifts and placement in the body have been sovereignly directed by God (see 1 Corinthians 12:18).

Eagerly desire the gifts – Even though Paul tells us that not everyone will receive all the gifts, and we are to be satisfied with the gifts God gives us, we are still to eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, especially the higher gifts. Paul goes on to describe the higher gifts. In 1 Corinthians 14:1 he encourages everyone to seek the gift of prophecy to build up the church. Not everyone will be called to become an apostle, prophet, or teacher, nor will we all be gifted in miracles or administration. Of one thing we can be certain: God has gifts for us to use in building up the body of Christ.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Through Paul's entire discussion regarding the gifts, Christ is at the center. The Spirit never speaks in opposition to Christ; no one can come to Christ except by the Spirit. The gifts are given not for individual benefit but for the benefit of the church, the body of Christ. The gifts of God are given to us as He determines and are not given merely for our individual pleasure.

There is a greater purpose: the building up of Christ's body, the church. Though God has given various gifts to individual members, all believers are to pursue their spiritual gifts to strengthen the body of Christ. Jesus Christ died that a people might be reconciled to God.

Prior to the death of Christ, the presence of God was limited to the Most Holy Place, behind the curtain in the temple. At the death of Christ, that curtain was torn in two, symbolizing a wonderful change. After Christ's death we, the believing body of the church, are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Together we can encourage each other with the gifts God has bestowed upon us.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Hosea 2:18-20

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Hosea foresaw a day when God would betroth Himself to His people forever. This betrothal would be in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion. One day we, the church-- the bride of Christ-- will join Him at the wedding supper of the Lamb (see Revelation 19:7).

Questions for reflection:

- Who does the bride refer to in the Bible? (The bride is the church.)
- Who is the bridegroom? (Jesus is the bridegroom.)
- What else do you see in the Hosea passage that points forward to Christ? (Hosea talks about a new covenant, which will result in the end of violence and death-- a reference to the end of the curse from the Fall. That covenant is the new covenant in Christ's blood.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

WE NEED EACH OTHER

Supplies:

- 15 bandanas
- about 120 colored connecting blocks (various colors)
- one long table

The object of this lesson is to demonstrate the way the various parts of the body work together and need each other.

Ask the class for 12 volunteers. Create four teams of three. Give each team a pile of 30 colored blocks. Explain to the team that they are going to need to sort the blocks by color, connect the blocks of the same color, and take the connected blocks to your desk (or a spot you designate). The first team to finish wins.

Ask the teams if they are ready and then just before starting say, "Oh, I almost forgot." Pull out the bandanas and do the following:

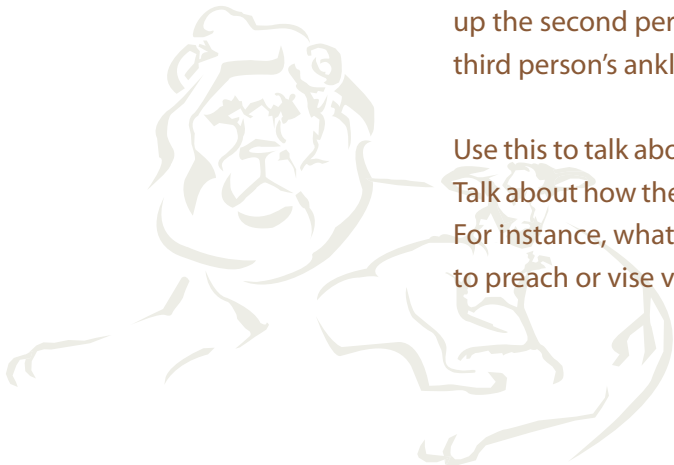
Team one: tie their hands together behind their backs

Team two: blindfold them all

Team three: tie their legs together at the ankles

Team four: tie up the first person's hands and ankles but leave his eyes free. Tie up the second person's hands and blindfold him but leave his legs free. Tie up the third person's ankles and blindfold him but leave his hands free.

Use this to talk about why it is important for all of us to work together in the church. Talk about how the different gifts God has given folks in your church, work together. For instance, what would it be like if everyone wanted to serve but no one wanted to preach or vice versa?



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COOPERATION RELAY

Supplies:

- 15 bandanas
- about 120 colored connecting blocks (various colors)
- one long table

Tie up two teams of three as follows. Tie the first person's hands and ankles but leave his eyes free. Tie up the second person's hands and blindfold him but leave his legs free. Tie up the third person's ankles and blindfold him but leave his hands free. Each team should have one person with eyes free, one person with legs free, and one person with arms free. Give them the blocks and see which team can complete the relay fastest.

Use this exercise to talk about how we need each other in the church. Talk about the two sinful responses found in Paul's description of the body in 1 Corinthians 12:14-22. The first group consists of members who, out of self-pity or jealousy of others' gifts, want to quit (see 1 Corinthians 12:14-16). The second group are members who out of pride think they are better than others and do not need them (see 1 Corinthians 12:21-22).

LIST THE GIFTS

Supplies:

white board

We can falsely assume that the gifts listed in the Bible are the only gifts and that other gifts don't exist or are less important. The lists in the Bible are not exhaustive. If a person is a gifted artist, for instance, they have a spiritual gift even though a gift of art is not specifically mentioned. The reality is that all gifts come from God (see James 1:17) and can be given and stirred by the Spirit to build up the church.

Make up a list of all the gifts you see in the lives of the people in your church that work to build up the church and keep it functioning. Then draw out the children and ask them what they think some of their gifts might be.

Finish by asking the class what all the gifts are designed to do. The answer, of course, is to promote the Gospel and advance the kingdom. The gifts are to build up the church so the church can grow.



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a grouping of people in the shape of a body. Make the shape of an arm out of two or three or more people. Do the same for each part of the body. Write the word Christ where the head should be. Color each person differently.



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

PART OF THE BODY SKIT

Divide the class into teams and have them pick one of the two following ideas and create a skit:

Skit #1: In this skit one sad person who is not as outwardly gifted as the others starts to feel sorry for themselves and confides in one of the group members that they are not going to come to church anymore because they are not as gifted. The person they told should tell the others in the group. They all gather round the sad person and ensure them of their importance. Pick one of the following areas of gifting to encourage them in.

Encouragement – those who are more outwardly gifted are encouraged to continue by their kind words and support.

Servanthood – Those who have more public gifting could never do it all without others behind the scenes serving in obscurity.

Administration – It takes a lot of hard work to make anything happen and this person always be counted on to organize and see that everything gets done well.

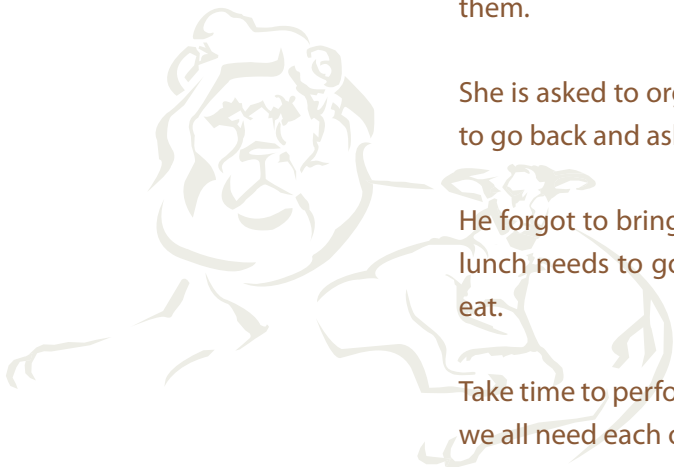
Skit #2: In scene one, one person thinks they are better than the others and they pridefully tell the group that they could do just fine on their own. In scene two they find themselves in need of the help of others but there is no one there to help them unless they repent of their former arrogance. Choose from the following scenarios:

He loses his wallet and wants others to help him find it but there is no one to help them.

She is asked to organize and lead a skit for the youth ministry and realizes she has to go back and ask others to participate because she can't do it herself.

He forgot to bring a lunch on the field trip. After saying he didn't need to share a lunch needs to go back to those who offered him food and ask for something to eat.

Take time to perform the skits for the class and talk about how in the body of Christ we all need each other.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Body of Christ – Paul uses the analogy of a body to describe the church. He brings the analogy to life in 1 Corinthians 12 but uses the term in other books as well. See Romans 7:4 and Ephesians 4:12. In Ephesians 1:22 Paul tells us that Christ is the head of the body, which is the church. Paul makes a similar declaration in Colossians 1:18.

