

# Bible Studies for Life: Used in God's Service

December 28, 2015

• *The **Bible Studies for Life** lesson for **January 10** focuses on 1 Corinthians 12:12-16, 21-22 and 1 Peter 4:9-11.*

How I would love to be able to sit down at a piano and begin to glide my fingers over the keys so a rapturous song moves throughout the room. To be able to hold a banjo and pluck a snappy tune making everyone tap their toes would be such a joy.

God expects believers to use their spiritual gifts.

**Don't consider yourself less useful than others in the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-16).**

How often I have felt like I couldn't do anything. The list of things I can't do seems endless. I can't sing. I can't do home repair. I can't fix the car. I can't grow a beautiful garden. When I focus on the list of things I can't do, it's easy to conclude I can't do anything.

When believers think they can't do anything for God, then the devil has them exactly where he wants them—doing nothing. After all, if we serve a mighty and holy God, then he deserves our best. If I can't offer the best, then why even try? It seems doing nothing would be better than producing something awful.

Paul gave an encouraging illustration showing how all believers work together with their various gifts. The human body was one of his most frequently used images to describe the church using it some 22 in his letters.

The human body consists of many parts with various functions. Each part is needed and necessary for the entire body to work the way God designed it. Just because a specific body part is not a “hand” or an “eye,” it doesn’t mean the body part is not part of body.

At church, just because someone can’t sing like the soloist on the platform or organize a fellowship gathering for the whole church to enjoy doesn’t mean that church member is less useful to the church—or not even useful at all. Everyone is needed for the entire church to carry out its God-given function.

The accumulation of the various gifts possessed by the members of a local church give that church its distinctiveness. Some churches are known for the music, others for the teaching of God’s word, and still others for their robust mission work. Each member contributes to the overall accomplishments of the church.

Other reasons may exist as why some might not think they can use their gifts in the church. Some may think their church doesn’t want them to participate due to their social class or ethnicity. Paul stressed believers are “all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). In this one body, there is distinction. Everyone in Christ is part of the body of the church universal and equally important and valuable.

**Don’t consider yourself more useful than others in the church (1 Corinthians 12:21-22).**

The use of spiritual gifts in the church should not be the cause for division, but frequently it is. With the variety of spiritual gifts distributed among the church, there is the temptation to think one’s own gift is superior to others. This thought is dangerous to the church. It is one way disunity can begin in a church and rob it of its full potential to serve the Lord and advance God’s kingdom.

The problem of thinking one has a superior gift in comparison with others causes friction. The problem is revealing. Christians should not compare themselves to other Christians but to Jesus himself. We are to be like Christ. Our goal is to have the fullness of Christ in us (Galatians 4:19).

When we compare ourselves to other people, we always seem to come out ahead of them. Our sins aren't quite as bad as the sins of others. Our strong points appear just a bit better than those of other people. Thus, when we compare our spiritual gifts with others, then ours come across just a bit more important holding a better air about them.

When we compare ourselves to Christ, then we see ourselves as we truly are. Our sins are seen as what they truly are—sins. Our strong points are viewed as originating from God, so he gets the credit for them even being in our lives. Our spiritual gifts are tools to be used to serve God.

Of course, the variety of spiritual gifts in the church serves to teach this distinction between unity and uniformity. The church lives in unity. We are one in Christ. The church does not seek uniformity when everyone is exactly alike. Christ doesn't save us in order to stamp out cookie-cutter Christians. He creates diversity among his followers, so that our unity in service will be even stronger.

### **Use your gifts to serve others and glorify God (1 Peter 4:9-11).**

God expects all Christians to use their spiritual gifts in serving one another. He gives the gifts with the expectation they will be used.

It's not just for the paid staff to use their gifts. It's not just for the other leaders of the church to use their gifts. Everyone must use their gifts and allow everyone else to use their gifts in the church, as well.