

Supernatural Body (1 Cor 12:12-31)

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- [0 : 0 0] But as you're sitting back down, please turn to our passage of this week as we finish off chapter 12. Very exciting thing. So I'll be reading from NIV, so feel free to follow up.
- Even so, the body is not made up of one part, but of many. How if the feet should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body?
- It would not for that reason stop being part of the body. For if the air should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.
- If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.
- If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you.
- [1 : 1 8] And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. And the parts that we think are less honorable, we treat with special honor.
- And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty. While our presentable parts need no special treatment, but God has put the body together, giving great honor to the parts that lack it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.
- If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it.
- And God has placed in the church, first of all, apostles. Second, prophets. Third, teachers. Then miracles. Then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.
- Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have the gift of healing?
- [2 : 2 6] Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts, and yet I will show you the most excellent way. Cool, and I'll invite William to come up to talk to us about it.
- Thank you, Fran, for leading us in prayer and emceeing. So yes, please, you've got her number on the screen before, or just find her on Messenger.
- If you have any questions, you can send direct. I do look at them. I do incorporate them into the sermons, and if we have time, we can even answer them live as well during our service. So don't be shy.
- This is a two-way conversation. And yeah, as Fran said, there are lots of interesting questions, perhaps puzzling questions that you might have. And I'd love to be able to help us through each of these.

So please, if you have your Bibles, please keep them to this passage. You will need them, the Bible. Your Bible, sorry. We do have some spares out the front. Just grab your head out there, grab it from the table.

[3 : 26] And yeah, my wife has also prepared some clipboards. If you're a bit more of a visual learner, okay, and you want to do some coloring while you're at it, please go ahead and grab one of those as well.

And yeah, I see a few of you out there using them. Well done. Yeah, let's help each other out here as we tackle these couple of important verses. Friends, we are carrying on right from where we left off last week.

All right? So if you weren't here last week, please, I encourage you to use the live stream, use the recording. And we are talking, as you know, to a church that is obsessed with spiritual gifts.

Gifts, certain gifts, right? The apostle Paul has to write to them, and there's division, right, because of some were valuing certain gifts over others.

All right? And remember how Paul started that letter. He still calls them, he still addresses the Corinthians as loved by a faithful God. So we don't forget that, right?

[4 : 26] This is Pastor Paul writing to a church that he started. He still loves and cares for immensely. All right? He reminds of, first and foremost, God did not spare Jesus.

He brought you out of bondage to sin. He has called you to be holy and blameless before him. So that's the context, right? Right? It's with our identity in Christ stated and affirmed that Paul, then using this letter, rebukes, counsels, pleads with them through the letter.

And it seems like from chapters 12 to 14, there's a special section where he is trying to help them understand and not be uninformed about spiritual things.

And you might have been wondering, why three chapters on spiritual things, right? Think about what are some of the questions that Paul's addressed so far in this letter. Some of you know, you've been journaling through. Okay? I won't ask the newish people, but I might call you out if you're sitting there and being too polite.

What are some problems? Okay? Concerning dot, dot, dot. Someone fill that blank for me? Anyone? Yes? Concerning food offered to idols. Well done. Chapter eight.

[5 : 34] Anything else? Concerning division. Okay, right? That's how Paul started the letter. Chloe's household. Tell me that you two, or you guys, I like this speaker more than this speaker.

That's right. Anything else? Concerning? Surely there was some discussion about relationships. Yes, marriage. Okay?

Dating. All kinds of things, right? Some of you paid attention more than others, it seems. Look, Paul knows, right, that there are lots of questions in the Corinthian church. And so, you might be surprised that he spends not much time, like half a chapter, couple of paragraphs, paragraphs on those gifts.

And then here we have three whole chapters on spiritual gifts. Why is that? Why is that? Right? You're spending a lot of time on these, this particular issue. Well, firstly, it seems like the Corinthians asked for it, right?

How did the chapter start? Now, concerning spiritual things or gifts. So, it seems like the Corinthians asked for it themselves. But more importantly, we heard in verse 25 of this chapter, there seems to be some kind of division in the body because of these particular spiritual gifts.

[6 : 46] Okay? There seems to be some kind of division. I wonder if you notice, though, Paul, he's a pastor, right? He can be direct. He can be indirect.

You notice how he frames it, so that there may be no division in the body. All right? This is actually one of Paul's more indirect ways of talking in this letter. All right?

Who remembers how direct Paul was, okay, with some other issues in this letter? You know, remember what he said? Okay? Expel the wicked person among you.

That was strong language, wasn't it? Or flee from sexual immorality. All right? No, maybe, maybe not. Very direct. But in these chapters, Paul's not raising his voice.

In the original language, actually, he doesn't even give a single command in this whole chapter until verse 31. Eagerly desire the greater gifts. And so, friends, our tone, when it comes to the topic of spiritual gifts, is not a raised voice, okay, but gentle persuasion.

[7 : 54] There are primary issues that we must die on a hill for. Right? Jesus died and rose again for sinners. The resurrection really did happen and changes everything.

Don't worship false idols. Don't worship any other God than the one true God. These are first-order primary issues, are they not? And then there are, I think, what we can call secondary issues.

Topics like spiritual gifts. When will the world end and what would it look like? Right? There are lots of different topics in the Bible, in our life, that I think we can categorize as secondary issues.

And I think spiritual gifts are one of them. They're important, right? Okay? It's important to take a view on baptism, for example. Who do we baptize? But they're not the gospel issues.

And so we talk about it in this way. Okay? We speak about it. We debate about it. We ask questions, but with grace and humility. So even if your jam is not spiritual gifts, you don't want to answer all these questions, you might have other things that you're concerned about.

[9 : 07] How we speak about it matters, friends. So when it comes to being spiritual, what's the opposite of division in the body? Well, verse 25 in your Bibles, if you read it, it continues, doesn't it, right?

There should be no division in the body, but that its part should have equal concern for each other. This is a very special word, actually. In the original language, you could translate concern as anxiety or worry.

So literally, Paul wants us to have the same anxiousness for one another. Okay? That same anxiety about whether you feel, is my delivery going to arrive on time?

Or whether he or she is going to text back and say yes. That anxiety or whether your boss will approve your request or give you a pay rise. That anxiousness is what we should have for each other.

That is the same attitude that Paul wants us to grow into as PCBC English. And so to do this, let's track back, all right? So we start in the middle of the passage. Let's track right back to verse 12.

[10 : 16] And I think my first point is that from verse 12 to 20, we see Paul tells us that the church is one body with many essential members in Christ.

Let me read verse 12 to you again just so you can hear it and follow along. Verse 12 says, Paul is not doing anything rocket science-y here.

He's just using a very simple, very universal metaphor. Okay? So he's using a word picture. He's saying a human body, you can look at your own, has different parts.

Okay? Admire them a little bit. And Paul is saying just like your human body, all right, it takes all these little parts to form one body. And so it is with Christ.

There's no better picture on earth to express what we heard last week. Unity, yes, but in diversity. That's what the church ought to be. And it's because the body has different parts that you can even have one body, right?

[11 : 26] To be one is only possible because of how we're many. There is no unity without diversity and it's exactly the same when it comes to the spiritual body of Christ, the church.

Paul goes on, verse 13, he says, for we were all baptized by one spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. Right? He's stating the same metaphor slightly differently. Friends, how do we know that the many among us have become one?

Paul says it's because we share the same Holy Spirit. Paul uses this vivid image of being plunged into the waters of baptism. Right? And describes the moment you and I, the moment each of us lock in our loyalty to the King Jesus, we are, spiritually, we've been immersed into the same spirit.

Whether you are Jew or Greek, Asian or European, employed or unemployed, rich or poor, young or old, all in, together. And some of you have known this experience.

[12 : 43] You know that this is true, right? Sometimes you can meet a complete stranger, maybe on a bus, maybe at work and it's awkward and scary. But then you meet a stranger who's also a Christian, a brother or sister in the Lord.

And you know what? Within the first few minutes you feel like long lost friends, don't you? Maybe in a few days you even feel like family. And even if you never see each other again in this lifetime, when the risen Lord Jesus returns with his everlasting kingdom, we're united forever.

Right? That is what can happen when we realize we share the same body, that we are with each other in one spirit. Look, you can feel as one in a football stadium for a few minutes, okay?

Some of you were there last night, okay? Mexican Way comes through, yeah, we're one, right? But then the game has to end and we have to go home. Or maybe you are in a music group, school choir, orchestra.

Maybe you're in a campus group, okay? I remember signing up when I was at Auckland Uni, signing up for the dessert club. I think I signed up because the giveaway was dessert and then I never attended any meetings.

[14 : 00] Look, you can be in a group, right, for a couple of years, but eventually you have to leave. Eventually others leave and then it's just you. But only in Jesus Christ can many become one forever.

A spirit-filled body that is made up not just of people that look the same or think the same, a spirit-filled body made up of people of every tongue, tribe, nation, people, worshipping the Lamb who was slain, right?

That's a picture from the book of Revelation, chapter 7, verse 9. All glorifying God the Father. Now that is a picture worth cheering for. And yet, friends, while many become one body in Christ, the one remains many.

Alright? Listen again to verse 15. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, because I am not an ear, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body.

Okay, guys, this is where you do not read the Bible literally, okay? Put aside the logical impossibility, okay, of a talking foot for a moment. You are getting the point though, don't you? This is a metaphor.

[15 : 24] Every part of the human body matters, okay? That is what we are voicing out here. In fact, without being our distinct part, the rest of the body can't work. Can it?

Every person here needs hands and feet, arms and legs, eyes and ears, all kinds of internal organs that do irreplaceable things. I am not a doctor, I do not know. But, actually, I do know one thing, I read this recently, even the appendix.

Who has an appendix? Okay, who got it taken out? Okay, don't have to fess up, it is okay. Alright, so apparently, okay, there is lots of arguments about this, but recently, alright, usually we assume that appendix has no function, right, just stuck there, alright, you just take an operation of it, soar.

Apparently scientists have now discovered that it plays a crucial role. What's the role? It kind of recolonizes our gut after, you know, if you have food poisoning or something, it puts in all the good bacteria back in, right?

Yeah, it's like a reservoir of all the goodness that you need in you. Who knew, right? Just sticking out there, alright, appendix, it's in the word, okay, it seems like it's out in the sight.

[16 : 31] You may feel like an appendix here, that PCBC, I don't know, or a little finger or a toenail, but the Bible says the body of Christ needs you to be truly part of this body.

Many become one in Jesus, but in Jesus, the one remains many. And Paul presses home this idea, right? Verse 17, look in your Bibles. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be?

And if the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? Okay? Paul must have watched Toy Story, he must have maybe looked at those pictures of Mr. Potato Head and his wife.

Who has a Mr. Potato Head toy? Fess up? No one, no one's willing. Actually, I couldn't even find it. I was like, where do I buy one of these? Because I need to illustrate my sermon, but look, it doesn't matter.

Mr. Potato Head, okay? This little toy, okay? The trick is, this toy, you can move the body parts around, okay? So the eyes can kind of go anywhere on the potato, the ears can go anywhere on the potato.

[17 : 36] It would look grotesque if this toy had four eyes and no mouth, right? Okay? Just imagine that picture. Or three ears and no nose. A church with just some gifts and not others has an image problem and it has a function problem, spiritually speaking, okay?

Look, if we only had musicians here at PCBC, we have amazing musicians, amen? Yeah? If we only had musicians, though, we would be a freak show, okay?

A creative one, yes, okay? One that can make nice music, but still a freak show according to the Bible. Think about it, right? If everyone was on stage worship leading, right? And nobody washed cups, okay?

We'd not be functioning, right? Okay? If everyone was preaching up here, but no one could run sound, thank you for every part of the body, all right?

If we are imbalanced, if we just have one or two different parts or members, we'd be like, I don't know, an orchestra. Beautiful, imagine an orchestra, lots of different instruments, imagine that there were only bassoons in this orchestra, right?

[18 : 49] Imbalanced, distorted, or a World Cup squad, okay, with just strikers, okay? All right? School hot of goals, both ends maybe, but nothing else otherwise. We need the different gifts here in the body of Christ.

You and I, PCBC, we will only thrive when our different gifts are identified, are celebrated, and valued. Are trusted, are released. Let me say this again, like a human body, God has designed the body of Christ to need every member.

As it is, verse 20, there are many parts, but one body. As a Chinese heritage church, that's how we started.

Some immigrants from Hong Kong decided let's plant a church, all right? Partner with PBC Next Door, okay? Share the same building spaces, eventually we get our own spot. As a Chinese heritage church, though, we get a unique window into the neediness that we have of each other.

All right? I've just been at all three services that we run, so I've got a little reminder of this. We're PCBC English. We're like the baby brother, okay?

[20 : 00] We might feel like the little toe sometimes, especially if you go into a meeting and everyone speaks kongdongwa, right? Too difficult to speak up in those situations. Maybe you might feel a bit looked down on, right?

They're all older and more wiser. questioned by your friends and other churches, even, perhaps. Why don't you join us, okay? Forget those problems. Yet, our church is special because here, God reminds us that we are a body.

We're very different parts that need each other, right? Please don't dismiss your gift to PCBC English, right? You are a gift to this fellowship here at Pakaranga Chinese Baptist Church.

Yes, you and you and you, right? You and I, we can reach friends and family and neighbours with the good news of Jesus in ways that our aunties and uncles could never dream of, right?

Because they're a little bit too fresh off the boat or plane. Their language isn't good enough. They speak with an accent, perhaps. It's true. We can connect with the next generation that live here in Aotearoa in ways that our parents would so struggle because they're trying to work out their own identity and place here in this society.

[21 : 17] They're too busy, right, trying to work hard and find a place. But we have the freedom to reach friends and family, students, classmates for Jesus. And in Christ, actually, because we are a cross-cultural church, we do it all the time, we can connect with certain kinds of people, particularly people who live between cultures, and there are many of them here in New Zealand, right?

We can do this in a way that maybe your white bread church cannot seem to do as well, okay? Monocultural churches are not as good at reaching out to people between cultures.

And so we thank God. Please, see each other and say thank God for PCBC English. You are essential to the body of Christ. You're the mission of our wider church family.

This is the attitude I think Paul wants us to realize and remember when it comes to spiritual gifts, when it comes to church. And it's because the church is one body with many essential members that we believe this.

But don't forget too, right? PCBC English, you are essential, but don't forget that actually the rest of the church is essential too. Think about it.

[22 : 33] Think about it. We'll get into this a bit later, but for now, let's look at the second point. The church actually should honor the weaker and less visible parts of Christ's body.

I think this is what Paul continues to talk about. He's still using the analogy, but let me read verse 21 onwards and you can refresh yourselves. The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you.

The head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. And verse 23, and the parts that we think are less honorable, we must treat with special honor.

Paul is expressing this point, right? The church should honor those that we can't see or seem weaker by bringing back the talking body part, right? You can't say to someone else, I don't need you.

It's as ludicrous as an eye saying, I have what it takes, I don't need the ear. Just as it's absurd for that to happen, right? My eye to just look down on my hand and say that I don't need you.

[23 : 37] Christians, we should not look down on believers, brothers and sisters who seem lower than us. This metaphor should humble us. Friends, we dare not look at our aunties and uncles and say, man, you struggle.

Look at your English. We can't say, I don't need you. They are indispensable. Notice verse 23, 24. Paul talks and uses the analogy of covering up certain body parts.

So here, actually, he's hinting at it. I think he's talking about sexual organs. He's saying that, look, you wear underwear, you cover up in a bathing suit, not because what you're covering up is useless, but actually because they're valuable and worth protecting, right?

And so he says, look, even if something looks hidden, out of place, it is so important. So it is with the body of Christ.

Praise God, for example, that he uses brave women and men to share the gospel, to strengthen his church in some of the most dangerous places in the world, right? We met one such person last week, didn't we?

[24 : 47] Their gospel impact, it may never end up on Instagram. But for the sake of the gospel, we honor them and we meet them. We support the less visible body parts of ours.

What other less visible body parts of PCBC, of God's church, can you think of that are worth supporting? Let's pray and give to them.

Let's welcome them. Let's send them out. Let's love and serve, especially the invisible but essential parts of Christ's body here. I know I can be guilty of this, right?

It's just the people that walk through the doors that I say hi to, that I'll give a call. But actually, what about those who just hover on live stream? Maybe they sit in the car because it's too hard to walk in.

Maybe they will text and say, yeah, it's too hard for me right now. Do you know anyone like that? How could you reach out to them, the body of Christ too? And look, another way I keep my pride in check is that I remind myself actually what kind of body part I am.

[25 : 54] In our kind of church, there's a little bit of honor shame. You value the people who have titles and positions. When I visit the other service, they're like, oh, Pastor William, Pastor William. Okay.

Here's one way to keep my pride in check. Right? Yes, I may be an ordained minister, but I try and tell myself what body part I am when I prepare a sermon.

Okay? I'm not the head. Jesus is the head. I'm not even the ear, right? My ears don't work very well. My kids can attest to this from time to time. For much of the week, friends, I have been your stomach.

Yes, your stomach. Chewing the fat, right, on this passage. Digesting and marinating God's word, right? Breaking down the hard parts, unlocking the nutrients so that I can share it to you in a contextualized, digestible form, and sharing it with the other members of the body of Christ in different ways.

Okay? This is kind of squelchy work, you know, sometimes uncomfortable, you know, like when you get a stomach pain. Sometimes it produces gas. Okay? All right, I'm not going to push this analogy too far because then you won't eat your dinner.

[27 : 04] Look, I'm the stomach here. Nice to meet you. Friends, sadly, our pride means that often we attach too much importance on certain body parts of this church.

Oh, that's the preacher. Oh, that's the rock star worship leader with nice clothes. Oh, and then, but then we flip around and we get really passive aggressive. Oh, yeah, I'm washing cups again.

How about you? Please remember, the hidden parts of this church are sometimes the most crucial and irreplaceable.

Look, actually, you can survive without a hand, right? Okay? But you can't survive without a liver. If I die, if the Lord calls me home, look, another pastor can take over.

But a whole unreached people group needs friends like the one we met for them to stay alive in Christ. And there are some people here that, honestly, if you stop coming, this church would be far poorer than if I stop coming.

[28 : 08] Look, as one author put it this way, heads, right, they might think they're more important than feet, but without feet, heads would roll, right? Okay, I think he's got the gift of puns as well, but let's put aside, please, any sense, all right, any attitude in you of I am better than you, okay, that is opposite to the gospel.

If the weakest member of our church is struggling, please, let us feel their suffering. I'm preaching to myself here, right? Even the youngest person in our church on the flip side can be honored and then we get the honor and joy too.

That's what this passage says, right? Verse 26, if one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

And so, let me share one suggestion, right? Who are some of the invisible yet essential people? Friends, how easy it is to ignore little people, children, or younger people, our teens and high schoolers.

Yes, adults, their lives might seem trivial in light of your adult life, right? Homework and studying and friendship issues and dramas, and then you're earning your big bucks and getting a mortgage.

[29 : 27] Come on. They are essential to our family, are they not? Among them are some of our future servants and leaders and preachers and worship leaders and deacons and other leaders.

They are less visible right now, yes, yet they are essential. So, how can we connect with them? Get to know them. Do what we just did that friend introduced us to. You are important.

You are our future. And yet, friends, so are our Cantonese-speaking brothers and sisters, right? Yes, they're very invisible, okay, because we don't see them.

They're not here in the English service most of the time. But just because you don't see them every Sunday does not mean that they are unimportant. So, don't look down on them.

Try not to ignore them. Be anxious about them. Pray for them. You could start by picking up a Chinese bulletin. I know, yes, there's Chinese on it.

[30 : 25] Look, there's English too, by the way, so don't be scared. Have a look. There are some brothers and sisters here that might need our prayer and help. Yes, I know, this is not great design, but it's good.

It tells us what we need to know about our body, the rest of our body. And yes, maybe the way they sing and worship, the songs they pick might seem a bit dated. Maybe it feels more like Yahoo rather than Apple or Google, right?

But do you know how to paint the roof? Can you cook amazing food for 50 people for a whole week at youth camp? Can you share the gospel with a dying relative in Cantonese, their heart language?

Didn't think so. So don't dismiss their gifts. Let's love them. Just be anxious for them. Maybe we can start here or ask a bilingual brother or sister to introduce you to some of them.

Look at friends, if we truly understood the body of Christ this way, maybe our small groups would feel less like gated communities and more like rest stops that welcome everyone.

[31 : 28] Maybe this would be a home, a true home, where every visitor is valued, every member is valued, whether they are struggling or rejoicing. And in case you missed it, verse 27, Paul states the main point.

Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it. It's important. You'd think he'd end there, right? But actually Paul has one final point for us today, right?

And this is kind of the spicy bit. Some people might want to pay attention. It is that the church should be zealous for the greater grace gifts among the body of Christ. So verse 27 to 31, we hear, right, that the church, nevertheless, should still be zealous for the greater grace gifts among the body of Christ.

Paul has already been very clear. No one part of this church can survive without the other members of the body. Everyone, every one of you has something to offer.

That's how Paul says God designed the church. And this is how Paul speaks in verse 29 and 30, right? Have a listen again. Our apostles, our prophets, are all teachers?

[32 : 38] Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Okay, these are rhetorical questions. The expected answer is no, that's right.

But, Paul knows, and God knows, that sometimes among churches we can drift towards seeing certain spiritual gifts as the test of true spirituality. Maybe you're here, you're more of a Bible nerd, alright?

And then, so you might look at this list and go, teachers, that's the A-grade gift, right? Gifts of healing, helps, other stuff, now, okay?

Or maybe you come from maybe a more Pentecostal or charismatic background. Welcome. Maybe you're here and maybe you think tongue speaking, now that is what will set this place on fire.

Paul's point, first and foremost, is that no gift is common to everyone. That's what makes our body, again, so special. Again, we hear this, we need each other. That's what verse 29 to 30 says.

[33 : 39] It's not just a list of gifts. It's saying, no, not everyone has these gifts, we need each other. But, Paul does surprise us, doesn't he, right? Look at verse 31 onwards. When he lists the gifts, he actually does something that's not very equal or democratic, actually, right?

Because he actually ranks a few of them. Did you notice when I read it? Okay? Further back, and in the church, verse 28, God has appointed first of all, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers.

Four, no, he doesn't say four, does he, right? The rest of the gifts are unranked, okay? Political parties are now choosing their candidates for the election and, you know, if you're up there, right, really important, you get number one, Chris Hipkins, I'm sure, number two, Chris Hipkins' friend, number three, Chris Hipkins, I don't know politics, well, obviously, imagine that if everyone else in that party had no ranking, what does that say about them?

They're less important, right? This is what's happening here. Paul is, yes, saying that some gifts are more valuable than others, and the value is in how it builds up the whole church.

We'll see this in future chapters, right, in the next two chapters, but for now, please reflect on the fact that actually, this is true in the human body too, is it not? Yes, every part of the human body is valuable and equally part of the body and yet, at another level, yes, let's be zealous, right, this is the only command, eagerly desire the greater gifts.

[35 : 12] Every gift matters in this church and yet, please, let's pursue the better gifts, the ones that proclaim the gospel and speak God's word into people's lives and if you've been following Paul's thoughts here in 1 Corinthians, time and time again, he reflects on his own identity as an apostle, right, so in this letter, he's talked about being an apostle a lot.

Sometimes he says he and the other apostles are last, right, 1 Corinthians 4, verse 9, right, he says, aren't we apostles like tributes to the Hunger Games episode, doomed to die, right, paraded at the back?

Other times, Paul says, am I not an apostle? Don't I have a right to eat or drink or take things? That's 1 Corinthians 9 and then he brings up this word again, right, here, what does he say?

First of all, God has appointed apostles. So I think the spiritual gift, apostleship, I think by putting this here, I take that Paul is indirectly saying that he and others set apart by God do have a higher ranking, as it were.

They do have the right to speak into our lives, right, as brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul and Barnabas, I read Acts 14 again this morning. They were called apostles. They were set apart to share the gospel.

[36 : 27] They were called as sent ones. That's what the word apostle means, literally, in the original language. And they are worth putting at the top of the list, amen? Right. Again, I'll go back to our sister we met last week.

So apparently her church nicknames her Siumai, so we can use that if you like. Or what about people like Barry who we are called to be a pastor in the next few weeks? Or like Pastor Albert.

Over 30 years he's been faithfully doing apostle work, right, sharing the gospel, opening up God's word. And then by listing prophecy second, right, in verse 28, I think Paul is preparing us to want this gift eagerly, even especially, right, verse 14, chapter 14, verse 1, especially desire prophecy.

So here's the question, what is prophecy? All right, we're going to spend more time on this, right, but for now, think of this gift with a small letter P, okay, so prophecy with a small P, rather than a capital P prophecy like what we see in the Old Testament prophets.

Okay, so the first one, prophecy, what Paul's talking about, I think this is more like, this is what I'm sensing while the big P prophecy is thus says the Lord, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot.

[37 : 46] There is a difference, I think. And verse 28 again, look, by noting the more miraculous gifts like miracles and healings, by giving them no listing, no ranking, I think Paul is saying that they all belong together, right?

Not everyone has them, but they all play a function. Look, a heart to help a Christian, okay, the gift of helps, right? It is just as miraculous, friends, as a gift for supernatural healing.

If you have a mind that organized and planned things well, right, you've got the gift of administration or governance, that is just as spectacular as one that brings about miraculous works.

And look, Christians, we can differ regarding how much of some of these gifts still occur and how often and what it looks like. but remember that even if you only ever see some of these gifts and not others, it doesn't mean that God isn't using some of these gifts outside of our church in other contexts.

I think particularly with the miraculous ones, I think there are places in the world, right, where there's no Bible, where someone will never meet a Christian, okay, like in East Asia or in the Middle East and God, don't put them in a box, he can and he does reach out supernaturally, show miraculous things, use gifts that are spiritually powerful so that people will come to say Jesus is Lord.

[39 : 17] That's the main thing. So let's not put God in a box, okay, he grants us different gifts as part of the body of Christ. But notice what gift is listed last of all here.

What does it say here? Anyone name it for me? Verse 28, what is the last gift that's listed? The gift of tongues, right? I think what's going on here, right, is that Paul is deliberately saying this, right, to a Corinthian church that maybe we're overemphasizing it a bit, this one.

Let's just dial it down a notch, please. Okay, let us explain how to use this more wisely. We'll speak on tongues a little bit more in chapters 13 and 14.

Let me give a quick summary though, with more to come. The modern view today, and this is a view that really started in the late 19th century, about 100 or so years old, is that tongues here, people think, describe an angelic language, okay?

There's a technical term, glossolalia, from the Greek, and perhaps you might have heard it, syllables that sound like certain syllables over and over again. It's a language between you and God, something private.

[40 : 33] That could be what tongues says. However, I personally take the older view that to speak in tongues, I think, is Paul here saying, some kind of supernatural ability to speak real, known languages.

And we can talk about this more, I could be wrong. I think though, from what I've seen in the Bible, I think what he's describing is more closer to what we see, actually in Acts 2, right?

What happens at Pentecost? Jews from all over the diaspora, they suddenly understand each other in known languages, right? And that's how the gospel gets kick-started among the nations.

I think it's a kind of gift that we see in certain missionaries, right? They have to pick up a local language really fast, effectively. I see this kind of tongue speaking as a gift that Christians like the Apostle Paul had, right?

Remember when he was captured in prison, he could speak in Hebrew and then in Greek? Some of you might have this gift. Who here is trilingual or bilingual, right?

[41 : 36] But whether you think this gift helps you to keep up your Duolingo streak or whether you feel like it will help you intimately commune with the Holy Spirit. Let's not forget Paul's primary point.

Not everyone has this gift. And that with or without it, you are just as essential a member of this body of Christ here at PCBC. So yes, friends, we will be zealous for the greater grace gifts like apostles and prophets and teachers.

And yet, we value everyone here. We must. So let's seek our opportunities to train each other in some of these greater grace gifts. And at the same time, let's remember, we all use our gifts in service of this body of Christ.

We are one yet many. We are many yet one. Let's not be sidetracked and divided from that beautiful picture for God's glory. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your living word.

forgive us when we distort your beautiful body through division, through pride. Help us by your Holy Spirit to glorify the Father in one voice together as many but one, one but many.

[42 : 56] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen.