

New Creation

Weekly Devotion #3

Below is a short devotion based on the Week 3 Devotion questions in your Renew: Session 4 handout. You'll get the most out of this devotion if you answer the questions yourself first. The goal is not for you to have the exact same response, but to understand the correct meaning of the Biblical text and then apply it personally in a way that uniquely helps you grow in your knowledge, love, and worship of God.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; (5) and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; (6) and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. (7) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (8) For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, (10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (11) All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

During our previous Renew class, we focused on what it means to be a "new creation" in Christ. And part of what we discovered is that being a new creation isn't a solo activity - it's a group project. God sent His Son to forgive our sins and Jesus sent His Spirit to transform us so *that* you and I could be brought together into a new humanity called the church. At the very least, this means that our individual growth is absolutely dependent on our corporate connection to other followers of Jesus. **We cannot be the new creations God called us to be if we cut ourselves off from the community he called us into.**

But God doesn't just call us to "hang out" with other Christians. He calls us to serve each other. Over and over throughout this passage in 1 Corinthians 12, we're told that **the Holy Spirit gives powerful gifts to each and every follower of Jesus**. Why? Verse 7 tells us: "for the common good." In other words, God designed us to need each other. By myself, I don't have all the resources I need to grow. By yourself, you don't have all the resources you need to grow. But, together, we can benefit each other through the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit. Of course, that naturally leads to an often-asked question: how do I know which gift(s) the Spirit has given me? A great way to start figuring this out is by **reading the lists of spiritual gifts given to us in Scripture**, like the one here in 1 Corinthians 12 and others in Romans 12 and 1 Peter 4. These lists are not meant to be exhaustive, but they give us a really great summary of the kinds of gifts that God gives to his children. After browsing through those lists, **pray** that the Holy Spirit would help you to discover which one(s) he's given you. Remember, he's the one "who apportions...as he wills." Although it's okay to desire specific spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:1), none of us ultimately get to choose which gift we receive. We have to trust God's wisdom. Your gift may be something that you've always naturally been good at, something you've never considered a personal talent, or even something completely impossible by human means alone (like prophecy or healing). So, as you pray and seek God's guidance, **be on the lookout for areas of need within the church** where you can use your current strengths and skills, but also don't be surprised if God draws you towards an area that's somewhat out of your comfort zone. God often does this in order to display that the gift and therefore the glory all belong to him! Finally, once you think you've discovered your gift, **seek counsel from your brothers and sisters in Christ and look for opportunities to practice it**. You may discover that what you thought was your gift, really isn't. Or you may discover that the Spirit really is empowering you in this area, but, as Paul told Timothy, you need to **"fan it into flame"**: work at it and develop it in order to use it most effectively for the good of the church and the glory of God (2 Timothy 1:6).

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, you have eternally existed in loving relationship with your Son and Spirit and so it only makes sense that you would design us to exist in loving relationship as well. We praise you for sending your Son and Spirit, not just to reconcile us to yourself, but to reconcile us to each other in the community of the church. Forgive us for the times that we have thought and spoke too lowly of the bride of Christ. And forgive us for the times we have neglected using our gifts to serve the church and allowing others to use their gifts to serve us. Show us the gifts you've given us. Show us the needs we can meet. Give us courage and boldness and faith to put them into practice. Above all, fill us with a love that desires to serve our brothers and sisters to see them grow into the new creations you made them to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.