

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (October 30, 2022)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

Each Sunday for the past two months we have been asking the question “Why? Why Church?” Do we really need the church to know about God, to worship God, to pray, to serve, to love? Aren’t there better, or at least equally effective, ways to do all of the above on our own terms, when, where, and how we want? Why Church? What has been stated repeatedly these seven weeks is that the Church was not founded by a bunch of eager, starry-eyed, religious fanatics. The origin of the Church is supernatural. The Church was established, chartered, initiated, by God Himself. When God set the Church in motion His priorities were not walls, windows, carpets, and lighting. His priority, then and now, has always been people, real people, including you and me. We are God’s priority, God’s Church. In our passage from the Bible this morning it is clear that each of us, without exception, has been blessed and gifted by God so that we can be a blessing and gift to others. Every Christian, every single Christian, has a God-given mission (a place to serve others) in their community, and a God-given ministry (a place to serve others) inside their church. We need the Church to discover and engage, in the right ways and for the right reasons, the passions and abilities given to us by God. If we reject the Church even our best intentions and efforts get messed up.

This Sunday is also the first of four Stewardship Sundays. As we ask “Why?” we also ask “How?” How can we best steward (take care) of God’s Church here at Grace. These are Big Questions, beautiful questions, challenging questions, questions that lead us closer to God and to each other.

Why Church? We Serve Best Together (1 Cor 12:5-31 selected)

^{12:5} 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.

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many ...

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.” (Love. Chapter 13)

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What, or who, is the source of all gifts and abilities?
2. What gifts are mentioned in this passage?
3. Reading the entire passage (verses 5-31) what does it say about how the various parts of the body relate to each other?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. What does it mean that our gifts are given to us for “the common good”? (Verse 7)
5. Which gift or gifts are most important?
6. What does, “the members of the body, though many, are one” mean? (Verse 12) Why is this important for the Church?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. What gift(s) and abilities has God given you? How did you discover you had your gifts and abilities? If you do not know what God-given gifts you have how can you find out?
8. Of all of the gifts listed which one would you most want to have and why?
9. How are you currently engaging your God-given gifts and abilities to benefit others in the body of Christ (the Church)?
10. What steps will you take in the next four weeks the offer, or more fully engage, your gifts in the life of the Church?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is simply talking to God and hearing Him talk to you. Pray for a better understanding of the gifts God has given you. Pray for the desire and courage to offer your God-given gifts to the Church. Pray to be active and engaged in serving others. God will help you. God loves you.