



The Bible uses the metaphor of the human body to describe Christian community. Within this, the Christian life is one where we are invited into an interdependent community to serve others and allow them to support us. This way of living is a beautiful interplay of blessing others with what God has given us, and exercising humility to allow others to bless you.

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## DISCUSSION #1: COMMUNAL LIVING

The Bible uses the metaphor of the human body to describe Christian community. Within this, the Christian life is one where we are invited into an interdependent community to serve others and allow them to support us. This way of living is a beautiful interplay of blessing others with what God has given us, and exercising humility to allow others to bless you.

In this discussion we will explore how the Christian life is communal where we live with and in support of one another.

### MY STORY | Starting Place

Imagine you've been invited to a church potluck where you do not know a single soul. The host asks you to introduce yourself and talk about what God has been teaching you lately. What would you say to this group of faith-friendly strangers?

### DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship... (Acts 2:42a)*

Why do you think Luke combines Bible study and relationships here? Why is it important to have both? What does one without the other look like?

*[They devoted themselves to] the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42b)*

*In the early church, the "breaking of bread" combined communion with a potluck. And then they'd pray together.*

What is sacred about eating together as Christians?

What happens in corporate prayer that usually does not happen when an individual prays?

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

Describe a time when you experienced a clearly-supernatural encounter with God. How did that experience impact your faith?

### **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

*All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)*

How do these characteristics of a healthy church express themselves in today's culture?

How can a person take steps toward living this interdependently?

### **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Organize a potluck with believers where each person brings a dish that reflects his or her ethnic origins. Once the eating begins, ask each person to talk about what God has been teaching him or her lately.

## DISCUSSION #2: SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Bible uses the metaphor of the human body to describe Christian community. Within this, the Christian life is one where we are invited into an interdependent community to serve others and allow them to support us. This way of living is a beautiful interplay of blessing others with what God has given us, and exercising humility to allow others to bless you.

In this discussion we will see how God equips his “body” with various gifts for us to share freely with others in order to collectively build one another up.

### **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What’s the most useful gift you’ve ever been given?

### **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. All these [spiritual gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11)*

Read the lists of spiritual gifts in these passages (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 27-30).

Which of these do you think you have? Which one are you sure the Holy Spirit DID NOT give to you? Have you ever been jealous of the spiritual gift God had given to someone else? How does the absence of a spiritual gift in your life make you dependent upon other believers?

According to Paul, what is the purpose of spiritual gifts? Who makes the decisions related to that purpose?

How have you seen the Holy Spirit use your spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ?

### **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 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. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts.*

*And I will show you a still more excellent way. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 31).*

This list of spiritual gifts precedes the famous “Love” chapter in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13. “Love” is the more “excellent way” – because love-driven spiritual gifts are a powerful force in God’s Kingdom.

Why do you think Paul put these particular roles and gifts in this order?

Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions, the answers for all of which are “No!” Why is it important to the health of the body of Christ that there’s a mixture of gifts in each congregation?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Identify your spiritual gift. Find the best way in our church to put that gift into action. Look for ways to “fan into flame” the gifts you’ve been given so you can get even better in your gift-based Kingdom assignments.

# DISCUSSION #3: MOVING TOWARD OTHERS

The Bible uses the metaphor of the human body to describe Christian community. Within this, the Christian life is one where we are invited into an interdependent community to serve others and allow them to support us. This way of living is a beautiful interplay of blessing others with what God has given us, and exercising humility to allow others to bless you.

In this discussion we will see how, as the follower of Christ grows spiritually, he/she moves away from selfish living and toward sharing his/her gifts to identify areas of need and serve others toward spiritual wholeness.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What's the best deal you ever negotiated? Did everyone involved get what they wanted? Tell us what happened.

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves (Philippians 2:3).*

How is selfishness different from looking out for your own interests?  
When does self-interest become unhealthy?

We know in our hearts that no one is more important than anyone else. Everyone has equal value as a human being in the eyes of God.

What does it mean, practically speaking, to count someone as more significant than you? What would you have to give up in order to make this happen?  
In what environment is this most difficult for you?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

React to the following quote: "The person who consistently puts his or her interests above others is rightly called selfish. The person who consistently sacrifices his or her interests to those of others eventually becomes an emotional martyr who expects a payback (that rarely comes)."

In Philippians 2:4, Paul assumes that you will be looking out for your own interests.

Where does he want you to place your interests on the "plane of significance" in relation to the interest of others?

What does it look like for either self-interest or others-interest to be overdone and unhealthy?

What does this look like when seeking out win-win solutions or a plan of action with others?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Plan an event with a group of people. The goal is for each person to get something out of the experience that is important to him or her (including yourself). Start by polling each person in the group about what he or she would like to see happen—and then put together a plan that reflects all of those interests.

# DISCUSSION #4: GIVING VS. RECEIVING

The Bible uses the metaphor of the human body to describe Christian community. Within this, the Christian life is one where we are invited into an interdependent community to serve others and allow them to support us. This way of living is a beautiful interplay of blessing others with what God has given us, and exercising humility to allow others to bless you.

This discussion focuses on how, in God's Kingdom, it is better to give and serve than to expect to receive.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

What's easier for you: to give or to receive? Explain.

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

*Now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. (Acts 20:32-34)*

How does the role you play in life, directly or indirectly, result in the flourishing of others?

What do those efforts cost you? In what ways is all that spent-energy worth it?

What fruit do you consistently see from the energy you spend in working with others?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

*In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)*

Talk about the ways you are blessed, on a weekly basis, by the work and giving of others.

As satisfying as it may be to receive grace and gifts from others, why is it even more rewarding to contribute to the well-being of others, expecting nothing in return?

Give a few examples from your own life.

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Determine to bless someone (in deep need) anonymously this week.