

- ***I Corinthians 12:14-31*** I spend some time this past week getting my Google degree in vestigial organs. Vestigial organs are most commonly defined as organs that seem to serve no purpose within the body. The most common example given for a vestigial organ is the appendix. Did you know that back in 1890, there were believed to be at least 180 vestigial parts of the human anatomy? Yes, scientist believed that 180 parts of your body were completely useless because evolution had made them defunct and void of any use. Today, however, the number of vestigial organs has dropped all the way down to ZERO. That's right! Scientist have discovered that all of these pieces of our body serve a function in some way or the other. Even the appendix has come to be known as a useful part of our anatomy in that it is a store house for good bacteria in our body. Once, again, God is shown to be the master craftsman.
- I share this with you because, just as there are no vestigial in our human body, there are not vestigial Christians within the Lord's Body as a whole and as individual churches. Our text of consideration in **I Corinthians 12:13-41**, speaks about the fact that there are not useless members of Christ's Body. It is commonly understood that the church in Corinth was greatly blessed with miraculous spiritual gifts of all kinds. Christians there had the ability to speak in tongues, prophesy, and come into special knowledge. Sadly, these great abilities, which were to be used for the betterment of the Gospel and the Kingdom, had become a point of contention. Many were seeking to elevate their gifts over those of other people, and some use their gifts as badge of honor while looking down at those who might not have had any gifts.
- Paul wasn't going to put up with that type of ridiculous attitude and then rebuked them for their poor attitudes. Here in our text, Paul makes the point abundantly clear that all members are good and necessary within the body of Christ. As we take this opportunity to consider this year's focus on serving the Kingdom, I'd like for us to talk about finding our place to serve. There are no vestigial organs in Christ Body and we all have a part that we can serve in...we just have to find that place. Let's begin with a very important point Paul makes in **v.31**.

I. There are some areas in which we all must serve as Christians.

- A. The Corinthians had focused and fought so much over these miraculous gifts that they had neglected the greatest service of all....the service of love.
 1. Paul instructs these brethren to take a moment to get over themselves and consider the fact that they need to give more effort to make sure that they are serving in the best way which is serving through their love for one another. **(I Cor. 13)**
 2. These Corinthians had put all of their eggs in their miraculous gifts basket, but they had neglected the fact that their serving with these gifts was worthless if they were not serving from a place of love. They had neglected love and their offerings were nothing before the throne of a God who demands that His people love above all things. **(13:1-3)**
 3. Their emphasis was misplaced, and Paul admonished them for that. At the end of the day, their love would be all that they could rely on because their gifts wouldn't last forever. **(13:8-13)** However, their ability to love would never vanish away. They always had the responsibility to serve others in the way of love.
- B. We are just as responsible for serving those around us through our loving actions.
 1. We discussed this a few weeks back, so I won't belabor this point, but we know that love is not passive, but it ought to be active in our lives. Our love should cause us to serve others through the actions that are given for us in this text by the Apostle Paul. **(13:4-7)**
 2. But serving others through love also serves another purpose that is just as important. **I John 4:16-21** teaches us that love for our brother is absolutely necessary to our righteous standing before God. If we fail to serve in this mandatory capacity, then we will stand condemned before our God, and none of us want for that to be our end. We must take on the responsibility of serving our neighbor through love.

II. There are some areas in which we must serve because of roles we have taken on.

- A. There are some decisions that we make in this life that come with some new responsibilities in serving.
 1. For example, when we decide to enter into the marriage relationship, we now take on the responsibility of serving our new spouse in the way that God would have us to. **(Eph. 5:22-33)**
 2. Or when we decide to reproduce. We, in that decision, take on the responsibility of fulfilling Paul's instructions to raise children in the training of the Lord. **(Eph. 6:4)**
 3. The same might be true when we take on other responsibilities in this life whether at work, in the community, or in the home.

- B. When and if we take on these roles, we don't have any choice but to serve in these roles.
1. Far too many people think that all areas of service are optional, but as we have seen...there are some areas that are mandatory.
 2. Loving others and showing our love through our actions is absolutely mandatory for all Christians, and when we become husbands, wives, and parents we must take the responsibilities seriously.
 3. Let me also add, that some people feel inadequate in their service because they don't see what they are doing in these roles as being areas of service, but they absolutely are! These areas of service are so important and vital to the strength of the Kingdom, and we should all seek to fulfill them to the best of our ability.

III. There are some areas in which we serve based of our personal strength and abilities.

- A. God had blessed the Corinthians with so gifts and strengths and they were to use those gifts accordingly.
1. This is not the only text in which different areas of service are mentioned. **Ephesians 4:11-16** speaks to many of the same positions of service that are found in our main text of **I Corinthians 12**. Notice that those who served in these positions were to serve in such a way that the church is built up stronger and better able to the work that God has given it to do.
 2. Those who had been blessed with the ability to speak in tongues were to use those to God's glory and in such a way that others would be built up. Those who healed were to heal to God's glory and so on and so forth. No matter the position, they were to serve to the best of their ability through love.
 3. Paul also notes the fact that there were many different positions to fill and not one single person fulfilled every position because not one person has all the skills for every single position of service. **(12:28-30)** God has blessed different people with different skills and it is our responsibility to use our talents and skills the best way possible.
- B. We must keep our eyes open for opportunities to use our strengths in service to God, and for ways to grow in our service to God.
1. I'll use myself as an example. It was never my intention to be a preacher growing up. I did not come from a family of preachers. In fact, I told myself that I didn't want to preach because it just wasn't the lifestyle for me. However, I had opportunities to preach from time to time at the congregation in my home town because we did not have a located preacher. I would take those opportunities to preach and the nice old ladies were always so nice. Granted you could probably preach just about anything and they would compliment because they were always just trying to be nice and encourage. But anyways, they would ask if I ever considered preaching because I was comfortable speaking publicly, and I would always say something like "no way!". Again, working with a church as their preacher wasn't in my plan of things to do in my life. But I was able to keep preaching decently often when I went off to finish my college degree in Knoxville. The church in Oak Ridge didn't have a located preacher so they allow me to join in the preaching rotation with the rest of the men. I met Katie and spent a lot of time with her in Shelbyville, and my uncle asked me if I would like to participate in their summer young man's training program. I would preach and work with Donnie Rader for a couple months and gain some experience in a position of service within the church. Again, I didn't plan on preaching even with that program. I was getting to spend the summer with my girlfriend and put that thing on lockdown! But I really enjoyed my time. I learned a lot about the work of a preacher, and I went on my way back to school. As I considered my options past graduation, I began to think about the work I had done with Donnie, and I thought about it possibly being an opportunity to do my little part for the work of the Kingdom. I weighed my options, and decided that this was an opportunity to use my talents for good. So here I stand today. A preacher for this congregation and serving God's Kingdom in this way because of opportunities that were presented to me and me taking advantage of them based upon my abilities and talents.
 2. After saying all of that, let me say that there is nothing superior about being the preacher. In fact, it is a humbling position in which to serve, and I hope that no one feels inferior because your talents are not in public speaking. We all have different talents and we must evaluate those talents and put them to use in whatever way we can.

3. You might be a good bible class teacher... teach class. You might be musically talented...lead songs. You might be blessed in prayer...lead prayers. If you can get up, prepare, and present a talk before the Lord's Supper that puts our minds in that very room where Jesus and His disciples were or right there at the foot of the cross...then you do just that. You might make some fantastic bread for the Lord's Supper...make some bread. You might mow grass like a champ...mow grass here or for others that need it. You might be great at writing encouraging notes...encourage the brethren that way! The ways in which we can serve are innumerable! We just need to know ourselves and be aware of opportunities to present ourselves to us.

IV.Regardless of the areas in which we serve, we all play a vital role in the work of God's Kingdom.

- A. The Corinthians had lost sight of the fact that all members of the Body of Christ are useful in some way or another.
 1. They were guilty of not honoring and not putting value in those who they might have deemed as "less important" in the grand scheme of serving the Kingdom.
 2. They weren't willing to encourage all members of the body in the ways in which they served. They were, in fact, discouraging fellow Christians by their attitudes and actions.
- B. Paul condemns this type of behavior on the basis of a couple of things.
 1. #1) All Christians play a valuable part in the body. The eye cannot hate on the ear and vice versa. **(12:14-21)**
 2. #2) Without those serving in "lesser" ways, things are not accomplished well. Those who we deem "lesser" ought to be encouraged all the more for their work. **(12:22-25)**
 3. #3) Love isn't jealous. It does not brag and is not arrogant. Love does not act unbecomingly. **(I Cor. 13:4,5)**
 4. When we consider the truth of these statements, we will truly come to appreciate the many roles that we all play within the local church and the Kingdom of God as a whole.

When we consider even just a local church, it should truly impress us the amount of work that goes into making everything operational and successful. Sure there are some things that everyone sees, but there is so much more that happens behind the scenes. May each and everyone of us do our part to loving serve those around us. May we take full responsibility for those ways in which we are called to serve. May we use our talents and skills to glorify God in all things and to help His Kingdom prosper on this earth. May we give every effort to find our place to serve and serve well.