

# A More Important Excellent Way

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, we turn to our Bible reading, which is going to be again in 1 Corinthians, and we're looking this week at chapters 12-14.

As it's a very long section, we won't read the whole thing. We'll read all of chapter 12 into 13-1, and then I'll guide our reading beyond that. So please do pick up your Bible, everyone, and turn to page 959, and we can read along together.

Beginning in verse 12. Now concerning spiritual gifts, or maybe more hopefully, now concerning the spirituals, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

You knew that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus is accursed.

And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit. Now, there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord.

[ 1 : 16 ] 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. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge, according to the same Spirit.

To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by one Spirit. 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. All these are imparted by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

For just as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the body, though many, are one body. So it is with Christ. 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. For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body.

[ 2 : 28 ] That would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body. That would not make it any less a part of the body.

If the whole body were in eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were in ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.

Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. And on those parts of the body that we think less honourable, we bestow the greater honour.

And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty. Which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body.

[ 3 : 40 ] But that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honoured, all rejoice together.

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 you all work miracles? Do you all possess gifts of healing? Do you all speak with tongues? Do you all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And in the rest of chapter 13, Paul explains what the love that the Corinthians lack looks like. And into 14, the start of chapter 14, Paul contrasts prophecy with tongues.

[ 4 : 49 ] And he reaches his conclusion, verses 21 to 25. So let's turn there. Over the page, chapter 14, verse 21. In the law it is written, By people of strange tongues, and by the lips of foreigners, will I speak to this people.

And even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord. Thus tongues are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers, but for believers.

If, therefore, the whole church comes together, and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?

But, if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all. He is called to account by all. The secrets of his heart are disclosed.

And so, following this faith, he will worship God, and declare that God is really among you. In verses 26 to 35, our instructions, then, about how worship should be more ordered.

[ 5 : 58 ] And then, in verses 36 to 38, Paul returns to the question of who is spiritual. Verse 36. Or was it from you that the word of God came?

Or are you the only ones it has reached? If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.

If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. This is God's word. May he bless it to us today.

Please do turn again in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, as we look at that together. If I want to get a recipe for a lovely Victoria sponge cake, I look up Mary Berry's recipe book, and there it is.

If I want to find out what the word polymath means, I look up a dictionary. And if I want to know when a particular event in history happened, I can look up one of my history textbooks.

[ 7 : 11 ] And so on and so on. Whether it be maths, history, geography, textbooks, for all sorts of things. But often this part of 1 Corinthians can be treated a little bit like a textbook.

Having decided that maybe we're a church that might want to use those things that are called spiritual gifts, we turn up to these three chapters and find out how to use them. We see around us things that might appear in these verses, and so we consult our textbook to find out what to do.

Well, the Bible is not quite a textbook. It is not simply a book for which we turn to with our questions posed by the 21st century. It is not simply a source of information about how we must do church.

It doesn't tell us how strong our coffee should be. It doesn't tell us how many hymns to sing. It doesn't even tell us how much theological content must be in them. The Bible is God's living and active word.

It was written to people in history with all of their contexts to consider, with their problems in mind. So whilst it wasn't written to us, it is still for us.

[ 8 : 25 ] And with this part of 1 Corinthians, it's particularly important to remember that. This is not a textbook on how you as a church, we're meant to do those things called the spiritual gift. Paul was writing to address problems that were ongoing in this church.

And it's all too tempting and easy to read into this section all of the contemporary things that we know about tongues and prophecy and healing, whilst overlooking why Paul wrote this.

There's a particularly cluttered path towards understanding this passage. So before we begin to walk it, there's a couple of stones that need to be unpicked. In chapter 12, verses 8 to 11, we find a list of various things that Paul calls gifts.

I have a commentary on my shelf that contains 53 pages on those four verses. 53 pages on nine particular gifts.

53 pages filled with options of what they might mean. We can draw a conclusion from that. It is very difficult to know what exactly is meant by each of them.

[ 9 : 35 ] We can't say with any great deal of confidence what exactly any of them are. Just because we hear similar words today from other churches, that doesn't mean that that's what Paul was talking about.

And I think we're not meant to know. I think by having a sense of mystery around these, we're helped to have a clearer view of the principle that Paul is teaching us here.

Just like last week, behind the food sacrifice to idols, there was a principle that needed to be applied, and the food was merely the presenting issue. So too, this week, are the spiritual gifts.

Secondly, as an introductory note, this might seem on the more geeky end of the scale, but it's worth pursuing. The pattern I mentioned last week that repeats in chapter 7, 8 and 12 sees Paul responding to questions that the Corinthians had asked of him.

He addresses these throughout the middle section of the letter and begins each one of them by saying, Now concerning. We see it in 12.1, Now concerning. The same thing in chapter 7, verse 1, and in chapter 8, verse 1.

[ 10 : 47 ] The pattern is that Paul says, Now concerning. And then he brings up the particular issue, and he quotes the words that they used to talk about it. He quotes the Corinthian phrases, and then he moves on to correct their various misunderstandings.

So last week, the Corinthians in chapter 8 were saying, All of us possess knowledge. That was their error about food. That was the phrase which Paul proceeded to deal with throughout the next few chapters and correct.

What says spiritual gifts in our Bibles will be more accurately translated as the spirituals, because that is the word that the Corinthians use.

Chapter 12, verse 1. The pattern continues, Now concerning the spirituals. The gift part of that is not tied to the word for spiritual, but it's probably added in our translations, because in verse 4, we come across the word gifts, and then Paul continues to talk about gifts throughout the rest of the section.

However, there is only one place in the whole New Testament where spiritual gifts as two words are put together, and it's in Romans where Paul wants to give them a greater understanding of the gospel.

[ 12 : 06 ] So the Corinthians' word here is spiritual. They want to talk about spiritual things, things that make someone spiritual. And we've been seeing that that is something that they love.

They love the appearance of being impressive, of being superior, of having things that set them apart as better than other Christians. And so their way of talking about things is to use a word that denies that it's been given, that denies it's a gift, but rather focuses on them being spiritual, them being superior.

But Paul's correction to this is to talk about gifts. That's why he changes their word, stops using spiritual, and starts using gifts.

Gift is the correction. Paul's word recognizes that it's been given, and it can't be boosted in. Whereas the Corinthian word is spiritual, and can lead to all sorts of superiority.

Geeky bit over. Two important steps, but we must remember those as we continue into this passage. So, in chapter 12, we see that a spiritual church uses all of its gifts to make Jesus new.

[ 13 : 23 ] A spiritual church uses all of its gifts to make Jesus new. Corinth prided itself on being spectacular. Don't think best church in the neighborhood, not even best church in the city.

They may even have wanted to be the best church in the world. After all, they've become so full of themselves that they thought they could leave Paul behind. And much like today, they prize those who could speak well, the speakers of the day.

Why is it that people will go to conferences when we know that there's a big name speaking at us? Who are the people that we look up to in church the most? What are the gifts that we most want to have?

What are the gifts that make people seem most special to us? Are the people on the periphery ever those who are gifted speakers? Certainly not.

Those who are present and visible at the front will be those who can speak and speak well. Other people that we look up to often are those who can speak to anyone and everyone all the time.

[ 14 : 38 ] Wherever they are, they're talking to people. They can talk to someone in a chip shop about Jesus, someone on the train, anywhere. Those are the gifts that we want to have. People who can speak well are a big deal.

Corinth was no different. They treasured their preachers. We follow Paul, we follow Apollos, we follow Cephas. They celebrated those who could speak with eloquence.

And we see in this chapter too that those who could speak in strange tongues were also looked upon as impressive. In fact, that seems to be the most impressive thing to do in Corinth. Speaking is the big issue in these passages and the Corinthians prized above all those who appeared to have the ability to speak in a strange tongue.

So key in unpicking all this is verses 2 to 3. Chapter 12, verses 2 to 3. Previously, those in Corinth were worshippers of mute, unspeaking idols.

That's where they were led to. That's what religion looked like in Corinth. But now, those who know the Lord Jesus are worshippers of a God who has spoken clearly. God does not lack clarity and he is not confusing in what he says and does.

[ 15 : 51 ] And anyone who can genuinely say that Jesus is Lord, verse 3, is truly spiritual. Anyone who can genuinely say that Jesus is Lord is truly spiritual.

The only way that someone can do that, the only way that someone can acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and live like it is because the Holy Spirit has been at work, has opened their eyes to see that truth.

No one who curses Jesus, no one who would defame him, has the Spirit of God. But one who acknowledges him as he is has had their eyes opened by the Spirit.

That's what makes someone spiritual. Not the gifts and abilities they have. Can they recognize who Jesus truly is? The Corinthians have tiers of Christians.

They think that the truly spiritual, the superior Christians are those with gifts. And they also think that there are these inferior, the lesser, the lacking in being spiritual kind of Christian.

[ 16 : 57 ] In short, they draw a line through the church to say that some in the church are spiritual and some are not. Paul's line is around the church.

His line is around those who can genuinely say that Jesus is Lord and mean it and have lives shaped by it. Because nobody can be truly awakened to say that unless the Spirit of God has opened their eyes.

That is Paul's opening riposte to all the Corinthian confusion. Don't think you're unspiritual if you don't have great speaking gifts. Rather, if you have a life genuinely shaped by the truth that Jesus is Lord, then you have the Spirit of God.

No preacher, no evangelist or gifted welcomer ought to make you feel insignificant or unspiritual because you don't have those gifts. gifts because they are gifts.

Why boast in something that has been given? Verses 4-7. Paul makes clear that gifts are given. Isn't that what makes it a gift?

[ 18 : 10 ] There are all sorts of things that are given to Christians to serve and build up the church and reach out with the gospel. Varieties of gifts of ways to serve, varieties of activities. But these gifts have been given by God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

Verses 4-6. The Spirit, the Lord, God. There are all sorts of gifts that are given to serve the church but they're all given and verse 6 empowered by God for the common good.

Just like there's diversity in the Trinity, just like God is united as one but also diverse as three. So too in the church. We are not all pianists.

Thankfully, if you've ever heard me play. We have all manner of gifts. Paul lists various ones that may well have been easily observable in Corinth in verses 8-11.

All to be used for the same purpose as part of the one church. His point is not which gifts in particular are important but rather his point is that all sorts of things, there are all sorts of gifts.

[ 19 : 22 ] All given, all empowered by the same Spirit. And it is up to God, verse 11, to give gifts to whom he decides. Paul's corrective language here is so important.

For a church to start celebrating people as particularly spiritual because of things they can do is silly. it forgets that they are gifts.

Being particularly tall it means that I'm advantaged in many ways at various things. At school I used to love playing basketball because my team would often win.

Anytime I got the opportunity to shoot for the hook I didn't have to get it in the first time because I could catch it because I was taller than everyone else and have another go and keep going until I went in. Three times, four times, five times, didn't matter.

I would get it in the hook eventually. Now, for me to boast about being good at basketball would be silly on that basis. I just happened to be gifted with height.

[ 20 : 27 ] There were small guys in the class that were quick. They couldn't boast about being that. They were just quicker than I was. Was I superior? I was taller.

The point is that to boast in something that is given to us without our deciding it or helping it is a silly thing.

I did nothing to be this tall. So too with the church. The Corinthians had a hierarchy based on things that they had been given.

Remember chapter 4 verse 7. Who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

The church is a body. It has many parts. There are Bible teachers. There are people who make tea and coffee. Those who do the technical things. There are those who do hospitality well.

[ 21 : 32 ] There are those who offer particularly warm welcomes. There are those who give time freely to do all manner of things. And just as an ear can't say to an eye that doesn't belong, neither can the church do without the multifaceted giftedness of all of its members.

All of the members of a church make up the whole body. A preacher in an empty building won't accomplish anything. A building that is locked, that's dirty, that doesn't have anyone in it, no chairs set out, won't achieve anything.

A building that doesn't have people in it that have been invited along by their friends won't achieve anything, even with a preacher. If everyone is too busy to clean, the whole body suffers.

If everyone wants to be a preacher or a pianist, the body suffers. If all 40 of us here wanted to be involved in kids ministry and that's all we want to do on Sunday evening, then the seats would be empty and visitors would never come.

If everyone in the church feels gifted at playing piano and insists that they get to do what their gifting is every week, then all there would be would be a serious racket of piano playing.

[ 22 : 55 ] So Paul puts a real challenge to us here. Play your part. Play your part. That's different from the person beside you.

That's different from me. Play your part. The body needs all of its parts to function. Don't feel to use your gifts. So there's a challenge but there's also an encouragement.

Not having the obvious gifts, not having the speaking gifts, the ones that are prominent, does not mean that you are not a truly spiritual person. Every part of the body is needed.

Verse 17, if the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? Verse 18, but as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose.

Your gifts, however small and insignificant they seem, have been given to you at God's choosing to build his church. Don't fail to use them because you think they're not as spiritual or they're not as useful as someone else's.

[ 24 : 03 ] Don't fail to use them because you think that you're not as spiritual as someone else. Indeed, be encouraged that verse 22, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

Corinth didn't think like that, but Paul wants us to be clear you are gifted with all that you're gifted with for a reason. You haven't been given the gifts that you don't have for a reason.

So don't beat yourself up about it. Do what you can do. Be useful where you can be useful in the life of the church. I'm so glad I don't have to stand and play the piano.

That would be a disaster. I'm hopeless at music. I'm so glad I don't have the responsibility to do admin because it would be a disaster. God gives the church what it needs, whether it be preachers, administrators, or many other things, and he gives them where they are needed.

So are you using the gift that you have to serve the church? God has given you gifts to play your part. Paul finishes this chapter by asking seven questions at the end.

[ 25 : 28 ] Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? And the answer to each question is no. we must not all aim to do the same things.

We don't all have the same gifts. Corinth seemed to think that being able to speak in tongues, whatever that meant, was the best gift. Paul says no.

There are varieties of gifts, all given by the same spirit, all needed in the body of the church, all, even though they seem weak, indispensable, and he finishes chapter 12 by pointing us to a more excellent way, the more excellent way of love.

Chapter 13, a spiritual church speaks in love. A spiritual church speaks in love. Corinth was full of kind syllables. It was a church that loved to speak.

Speaking was the special and spiritual thing to do, but their speech lacked love. It was divisive. As speakers were pitted against each other, I'm with Cephas, I'm with Apollos.

[ 26 : 42 ] They even looked down on Paul because he didn't speak with elephants. Divided and arrogant, boastful, all of these things accompanied the Corinthian speaking.

Their speaking was a means of power, of status, of reputation. it was not used to build other people up. It wasn't to encourage believers to keep going and it wasn't to tell unbelievers about Jesus.

They lacked love. Verse 1. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have all manner of gifts, knowledge, tongues, prophecy, whatever they might be called, but I don't use them to fill people up, then I'm nothing. No matter how gifted I am, if my gifts aren't used in love, I am nothing.

That's what Paul says. We don't know what exactly these gifts were, we don't know how they were practiced, we don't know what we hear of today as being called gifts, if that's exactly what Paul was talking about, but what we do know is that Paul is pulling no punches in correcting their abuse of these gifts.

[ 28 : 04 ] He is saying to them, you don't have any love. Remember chapter 8 verse 1, all of us possess knowledge they said. Paul's response, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Love builds up. The Corinthians have proven impatient and unkind. Their lack of concern for those they see as weaker proves that. They boast, even though sexual immorality is rife amongst them.

They're arrogant. They celebrate the gifted as more spiritual than the rest. They're arrogant in thinking that they can move on from the apostle Paul. The Corinthians fundamentally insist on their own way.

We want to eat meat, so we'll eat meat. Who cares if it brings a brother to ruin? That's what we saw last week. These are the attitudes at play in the Corinthians.

This chapter is fundamentally about a church that lacks love for one another. In its arguments, Corinth has let their giftedness, the things that made them seem impressive, take over.

[ 29 : 14 ] But Paul says, love is the thing that never ends. Prophecies will pass away, speaking in this world will stop because one day the perfect will come.

One day, the last day will finally arrive and then there will be no more preaching, there will be no more gifts needed in the church, for we will have in full sight, in full perfection, everything that has been promised.

We live in a shadow land for now, we see in a mirror dimly, but this imperfect world will no longer exist one day.

This partial experience of God's kingdom will be no longer and with it prophecies won't be needed, their gifts will not be needed anymore. But what will still be there?

Love and the fruit of love. Remember that those who love God are known by God? Love builds up and what it builds will last.

[ 30 : 23 ] That is why a spiritual church speaks in love. It wants to grow people in knowing that Jesus is Lord because that will be what counts on the last day. The more excellent way that the Corinthians needed to get was that the gifts did not make or evidence a spiritual person.

Love does. Love for God firstly because it's through that that they are known 8-3 and then love for others as we see in this chapter.

That's how the whole law was summed up. Love for God and our neighbours. Jesus said himself, don't go and worship my father and give money to him whilst you have grievances with one another.

Love is vital. How we relate to those around us is absolutely important. And for a church that loves to speak the speaking needed to be driven by love.

Speech that lacks love is speech that puffs oneself up. It is to establish reputation, it's to be impressive, it's to put others down. Speech that lacks love doesn't need to be clear, doesn't need to be understood because you don't really care if the person hearing is going to benefit from it.

[ 31 : 45 ] that's not why we speak, we speak to build ourselves up. So who cares if it's in a strange time? That might be what the Corinthians would say. That lacks love, but speech that is loving wants to build up.

It is patient, it doesn't boast, it mourns wrongdoing, it puts others before ourselves. And that is Paul's whole pattern that we've been seeing.

It's what we were seeing last week, loving speech has at heart what is best for other people. Loving speech does all it can to see people genuinely saying that Jesus is Lord.

Loving speech proclaims that Jesus is Lord and that we should follow him. And so finally in chapter 14, a spiritual church speaks clearly.

A spiritual church speaks clearly. If love is the motivation, if wanting to build up is what drives speaking, then why would a church want to speak in tongues that were not clear?

[ 32 : 57 ] That could not be understood by people? That didn't build up, but rather left people feeling unspiritual? Paul says, 14.1, pursue love.

And he then continues to talk about prophecy being better than tongues. We don't know exactly what Paul means by these, but what is clear is that prophecy is something that people could understand that was clear, whereas tongues were the opposite.

14.2, if they speak in tongues, no one understands them. They utter mysteries. But, verse 3, the one who prophesies speaks to people to upbuild them, to encourage.

Tongues build oneself up, prophecy builds the church. Confusion builds oneself, as people assume that you're on some sort of higher spiritual playing field, but prophecy is loving.

Clear speech, clearly telling people the truth about God, is loving because it builds up. Paul, throughout this chapter, gives instructions for how they're to conduct themselves.

[ 34 : 11 ] He is offering corrective guidance for them. And underlying it all is verse 12. Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

Love builds up. Use your gifts in a way that are helpful. All instructions to sheet the use of their collective gifts is to be more clear, so that people might be helped by the gospel, or even to have their eyes open to it for the first time.

Paul begs up that anything that isn't understood must be interpreted. Clarity is what's most important. Why speak in tongues if it leaves people in the dark?



Instead, speak clearly that people might understand. Verse 17, it may suit your needs. You can give thanks, but other people aren't being built up.

people. Paul says, better five words that have been thought about to help others than thousands of words that can't be understood. That's the same principle as last week.

- [ 35 : 26 ] Limit yourself and your freedoms if it benefits others. Paul appeals to the Old Testament in verse 21. He quotes from Isaiah as he says, by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people and even then they will not listen to me.

This was God saying to Israel that because they wouldn't listen to him, the Assyrians with their foreign tongue were going to come and enact judgment. And so strange tongues were a sign of covenant cursing.

when God stopped speaking clearly to them, it was trouble. If they wouldn't listen when he spoke clearly then they would face a strange tongue which would lead to their destruction.

Whereas prophecy, where God spoke clearly through prophets, that was a sign of his presence. Covenant restored, hope, clear revelation from God in prophecy versus the curse of covenant breathing.

of confusion, of a strange tongue. So Paul concludes tongues are a sign of unbelief. Prophecy is a sign of belief.

- [ 36 : 43 ] So when the outsider comes in, verses 24 to 25, speak clearly about God, proclaim that Jesus is Lord, that is the most spiritual thing in the world.

To know that and to do what you can to make that known. If you do that, you then people won't think you're mad like if you speak in tongues.

But instead, verse 24 and 25, they will know that God is amongst you. Speaking clearly about God means that people might just know that God is amongst us.

God is not a God of confusion, God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

God is not a God of confusion, but peace. He says, speaking away that's ordered, not chaotic. Maybe summed up best in verse 33. God is not a God of confusion.

- [ 37 : 48 ] God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. Verse 40, all things should be done decently and in order. Again, Paul is offering corrective guidance.

don't have a mad party where everyone is speaking and doing what they want. No, order, clarity, so that people can actually hear and know the Lord Jesus himself.

Paul's correction to the Corinthians is not to put stock in being gifted to speak. The gifts that are given to the church are to make known that Jesus is Lord. They are gifts not to be boosted in, but to be used to build up our brothers and sisters and to bring the gospel of Christ crucified to those around us.

Verse 37, if anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I'm writing to you are a command of the Lord. So two things Paul says about a spiritual person.

They can genuinely say that Jesus is Lord and the spiritual person knew that Paul's pattern of ministry ministry is the Lord's pattern. The spiritual church knows that any gifts it has, whether big or small, are to be used to build the kingdom, to make Jesus known, to tell others that he is Lord, and so we must bow and follow him.

- [ 39 : 18 ] that's Paul's pattern, and that's making known the one thing that can cause someone to be truly spiritual.

We love those who are impressive speakers, whether it be the comedians of the day, whether it be the headline speakers at conferences. we love them just as much as the Corinthians do.

But the small and seemingly unimportant gifts are indispensable. So if you feel like you couldn't ever spend 15 minutes explaining the heart of the gospel with clarity and eloquence to someone, don't be discouraged.

If you look at others who spend their time after services speaking to 23 different people, and you feel you could just never do that, don't fret. If you hear stories of people starting conversations on every training journey, in every cafe, about Jesus, and you feel depressed by it like I do, because you just think, I could never do that, don't think that your gifts are a mistake.

Don't think that you're a lesser Christian. God has given to each person gifts as he chooses. Each person's are different, but each person's are needed.

[ 40 : 41 ] Speaking gifts attract the most attention, but the danger is that we're caught up in them, and we fall into this Corinthian trap. There are things that you can do in church that need to be done, so do them.

And do them with full confidence that you're playing your part every bit, which is every bit as important as those around you. For when the body of the church functions as a body, using a myriad of gifts that it has, then they together can proclaim that Jesus is Lord.

When the priority is love, love for God and love for others, then in unison we can make known that Jesus is Lord. God is among us. And that, that will lead people in Queen's Park to see that God is amongst us.

That will have people brought to worship God. Each one of us, playing our part, using our gifts, even in areas where we think that they're so insignificant that they couldn't matter.

If there's somewhere where there's a need to serve and you can do it, then play your part. Because by doing that, you're helping the whole body of the church to make known that Jesus is Lord.

[ 42 : 06 ] That's a spiritual church. One that uses all of its gifts to speak the truth in life. And that will mean 1226, if one of us rejoices in gospel fruit, we all rejoice.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that we have been so gifted by you, that you've given us the Lord Jesus.

And much more than that, you've given us each a role to play in your church, in the building of your kingdom. You've given to each of us gifts that you've decided.

Gifts that are indispensable. Gifts that need to be used in building the church. We thank you that we can be confident that if we truly love the Lord Jesus, recognising who he is, then we are spiritual and no one can deny that.

No matter how impressive they look, Father, we ask that you would encourage us, encourage us as we play our part in this church family, that we would love one another, and that we would love serving alongside each other, to make Jesus known, so that people might look at the Tron at Queen's Park, at the Tron Church, and be able to tell very clearly that God is amongst us.

[ 43 : 52 ] Lord, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. We close our service this evening by singing hymn number 593.

Christ, from whom all blessings flow, to perfect your church below you. Christ, whose nature now we share, work in us, your body here. Join our faithful spirits, join each to each, with yours made one, lead us through the paths of peace unto greater holiness.