

How God Builds Community

Rich Nathan

October 5-6, 2002

Spiritual Gifts: God's Way of Building Community

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

Back in 1971, about 300 young adults and their babies left the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco in brightly colored old school buses and tie-dyed shirts. They crisscrossed the country looking for the perfect place to create a utopian community. Five months later they landed in Summertown, Tennessee in the poorest county in the state. These young adults called their little experiment in communal living simply "The Farm." They jokingly referred to themselves as the "Technicolor Amish".

Here are people who wanted to live together and work together in a caring environment. They were tired of capitalistic greed. They wanted to find a place where people helped one another instead of competing with each other. They wanted a just and loving place to raise their children. They wanted to find a place of peace in a world of war and violence.

Many of the original members came from the suburbs, which they found insufferably boring. One woman said, "I grew up in a house that was very nice and exactly like the other 1000 houses in our town, with a little palm tree in front of each house." They hated the sameness, the dullness, the blandness of suburban life. They hated the fact that everyone everywhere didn't seem happy. Technology made everyone detached from their environment.

These young adults felt that people had lost touch with nature. They felt that people had even lost touch with their own food, which was no longer a creation of nature, but it was a creation of factories.

Very importantly, the desire for communal living was fueled by the politics of the 60's and early 70's. Many young adults felt that system was failing. Vietnam was dragging on. John and Bobby Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated. Then the four students were killed at Kent State and the two black students were killed in Jackson. And the Black Panther leadership was murdered in Oakland.

So they pitched in all their belongings and they picked up and moved to Tennessee to find a life rooted in love, compassion, and tolerance. The women sometimes nursed each other's children so the others could work in the fields or in the midwifery clinic, the store, school, or book publishing company. The men did construction. They fixed farm equipment and worked the fields. The kids grew up roaming the farms barefoot, playing by the creeks, running in the woods, having dozens of adults as back up moms and dads.

The rules were simple. Take a vow of poverty. Turn all your possessions and money over to the Farm. Be completely vegan. Don't even use any leather. Make a commitment to be as compassionate as possible to each other. And surprisingly, at least to me, refrain from premarital sex and abortions. There were moral rules to keep this thing going.

The Farm is still going three decades later, although a lot of the original participants left. They got fed up with the poverty. They found that they had to introduce some capitalism into the system to encourage people to work. They got tired of just eating cornmeal and flour and black-eyed peas. There were arguments over the distribution of goods.

But there is something inside of me that really resonates when I read about experiments in communal living. I want to be part of something where people genuinely care about each other and each other's kids. Where folks are compassionate, where we're connected to each other. Where we don't necessarily measure people by what they own, or what degrees are next to their name. Where we aren't so cut off from each other and it's not every person for himself.

I don't necessarily want to eat whole-wheat lasagna and soybeans all the time. But I am so tired. I am so sick of the American perversion of Christianity, which is reduced to just me and my personal relationship with Jesus in utter isolation, utterly apart from my relationship with other people.

Of course, the desire for community has often taken a very dark turn. Back in the 1970's followers of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, from South Korea, began showing up on college campuses and in shopping centers. They were clean cut and talked to young adults about a new way of life. Those of you who are around my age, in your mid-40's, can remember these folks hanging out on college campuses, recruiting, reaching into the desire of young adults to build community. They used to invite recruits to a dinner where Moon's name wasn't even mentioned. It has been said that there was a lot of singing and sharing and prayer. Everyone smiled throughout the night. Everyone was so nice, so affirming, so encouraging. They hung on every word that the recruits spoke.

Then they would invite the young recruits to a 3-day workshop. During the workshop the recruit is never left alone. You are called a spiritual child and the leaders of the workshop are your spiritual parents. You are assigned someone to be with you all the time. If you wander off, even to the restroom, someone will walk with you. If you wander off by yourself, someone is going to come with you and politely ask you to rejoin the group, that they need you and that you are being missed.

Again, everyone is super positive and super affirming. They only talk about spiritual things. The recruit is bombarded with new ideas and new concepts. The recruit is pressured to conform. Any breach of total conformity is frowned upon.

So the group plays upon the most vulnerable points of an individual, our need to belong, our desire to feel loved and affirmed. The group floods you with affection. There are hugs, handholding and smiles. And gradually, bit-by-bit, the young recruit conforms. They don't want to be alienated. They don't want to stand against all these people.

At the end of the 3-days, you are begged by the group to stay. People tell you how much they want you, how appreciative they are of you. And if you choose to stay, you are brought into a 4-week very intensive series of meetings, in which your ties to anyone outside the group – your parents, your friends, your family, your coworkers - and your ties to everyone in the outside world are severed. You are told that Satan will use those who are closest to you to try to draw you away from the truth.

Once you are completely alienated from everyone you are told you can leave, if you like. But by then, it is too late. Your schedule – your eating habits, your sleep pattern, your work – everything is rigidly controlled by the group to achieve total conformity.

Listen, everyone – Christians, non-Christians, relatively good people and relatively bad people, Mother Theresa and Jim Jones – everyone has dreamed of building communities of people, which overcome human isolation. Communities where people are loved and learn to love. Communities where connection with each other truly happens. The dream of community is found everywhere. It is the inspirational backdrop of all the sappy, syrupy love songs and romantic movies of finding your soul mate. Finally overcoming isolation and connecting with another person.

Community is one of the major goals of this church. To somehow try to forge community in the midst of a world that is suspicious and cynical and greedy and self-centered and community oriented. It is one of the primary goals of this church to try to forge genuine community in a world in which people church hop and church shop and evaluate whether they want to participate on the quality of the music on any given Sunday, or the friendliness of an usher.

And in the midst of all of our consumerism and self-centeredness and cynicism, I still believe in community. I still believe in working for community. Better than that, God believes in community. Because as we are going to find today, community is not some humanly inspired dream, some romantic utopian hope. Rather the motive of spirit-created community is our reflection of God's passion.

I've called today's talk, "How God Builds Community." Let's pray.

1 Corinthians 12:1-3 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Let me give you a little bit of context for what we are going to be studying in 1 Corinthians 12. One of the main themes that runs through 1 Corinthians is the building of Christian community. Now, Corinth was a city in Greece that was notorious for its immorality. There were thousands of male and female prostitutes. Homosexuality was rampant. A university that was located there made everyone snobbish. The city was wealthy so people had a lot of money to spend on the pursuit of pleasure and the practice of different vices.

And in the midst of this immoral, totally materialistic, intellectually snobbish culture, Paul plants a Christian church. He doesn't give up on the dream of community in the midst of an incredibly hostile environment. It was like he put a tomato plant in really bad soil. And you look at that poor little plant and you say, "How in the world is this ever going to bear any tomatoes?" This little church experienced so much pressure from the world.

So the question that runs right through 1 Corinthians is, "How in the world can the church overcome all of the world's social patterning?" Members of the church were succumbing to sexual immorality. Members of the church had separated themselves into little cliques and rallied around their favorite church leader. Members of the church were suing each other. People were fighting around the communion table.

When I read 1 Corinthians I think of all the barriers, the obstacles that exist to creating community for us here in Central Ohio. For those of us living in the suburbs, our homes throughout our neighborhoods are the antithesis of community building dwellings. Our homes in our neighborhoods are designed for privacy and for isolation. We have all these little cul-de-sacs and looping, winding streets. Many of them are without sidewalks. There is virtually no place to walk in many of our neighborhoods. And if you do walk, you almost never meet people. There's no town square. There's no mix of business and homes in our local neighborhoods.

The reason I believe that Easton is so popular is we have sort of a virtual neighborhood. We get in our cars to drive to a community. Easton is neighborhood as entertainment, community as a shopping experience, community as opportunity for consumption. If you walk in most neighborhoods, people peak out of their windows and wonder what you're up to. Why are you standing in front of their house? If you walk on the Main Street of the city – on

Morse road, or 161 or Karl Road, people suspect that you might have just been released from prison, or maybe you are mentally ill.

And we are so busy with work and child-raising and activities, there's hardly any time for building relationship. Schedules never connect up. We Americans don't have a culture that supports community. Our culture supports self-reliance, self-assertion, self-esteem, self-determination, and self-improvement. But pulling together, relating together, making time for each other, valuing people over our purchases, connections over our consumption, we rather than me, we rather than TV; it's hard building community in Central Ohio.

It was hard building community in Corinth. It was hard building community in ancient Rome. Sometimes when I think about community I feel like the disciples wanting to throw up my hands and say, "Who then can be saved. How can this thing happen?"

We need to remember Jesus' response, "With man it is impossible. But with God all things are possible." With God's help, and with God's strength, and with the power that God supplies, it is possible to do Christian community even in Central Ohio. That's what 1 Corinthians 12-14 is all about.

Now, chapter 12 is labeled in the New International Version "Spiritual Gifts." Of course, these labels are not part of the original text. They are the Zondervan Company's, the publisher of this version of the Bible. They are Zondervan's addition to the text. And there is, in fact, a significant dispute whether verse 1 ought to be translated, "Now about spiritual gifts..." The Greek word simply means "spiritual." There's no way to know whether Paul was speaking about spiritual people, spiritual gifts, or spiritual things. It is, "Now about the spiritual..." Or we would say, "Now about that which was created by the Holy Spirit..." But whichever way we go and however we translate verse 1, it is clear in what follows that Paul is using the discussion of spiritual gifts simply as another occasion to discuss the building of the Christian community.

How does God build community in a hostile culture? The first thing we see is that the mark of spirit-created community is the Lordship of Christ, not humanly inspired speech, verses 1-3.

Let's say you are a follower of Christ. You just moved to a new area and you are church shopping. You are looking for a good church for yourself, or if you have a family, for you and your mate and children. Well, what's on your checklist for finding a good church, a church you will commit yourself to, settle into, and hopefully serve in?

Well, on the checklist you probably shouldn't have listed the décor. Do I like the decoration in this church? Do I like the carpet color? The banners? The wall coverings? Your highest priority probably should not be convenient parking or

programming, or personalities. You might ask about the preaching, the opportunities for service, the training for adults & kids, the possibility for fellowship.

If you are looking for a church, the number one question that you ought to ask is God active among this group of people? Is this a place where I will meet with God? Or if I have children, is this a place where my kids will meet with God? My mate will meet with God? Is the Holy Spirit active among this group of people? How do I know if the Holy Spirit is active?

The apostle Paul in verses 1-3 says, don't simply look at the level of the inspiration of the speaker. Is the delivery dynamic? Is the sermon stirring? Do people get out of their seats and stand, cheer, and clap? Don't simply ask, "Do people here speak in tongues? Will I hear a prophetic word during the sermon?" Inspired speech is not the critical mark of the Holy Spirit's activity. A lot of people will determine if a church is charismatic or spirit-filled by whether there is a prophecy during the service, or whether there is a public tongue. They will look around and say, "Are people raising their hands?" or "do they sing the same verse of the song over and over again?" Are anyone's eyes fluttering? People come to the church and they ask me, "Are you a Spirit-filled church?" And I know what they're looking for in my answer. So I say, "Yes, we believe in and we practice the biblical gifts of the Spirit."

But none of these things – not the hand raising, the exercise of a particular gift, not the inspiration of the message – none of these things is the critical issue when it comes to marking the Holy Spirit's activity. Paul says in verse 2, *You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.* In other words, in the past before you came to Christ, when you were still pagans, you used to have all kinds of experiences. You got carried away into a lot of exotic kinds of experiences. Back in ancient Greece, people at a place called Delphi used to prophecy.

Friends, do you know that in various non-Christian religions, people speak in tongues. In various non-Christian religions, people prophesy. They get visions in Islam. There are groups of people with extraordinary mystical experiences. They get visions. Some of them claim to heal the sick.

Now some of you might say that these are all demonically caused visions or dreams. Some of you might say that all of these things in other religions tell us about untapped human potentiality. That there are a lot of things in us that we don't yet fully understand.

The point is, according to Paul here, the only sure mark of God's activity in the church, the sure mark that a church is spirit-filled, that we have Holy Spirit

created community, is not tongues or prophecy, or visions, or healing, or hand raising. It is the Lordship of Christ.

You are picking a church. You want to know is God active in this place? It is a matter of first importance. Look for a church that confesses and demonstrates allegiance to Christ as Lord.

You know, in the 1st century calling Jesus Lord wasn't just a religious claim. It was a political claim. Tom Wright, in his wonderful little book called, "What St. Paul Really Said" reminds us that there was one "Lord" in the Roman world, the Roman Emperor. Just like there was one Fuehrer in Nazi Germany; one Premier in the Soviet Union. To say "Jesus is Lord" in the 1st century is to say that the emperor has a rival. To say "Jesus is Lord" in Nazi Germany means that the Fuehrer has a rival. To say that Jesus is Lord in the old Soviet Union meant that the Premier has a rival, the Communist party has a rival. There is another King, another Lord.

In fact, the announcement "Jesus is Lord" means that these leaders just don't have a rival, they have a superior. His name is Jesus. There is but one Lord. His name is Jesus. And throughout history people have been thrown in jail for saying "Jesus is Lord." People throughout history have been burned at the stake. They've been tortured. They've been fed to lions. They've been lined up against a wall and shot. This is a very threatening claim to the little powers and petty little tyrants in this world. Jesus is Lord.

It is living aggressively, assertively, boldly, passionately out of this claim that Jesus is Lord that is the mark of spirit-created community. And so when you resist going along with a policy at your job that's been established by the boss, or by the CEO, or by your supervisor, or by the board because Jesus is your Lord, Jesus is your Ruler, your Sovereign, your Leader, your Master - the policy they want you to follow at your job or the practice that they want you to engage in, in how you sell something, or what you say is unethical; it conflicts with what your Lord says, it conflicts with what your Lord wants for your life - whenever you resist going along with one of the little petty tyrants in the world like your boss, or your boyfriend, be prepared because there will be repercussions.

But this ability to resist the pressure, this ability to survive in a hostile environment like Central Ohio or Corinth, the ability to say, "I'm sorry, but Jesus is my Lord," that's the mark of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessarily hand-raising and eye-fluttering that marks the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is active when you state a wildly unpopular opinion in your women's studies class like you are pro-life and you support a baby's right to life. When you come out of the closet because Jesus is the Lord, there's the Spirit. Whenever you refuse to go with the flow in your family, with your roommates, at a restaurant with some friends, whenever you say something that you know is wildly unpopular, when you draw a line, stand up for what Christ wants, Paul says there's the Holy Spirit. In fact, I believe

that a great indicator that you are growing as a disciple is that you are beginning to take heat for your faith.

Let me ask you a personal question. Let me bring this down to earth. When is the last time someone got upset with you – not because you messed up, not because you were foolish or you were obnoxious or pushy, but just because Jesus is your Lord? By your life, your actions, and your words, you were announcing that there is another King that there is a rival, indeed, there is a superior to the king in your workplace or the king in your classroom, and his name is Jesus.

I say this with all affection, but if you've never experienced any opposition, if you never take any heat, you must ask yourself whether Jesus is, indeed, your Lord.

But you know, the Lordship of Christ is the precondition for all spirit-created community. You can build a form of community by making everyone conform to a set of behaviors. You can crush people's individualities like the Moonies do, or communists, or the military might. You can smash everyone's creativity. You can grind up their individuality, destroy people's initiative. But you know, you can't preserve a person's individuality. You can't preserve a person's creativity. You can't preserve a person's choice and also have people work together and love together, unless Jesus is the Lord of that community.

Human engineering can't pull off freedom for the individual and interdependent relationships. Only Jesus can do it. How do you get selfish, self-assertive, self-consumed, self-protected, self-oriented Central Ohio residents to work together and love together and commit together and yield together? The only possibility is Jesus as Lord of all of those people. But because Jesus is Lord, we can plant a community in immoral, busy, suburban, consumer-oriented Central Ohio culture and expect the community to flourish.

Let me just look at this from one other angle and then I'll turn to my last point. Take a marriage in which two people are tearing at each other. Each partner is exhausted. Both are hurt. Both have legitimate gripes. Both have a list of mistakes and a record of wrongs from the other person that is a mile long. They are both full of mistrust for the other person.

How does the Holy Spirit build Christian community from the smallest unit of society – one man and one woman? Have them both bow the knee and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. Have them both acknowledge their own weakness, their own screw-ups, their own sin and let them get on their faces before Jesus as their Lord and King. Let each of them give their lives to Christ in a radical way. Let them stop pointing their fingers at each other and beg for mercy for themselves.

It's on our knees before God, it's on our faces before our King, and it's with the

confession that Jesus is Lord on our lips that we say there's the healing for our marriages. There's the healing for our families. There's the potential for community in Central Ohio.

And the model for spirit-created community is the Trinity, not some human ideal.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Why in the midst of discussing community does Paul reference the Trinity? In verse 4 he says "the same Spirit." He's speaking of the Holy Spirit. In verse 5, "the same Lord," he's speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 6, "the same God," he's speaking of God the Father.

Before I answer the "why" question, let me answer the "what" question. What are we talking about by the Trinity? You know, I have in the last year had 10-15 different people write to me or talk with me and say, "What's this business of Christian faith in the Trinity?" I know a number of followers in Christ are troubled by the fact that the word Trinity does not appear in the New Testament. A Jehovah's Witness comes to your door and when they ask you what you believe, you say, "Well, I'm a Christian."

They say, "Are you one of those people who believes that God is a Trinity?"

You say, "Yes."

They hand you a Bible and say, "Well, you know, the word Trinity doesn't appear anywhere in the Bible." And then the Jehovah's Witness will say to you, "This claim that God is a Trinity was invented by the Catholic Church in the 4th century or the 5th century after Christ."

To which you respond – what? Your response is that the term Trinity may not appear in the New Testament, but the concept is everywhere. The label Trinity came later, although not in the 4th or 5th century. It came about 200 AD from a church Father named Tertullian. But the truth of the Trinity flows naturally from the pages of the scripture. The church did not invent the Trinity. The church simply labeled what they discovered in the scriptures.

Let me give you an illustration. Parents can wrestle over the name of a baby long after it's born. The father may want to name the baby after his favorite uncle. The wife wants to name the baby after her brother. They settle on the name of their pastor. The baby wasn't invented by the name. It was simply labeled by the name.

The reality that God is three persons of one substance – God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit, flows out of the data and material that the early church read from their bibles. See, the Bible clearly asserts three things. First of all, the Bible teaches us that there is only one God. The notion that there is only one God, what we call monotheism, is everywhere in the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament, we read passages like Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” In the New Testament we read passages like 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

The second thing that the Bible clearly affirms is the deity and personality of the Father, of Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit. And you can look at your outlines for some relevant scriptural references to the deity and personality of the Father, Jesus and the Spirit.

Now, the third thing that the Bible teaches is that these two concepts of the unity of God and the deity and personality of the Father, Jesus and the Spirit, need to be pulled together. That there is both a unity and a community, a plurality in the being of God. God not only exists, he co-exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three in one; one in three.

You see, there is complexity in the being of God in the opening words of scripture. We read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) Now the word God is plural. It is the Hebrew word Eloheim. But the word created is singular. The plural God acts as a singular entity in creating. We see the same thing in Genesis 1:26, “Then God [plural God] said [singular said], ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’” The Bible shifts back and forth in the same sentence between plural and singular.

And in Isaiah 6:8, Isaiah says, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’” Whom shall I [singular God] send and who will go for us [plural God].

Now the New Testament gives us more light, more revelation, more clarity on this unity and diversity that the Old Testament points to. So we are told in the New Testament that God is one, but that we should be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Paul closes with one of his letters in 2 Corinthians 13:14 by saying, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

And in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul says, “We always ought to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.” Thank God; loved by the Lord; saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

In virtually every book of the New Testament, there is some hint or reference to the reality of the Trinity. Three persons of one substance.

Now, in the history of the church some people have pressed the oneness, the unity of God, to the neglect of the three persons. And in the history of the church, some people have pressed the threeness of God to the neglect of his unity. I've heard Christians over emphasize the oneness of God to the neglect of the threeness by saying something like this, "Well, you know in the Old Testament God revealed himself as Father. In the gospels God revealed himself as Jesus. In the book of Acts and the epistles and the New Testament age, God reveals himself as the Holy Spirit. You see, the one God is playing different roles at different times. He's like a singular actor on the stage that appears in three different guises. Sometimes he appears in the guise of Father, sometimes in the guise of the Son, and sometimes in the guise of the Spirit. A best-selling Christian author teaches this.

Now the problem with this understanding of God is that in the New Testament the three actors – Father, Son and Spirit, sometimes appear on the stage at the same time. For example, in the baptism of Jesus, we have the Father speaking to the Son, "You are my beloved Son. In you I am well pleased." And we have the Spirit descending like a dove on the Son.

The error that emphasizes the unity of God and denies the threeness of God is sometimes called modalism – that God simply appears in different modes. But he's not eternally existing, forever existing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Some people emphasize threeness to the neglect of the oneness of God. It is almost as if there are three Gods. They may do this by defining the deity of Christ, by having Christ or the Holy Spirit be somehow a lesser God than God the Father. But what we read in scripture is that we have three separate centers of consciousness eternally co-existing, interpenetrating the others, eternally equal in power and glory, eternally interdependent – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

So why then does Paul reference the Trinity as he is making a case for community in a hostile world?

The model of the Trinity is the Bible's response to the isolation of individuals. You know, American culture dehumanizes people in a lot of different ways. Our culture communicates to females that they are just sexual objects. More and more we have the phenomenon in the 21st century of little girls dressing like hookers. Parents have to wrestle with their 8-9 year olds to say nothing of their teenagers about baring their midriffs and hanging out of their clothes. See, American culture is so perverted that it dehumanizes females and turns even little girls into objects.

We dehumanize people when we turn them into numbers, or consumers. Perhaps the chief way that American culture dehumanizes people is by teaching us to live in isolation from each other. By continually communicating to people that they must be self-reliant and self-determined and pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

And you see this isolation even among Christians. Is it not the case that we watch Christian after Christian collapse? We have Christians collapsing in their marriages. We have Christians collapsing in depression. And Christians collapsing in immorality.

Is it not the case that so many Christians just throw in the towel and collapse because we in the church have bought the American perversion of the “me and Jesus” approach to Christianity. That you individually make a decision for Christ and that it’s up to you to gut it out on your own.

Well, that’s impossible. You are made for community. That’s what the trinity tells us. We find in the Bible that God is not a lonely, solitary, isolated being. That God not only exists, but that he co-exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in mutual interdependence and mutual interpenetration of the other persons. We cannot do well or be happy in isolation. We need community. We thirst for relationships. We allow ourselves to be caught up in stupid destructive relationships with the opposite sex. We allow ourselves to be caught up in destructive relationships with groups. We allow ourselves to get caught up in destructive religions.

Because we were made in the image of someone who eternally exists as a community – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The most dehumanizing, unnatural thing that can happen to you, the great lie that many of you live in every day of your lives, is the lie of isolation. It is the lie of self-reliance and self-absorption. We were made for community. That’s why we have hundreds of small groups here at Vineyard.

And the Bible teaches the model of the Trinity as a response to the irrelevance of an individual. See, everyone in the body of Christ counts, just like every member of the Trinity counts. And it’s interesting that Paul picks the least conspicuous member of the Trinity and puts him first – the Spirit. Then the Lord Jesus, then the Father. This whole chapter talks about our need for every person, even the least conspicuous and least obviously gifted person. The Trinity tells us that no person is irrelevant; that everyone counts.

How does God create community in an environment like Central Ohio? By the Holy Spirit causing us together to live under the Lordship of Christ. And by stirring us to worship, to love, to experience, and to meditate upon the three-in-oneness of God. Let’s pray.

How God Builds Community

Rich Nathan

October 5-6, 2002

Spiritual Gifts: God's Way of Building Community

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

- I. The Motive of Spirit-Created Community is Our Reflection of God's Passion Not Some Humanly Inspired Dream.

- II. The Mark of Spirit-Created Community Is Our Reflection of God's Passion Not Some Humanly Inspired Speech (1 Cor. 12:1-3)
 - A. "Jesus is Lord" is the Criterion for Measuring Christian Community
 - B. "Jesus is Lord" is the Condition for Making Christian Community

- III. The Model of Spirit-Created Community is the Trinity Not Some Humanly Created Ideal
 - A. The Trinity and the Bible
 - 1. The Unity of God (Dt. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:5)
 - 2. The Deity and Personality of:
 - a. God the Father (Mt. 6:26-30)
 - b. God the Son (Jn. 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5-11)
 - c. God the Spirit (Acts 5:3,4; 2 Pt. 1:21)
 - 3. The Unity and Complexity of God (Gen. 1:1, 26; Is. 6:8; Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:13,14)
 - B. The Trinity and Its Distortions
 - C. The Trinity and Christian Community
 - 1. A Response to Isolation
 - 2. A Response to Irrelevance