

**Date:** October 1-2, 2022

**Title:** 212: *Receiving*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

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So let me ask you this. What attracts you to spirituality? What is it that you seek in having any kind of spiritual life? My guess is some of us would say, well, I'm not sure that I really am attracted to spirituality that much. Maybe a friend invited you and you are saying, well, I'm here because they bribe me with a meal or something.

Or maybe you say there are things that attract me to spirituality, but I'm not sure that it's always tied to the practice of religion. Maybe it's truth that you say, I really want truth, and if God is God, then He's the source of truth. Maybe it's beauty. Maybe it's transcendence. Just connecting with something bigger. Maybe it's justice. Or maybe there are things that are more personal.

Maybe for you what attracts you to spiritual life is the desire to be more loving or the desire to be more passionate. Or maybe to be more patient, or to conquer something in your life that has felt unconquerable. Or maybe you're wanting God to intervene in something that it seems like you cannot no matter how many resources or what you bring to bear bring about the result you want. Or maybe you're just longing for a deeper sense of peace in your life.

We started a series a few weeks ago that we've called 212. And the idea is really simple, and that as water changes from being warm water to steam that can transition and bring about significant changes when it hits the boiling point. So spiritually, we can move from an experience that's lukewarm and good to something that is transcendent and is really what has attracted us to spiritual life.

And so today we're looking at First Corinthians Chapter 12 verses 12 through 26. You heard it read, and it begins with this statement. It says, "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." And then it says this, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free."

And just for a moment, I want to go down a little bit of a rabbit trail, and this will tie in to spiritual life. But this is around this phrase of the baptism of the spirit because this verse is actually one of the more debated verses in the Bible because in Christianity there are a couple of ways that people understand the baptism of the spirit.

Some people would understand this as a subsequent work of God. So, somebody comes to faith in Jesus Christ. What that means is they believe that they are a sinful person who needs a savior. They say, Jesus Christ is that savior, and I believe Jesus Christ, and there are some who will say, well, that's good, and that gives you salvation, so to speak.

But if you really want to go on spiritually, you need a second work of the spirit, and it's this baptism of the spirit that comes on you and is shown through all kinds of signs and wonders, often associated with speaking in tongues. You've probably heard this. You haven't probably had to be around Christianity for long before you've heard this kind of teaching.

And then there are those who would read this verse and say, this verse is an indication that baptism of the spirit takes place for everyone the moment that they come to faith in Jesus Christ. That is the view that I take. There's a great little book written by John Stott called *Baptism and Fullness*. It's a thin book and can be read in an hour or two that explores this topic and gives everything.

And here's what John Scott does. He goes through and traces the seven times that the phrase baptism of the spirit is used, and he comes to the conclusion that six of those, not this reference here to baptism of the spirit are historical, not necessarily prescriptive, saying this is how God did work in that instance. And then about First Corinthians 12:13, this is what John Scott says. He says, "So the baptism of the spirit in this verse, far from being a dividing factor, some have it and some don't, is a great uniting factor, an experience that all Christians have. It is, in fact, a means of entry into the body of Christ."

And then a little later he writes in the same book, he says, "I have concentrated on the meaning of the expression, gift or baptism of the spirit. And I have tried to summarize the strong biblical evidence, both that these two are one in the same thing, and that they describe the initial blessing which is received at the beginning of the Christian life, not a subsequent one received at some time later, and therefore a universal blessing that's given to all Christians, not an esoteric one given to some just to enjoy."

Now, why is that important? Why do I take this little rabbit trail? If you're here and saying, well, what does this have to do with my spiritual life? It has a ton to do with your spiritual life because if you believe that there's this second work and that if I really want the spirit, I need to seek and try to get this second work, then you are incomplete, incapable of being moved by the spirit.

But if what John Stott says, and I believe is true about First Corinthians 12:13 is right, what it means is that if you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit in fullness available to you, given to you now to enable you to live the spiritual life that you desire and that you have been drawn to.

In fact, in Second Peter, chapter one, we get this statement. It says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." So, what has God given you and me? Everything we need. He's given us his spirit fully, completely. Now, that doesn't mean that there's nothing for you to do.

In fact, John Stott writes in *Baptism and Fullness* that there's a difference between the baptism of the spirit and the fullness of the spirit. And that the fullness of the spirit of Ephesians five and some other places, talks about us allowing the Spirit's work in us to be fully manifested, taking that step to saying what is it that I can experience?

And here's how Peter says it. This is Second Peter, chapter one, verse five. "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love." And here's why this is important. Second Peter, chapter one, he says, you have everything you need. And then two verses later, he says, and make every effort to take what God has given you and use it so that you experience God in his fullness.

And here's again why this is important. You and I don't have to seek something that we already have, but we do need to say, what does it look like for me to take what I've been given and utilize it? I don't know if you've ever done this, but have you ever had keys to your car in your hand and walked around your house looking for your keys? Anybody? Is that only me? And what's true at that moment is you have what you need to get in your car and go where you want to go. And yet you wander around your house going where did I put my keys?

That's what some of us have done with the Holy Spirit, because what we've done is we've lived with this sense of saying, I don't feel like I have the power to do or to be what I read about or what I see in Scripture. But yet the spirit's been given to us. And when we come to First Corinthians 12, and here's the context and this is why this fits here, is what Paul is doing, the author of First Corinthians, is he's saying and now God has placed you in a body.

And so now we get this body analogy, this idea of Jesus as the head and all Christians are members of this body. And so, when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you're

given the Holy Spirit and you're placed in a body. And the parts that we play in the body matter in terms of our spiritual life.

If you were here last week, we talked about in verse seven of Chapter 12, this idea that each person, each Christian, each follower of Jesus is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. The church needs you, not just your service, not just your resources, not just you showing up. It needs the particular gifts and personalities and passions that God has given you in order for the body to function.

But you and I also need the church because the body is given to us for the common good. And what this means is that if you and I don't live in a place where we're receiving the gifts of the body, we will not reach our boiling point. We will not experience God in his fullness. What we'll do instead is we'll live with a little bit of mediocrity, lukewarmness, a sense of saying, I know there's more, but I don't experience it.

And the key to receiving, I think the gifts of the body is to say, and the body here, most commentators would say, is an analogy for the church, certainly the global church. But the global church is only experienced locally. So being part of the local church is a key to receiving some of these gifts of the spirit. And I see five of them in this text that I want to show you.

Here's the first, and that is the body gives us support and without it, we're vulnerable. The body gives us support and without it, we're vulnerable. We see this in verses 21 and 22, "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable." They're indispensable. You need every part of your body.

Have you ever stubbed your toe and then thought, I didn't think the toe did anything until you can't walk? How could that make that big a difference? The toe seems irrelevant until you hurt it and then you can't use your foot or walk. And all of a sudden you say, this toe actually matters. And what is being stated here is that you may not think that you need other people, other parts of the body as part of your spiritual life, your spiritual experience, but what Paul is doing is he's saying, if you ever get to the point where you say, I don't need other parts of the body, other people to be part of my journey, that you're missing part of how God designed us and part of how we will become people who have passion and joy and love and peace. Some of the things that are evidence of the spirit in our lives.

And then he says this, verse 26, he says, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." One of the things that happen when we're part of a community is when we suffer, there are those who will suffer with us and when we rejoice, there are people who will rejoice with us. And we need that kind of support because what happens when we're isolated is that we are vulnerable.

I don't know if you've ever seen one of these National Geographic specials where you have a hunting animal going after prey like a lion after things in Africa. If you've ever seen one of these, who do the lions or the predators target? It's usually the most vulnerable, the slowest, the one who's separated from the herd.

Do you know that's actually a very biblical concept? Do you know what First Peter, chapter five says about Satan? That he's our adversary. And what does he do? He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour. One of the reasons we get vulnerable is because we think we don't need and so we say, I'm going to do this on my own.

And what people will tell you who fall away, not just from church, but from faith or who have made decisions in their lives that are difficult was that it didn't start with waking up one day and saying, I think I'm going to blow up my life. It started with little decisions where they weren't part of the community and then they ended up in a spiritual battle and were vulnerable.

In fact, Ephesians six talks about this, that there's a battle, a spiritual battle that you are in, and I am in, and sometimes we forget it. And the reason in part that we need the body is to be reminded to gather that we're part of something and that there is a spiritual battle going on for your home, for your soul, for your family, for your life. And when we end up in isolation what happens is we become vulnerable.

And sometimes we just gain from being around people who have healthier habits that keep us from being vulnerable. If you've ever been around people with really healthy eating habits, healthier than yours, that doesn't take a lot for me to be around people with healthier eating habits. But when you're around somebody who is eating a kale salad, when you want to order the burger, it's annoying. But it is also setting something that you say, oh, maybe I should have kale. Said nobody ever. But you have that moment where you say, you know what, that's probably a better life choice. And sometimes just being part of a community gives us that perspective. So, that's the first gift of the body.

Here's a second. And that is, the body gives us perspective. And I would say without it, we're shallow. This is verse 17. It says this, "If the whole body were an eye, where

would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?" Very simply what Paul does here is he says you have a particular bent, a particular perspective, and if you don't have other perspectives and he uses hearing and smell here, then you are incomplete. You're shallow in your perspective.

What some of us like to do is we like to collect people who think and see the world just like us so that no one ever challenges our way of seeing things. But to do so is to miss the understanding of the body that says we need people who see and experience the world differently because it brings perspective and it keeps us from being shallow. Without it, what we do is end up in an echo chamber where we're constantly finding people who say what we already think and believe, what we already believe, and feel what we already feel. And we're not pushed to ever see the world differently.

Now, I understand that there can be some challenges to that at times where you say, what if people have a wrong perspective and I have the right perspective, I get that. But part of being in the body is saying there's a perspective that keeps me from becoming shallow and narrow and just experiencing life as an echo chamber.

And sometimes it's just a matter of passion. I came over to church on Friday night for the Worship Night. And just to be really honest, my week had been such that I didn't really want to come to Worship Night. I was like, well, I'm the pastor. I guess I should go worship. It was so good for me to come and experience the passion of other people. And as I experienced their passion to say, you know what, I need a little more passion, and to start to sing and to worship and to engage in what God was doing. Sometimes we need the perspective of others because without it will be shallow.

So, the body brings both perspective and support, but it also brings something else. And I'm just going to call this accountability. And without it, we become dangerous. Here's what verses 15 and 16 say, "Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body."

And what is that pointing to? And why do I say accountability? Well, if you look at verse 20, it says, "As it is, there are many parts, but one body." Then verse 25 says this, "so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other." So, when you take those verses together, what it's pointing to is that we need other parts of the body and there should be concern for other parts of the body. And part of what happens when you're part of a community, a church, is that you have built-in accountability.

Now, I understand that accountability is only as good as we're willing to submit ourselves to accountability. Meaning if we don't let people query us, if we're not in relationship, then we don't actually end up with accountability and we need to be truthful. But there's something about putting ourselves in a place where people may ask us what's going on or why we're making certain choices. And there's something about being in a place where we're experiencing other people because again, there's something built in just to the fabric of it that says this is what I want to be. And I'm part of a group that is living that same thing.

But some of us have built our whole lives around being in a place where nobody ever needs to challenge us. There is a video that went viral last week. There was a woman in Walmart who evidently cut in front of a man and the man said, hey, did you realize there was a line? And he started filming. I don't know why he started filming instantly. But this woman just started to yell at him, and Google this if you want to see it, and she went crazy, basically, on the guy. And she immediately said she had trauma and he was traumatizing her. And that may be and if that is all true. It's a sad tale that she was that vulnerable.

But the reason I say this is we need to be in a place where somebody can say to us, did you know there was a line that you jumped? Did you realize that you were just harsh with that friend? Did you realize that what you just said isn't actually a biblical way to think about things? Have you thought about the choice that you're making with your money? And if we don't put ourselves in those places, then when somebody or something happens, all of a sudden, we go, don't you dare ask me about jumping the line.

And here's what's probably true. Probably very few people wake up in the morning and say, I'm just the kind of person who cuts in line. I don't care. But what happens is little by little you start to say, I'm entitled and nobody should question me. And then we end up in a place where we're dangerous to ourselves because we're not seeing the world completely as it is.

So, the gifts of the body are that we have accountability, we have perspective, and we have support. And then I'm going to say there's a gift from the body that we have an obligation. And I recognize that some of us will say obligation. That doesn't sound like much of a gift. That sounds like the opposite of a gift. But without obligation, we will become self-focused.

And here's where this is in the text, verse 21. "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary,

those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it."

So, what's that saying? If you and I simply choose our community all the time, we say I can get my teaching and get my worship wherever, and then I have my friends and that's my body of Christ, that you're not ever put in a place of obligation to say part of how God intends us to grow is that when we're around people, the term that He uses here, needs special honor or are less honorable. What that could be translated as, not like officially in the Greek, this is my take, is basically those who are hard to love.

Sometimes being in relationship with people that are hard to love is actually the way that God intends to grow us, because it's in having to love people that aren't always lovable, that we actually express the love of Christ. If we only love people who are easy to love, what are we doing? We're simply trading love back and forth. But when we have to love people that are not easy to love, it brings about the work of God's spirit in us and actually raises our spiritual temperature.

I remember years ago talking to somebody. They were coming to Orchard Hill, probably 15 years ago now, and I remember them saying to me, I just don't feel very connected. I said, oh, that's too bad. Then they said, let me even tell you what I did. I came to church one weekend and I stood in the lobby and I said I was just going to stand there and see if anyone would talk to me. And so, what they did is they literally came, stood in the lobby, and said is anyone going to talk to me?

Now I feel for you. If you're somebody who says, I come and I don't feel connected I realize that's a real phenomenon. But the wrong way to approach it is to say, I'm going to stand in the lobby and just see if anyone talks to me. Because what you're doing at that moment is you're saying, I'm treating this as a consumer and seeing if anyone will meet my needs.

And what I said to this person and I think is still true, is what if you walked into the lobby and looked around and said, who looks like no one's talking to them? Maybe I could go over and introduce myself to them and talk to them and see if I can meet a need. Because when you come on this campus or any campus, any church, anywhere in the world, if your mindset is what am I going to get, you will only get to a certain spiritual temperature.



But if your mindset is, what do I bring? What does God have for me? Who can I minister to today? What will happen is your whole experience will change because instead of coming and saying, the music, it was so-so, the teaching, I don't know, it was okay, what you're doing is you're coming and saying, I'm bringing part of myself. And when you do that, God uses it in a way to grow you, not just to meet needs that exist.

I got an email from somebody after last weekend. A friend who had emailed and just said this, one of the things that we fail to see, even if we don't involve ourselves in church, is that God uses even our hardships. Like some of us have walked through horrific things in the last several years. But what this man was saying was that if I will bring myself and involve myself, then I don't waste my suffering. And that's a biblical idea.

Listen to this, Second Corinthians, chapter one, verse three, and following it says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." So why does God comfort us? So that we can comfort others.

But if you missed that link, if you say, I just suffered and I have suffered the most horrible thing, and nobody's meeting my needs instead of having suffering that's redeemed, it will be wasted. But when you say God has as allowed me to go through this so that I can love and help other people come out the other side of their suffering, then your suffering isn't wasted. But it's really easy when we're in the midst of something to say, no, I'm just suffering here.

And then finally, the fifth thing that I believe comes, a gift that comes from being part of the body is that we are given a mission, and without it, we'll be limited. And this comes back to verse seven. We looked at it last week, but to each is given a manifestation of the spirit, a portion of God's work for the common good. And the reason I say we'll be limited is what many of us do is we settle for being part of a smaller mission.

Now, in a sense, all of our smaller missions are the mission of the church. Everything that we do, if you're part of the church and a follower of Jesus, is part of God's grand mission. But when I say we can settle for a smaller mission, we can simply say, I just do my thing and I'm not part of what God is doing, but when you say I'm part of what God is doing, then what happens is every time that you say what I'm doing here and in walking with somebody who's lonely, is I'm participating in the global ministry of the Work of God.

Every time you help somebody step out of an addictive pattern, every time you help somebody who's struggling in their family, maybe because of their own anger or their own issues, walk in a better way, you're part of God's global mission. Every time that you hold a baby and help children experience Jesus Christ, every time that you wave cars into the parking lot, every time that you're part of a student group or you're part of something that God's doing, what you're part of is God's global work that's taking place in beautiful auditoriums, in storefronts, and in huts all over the world all the time.

And when we aren't part of the body, we detach ourselves from that global sense of mission. Certainly, just coming to church doesn't make us part of the body. Certainly, even being in a group doesn't ensure that we're part of the body because we can miss that either way. And I understand that some of us who are gathered this weekend here in the Chapel, in the Strip District, Butler County, and Southpointe, that we may, as we're here, say very simply, you know what, I'm not sure about my faith. I'm not sure about church. I'm not sure about anything.

Can I just say that God has spiritual life for you? But his path has always been and always will be through the community of believers over time. It's not an individual journey. Some of you are probably saying, well, I'm part of the church, but I'm not feeling it. I'm kind of like that person you talked about in the lobby who says, you know, I've been coming for a while and I don't feel a whole lot of community. Maybe you've been around for a long time and you walk through the doors and you go I don't know anybody. It's a bunch of new people. Isn't that great, by the way? I mean, what a good thing to have happened in the life of a church to have a bunch of people that you don't know.

But here's how some of us experience that. We say, well, since I'm not feeling a part of things, I guess I'm not needed. And we drift instead of saying, this is my opportunity to say I need the body and the body needs me, and as I invest, I will experience the gifts of the body once again. Some of us are maybe experiencing it in part in a good way, but it hasn't been as transformational as maybe it could be. This is God's way of bringing about change in our lives because, again, without it, what we end up doing is we end up simply saying, I guess I'll go it alone.

And what we need to do is acknowledge our needs. We live in an era that is so full of independence that it says if it is going to be, it's up to me. I don't need anybody else. We need to acknowledge our needs. We need to be willing to put ourselves in a place where we're saying, I will continue to be here so that the benefits show up over time. And I'll even ask without demanding from people that maybe they come alongside me.

I don't know if you've ever joined a gym. But every January, gym memberships spike. You know how this goes. They offer a cheap deal for the first month or two and people say, this is the year I'm doing it. And so, they sign up for the gym. They go five times in January, twice in February, and then they're done for the year. And here's what you know is true. And that is joining a gym doesn't get you fit. It gives you a resource that you can use to get fit, but it doesn't get you fit. In fact, going to a gym doesn't get you fit. You can go to the gym, but if you stop for a donut on the way home, you kind of undo the good of going to the gym.

One of my least favorite phrases is you can't out-exercise the fork because I'm happy to exercise, I just don't want to cut out food. And here's what's true. Spiritually, you can be a part of the church, and if you show up sporadically, you will have sporadic benefits from the body. You can be a part of the church and show up all the time, but if you don't invest in yourself and become relationally connected, you will have limited benefits from the body.

But if you say I am in and I'm part, then you will find support, perspective, and accountability. You will find yourself having the kinds of things, the shared mission, and even the obligation that moves you forward spiritually to the places that you really want to be. And so, what I would say is that all of us need to be at a point where we say, okay, God, if this is the pathway through to experience you, then I'm willing to put myself in a place where that will happen.

I'd like to just take a few moments and ask you to bow your head and close your eyes for a moment. And I want to give you a chance to respond today, depending on where you are. Maybe for some of us gathered, we're here and church has never really been a priority. We want spiritual life, but we want it apart from the mess of the church. And the church will always be a little messy because it's full of people. But maybe for you, today is just a day to say, God, if you're real, I want to know you. And if you call me to be part of a group of people, and that's the pathway to spiritual life, I'm willing to go down that path.

Maybe you're here and you've always thought that church was just about pleasing God, a way to punch a ticket, maybe to heaven. And even today, as we've talked about church, we said at the beginning that we come to Jesus because we recognize our sin and His perfect work on our behalf. Maybe today is your day just to say, God, I, I believe.

Maybe you're here and church has been hard for you. Maybe you've experienced deep hurt, you've invested in the past and some people let you down. Maybe today is

just a day to say, God, I let go of this and I'll continue to be committed to your church, to your bride.

Maybe you've just been busy. Life has you running in a bunch of different ways and it's not that you intended not to be committed to the body of Christ, but the reality has been that it's just been hard, been too many things going on. Maybe today is just your day to say, God, I will reprioritize being connected to your work through the local church.

Maybe you're a person who's just never wanted to appear needy. And so, you kind of stick your toe in, you show up, but you never let anybody see where you struggle. Maybe today it's just a new commitment to say whether it's in a group, a serving team, or something, where you say God, I will acknowledge what's real so that I can be part of the body because even in that, that encourages and helps others as well as me.

Maybe as you're here today, you've been frustrated with church in general, maybe over politics in the last few years, maybe out of a lack of mission or clarity, and maybe today is just a day to say God help me to be a part of the solution that you want to bring to your church so that it can thrive and point people to you in this world.

God, I pray today, wherever we're coming from, whatever our experience has been, that you would help us to celebrate the gifts that the body can bring to us and put ourselves in a place where we can live in the fullness of those gifts, in the fullness of your spirit, rather than just simply doing church. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great week.