

**1 Vision Area**

1 Group

**The Big Picture**

Today's lesson will look at another passage focused on how we should love one another and use our gifts to benefit one another. We will also conclude the crafting of the Group Covenant.

**Biblical Text**

1 Corinthians 12.12-31 & 1 Corinthians 13.4-13

**Materials Needed**

1 Corinthians 13 reading sheet (below)  
Highlighter  
Puzzle, *if used*

**Preparing for the Lesson**

Although they are somewhat related, there are two parts to the lesson today.

The first is the discussion and reading exercise for 1 Corinthians 12 & 13. It may be helpful to place this passage within its context. 1 Corinthians is a highly corrective book, that is, as opposed to a book like the Ephesian letter where Paul is encouraging the church there to continue what they are already doing, the Corinthian letter seeks to instruct people on how to change how they live with one another. It would appear in chapter 11 that those who have are indulging in all that they have and those who do not are being left out. This is the point of Paul's comments on the Lord Supper. The idea is continued in chapter 12, where we see that everyone has a specific gift they bring to the body—there are no non-important parts, for all parts of the body are important.

If we skip over to chapter 14, we discover that their selfishness has manifested itself in how the people in Corinth seek out specific gifts. They want to have the best gifts, but are overlooking the fact that these gifts are to be used for the building up of the church body as a whole.

Right in the middle of this, Paul places 1 Corinthians 13. We often view this as the “Wedding Passage,” because that is where we hear it most often read. In actuality, Paul was not thinking of the love for a husband and wife at all. He was concerned that members of the church love each other.

Therefore, we will ask some questions over 1 Corinthians 12.12-31, and then read together a part of chapter 13 in a way that I think will help accentuate the importance of the many parts working together for the good of the whole.

*NOTE: During the discussion, we will ask individuals to share the ways they see their giftedness benefiting the body, like we see Paul describe in 1 Corinthians 12. This is usually a difficult question for most people. I would like to say it is because we are such humble people*

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## Preparing for the Lesson (cont.)

*that we want to deflect the glory and honor of our giftedness away from the attention of others. Perhaps, I think it may be closer to the truth that we do not often think of ourselves as gifted. We struggle to find those qualities we think God can use for His glory. This becomes even more the truth when we “rank” the important gifts. If we do not have the gift of teaching, speaking, etc., we tend to assume we are not as valuable as someone who can. (Going exactly counter to Paul’s argument, by the way!) You may not feel this way, but I can almost guarantee someone in your group will.*

*Be cautious. You are asking people to be vulnerable and when they entrust you with their vulnerabilities, handle them with care. If it is your nature to cut people down in jest as a way to break the ice, this week is not the week for it. As a leader, I cannot stress enough how important it will be for you to be the number one cheerleader for those in your group. Do your very best to find the gifts in others they do not see. If they wrestle with what those gifts are, you be prepared to affirm what you see in their lives. I know this may be tough since groups are so new, but try to find things to encourage people about this week.*

The second portion of the lesson—and you can do this in any order you prefer—is to finalize your Group Covenant. At this point, you should have an outline of those things that individuals want to see come out of group. These should be compiled and summarized or grouped in similar sections as appropriate in order to facilitate your group reviewing these.

As you sit down to review this with your group, I find it helpful to say: “Here is the list as I received it from you. Does this list represent what you desire to see in group or is there something I have overlooked? Is there anything that you wish to add or change? Does everyone agree with the things we have listed here?” This gives people plenty of opportunity to add their comments or shape the specifics of the items on your list.

It is important for your group to all agree to the guidelines you set forth. Now is the time for people who want to add or adapt something to speak up. You will need to be aware of how people are reacting to the covenant in order to prompt some people to comment. If someone desires to make a change but feels that the group would not be in agreement, he or she will find it difficult to speak up. You need to try and sense this and invite him or her to make their comment anyway. Most of the time, you will find others were in agreement, but they too were hesitant to bring up any dissenting comment.

Once your group has agreed to the covenant, I usually find it helpful to take it home, type it out and either copy it or email to all group members in order for them to have a tangible reminder of the commitment they have made to the group.

## Possible Lesson Outline

Gather your group together.

If your group does not eat/snack together prior to the actual group time, spend a few minutes with an ice-breaker question or have everyone share how their week went. The fair is in town this week, so maybe asking the group to share their favorite fair memory/food/experience would be a good way to open things up. If there are any individuals everyone does not know, be sure they are introduced appropriately.

Open with a prayer asking God to help you as you work together to craft a covenant that will help guide the working of the group this year.

Share the items you have gathered from group members concerning the Group Covenant. Have group members discuss these items and make any updates you need to on the covenant. See “Creating a Group Covenant,” which was sent out last week or get it here: <http://1groups.com/lessons-materials/>. (NOTE: *This may be done at the end of your group time rather than the beginning.*)

Read 1 Corinthians 13.12-31.

Spend some time in discussion of 1 Corinthians 12 using the discussion questions below.

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## Possible Lesson Outline (cont.)

Do the 1 Corinthians 13 reading as described below.

Ask Question #7 here, if you choose to use it.

Close your time in prayer.

## Lesson Activities

### *1 Corinthians 13 Reading*

Print off enough copies of the 1 Corinthians passage provided below for every person able to read in your group to have a copy. (I realize this can be tricky because of your lack of knowledge of who may actually be there. You can set this up at group, or you might want to make a copy or two less and just allow some people to listen.)

Once you have done this, use a highlighter to mark enough lines of text for each person to have the same number of lines to read. Spread out the text each person will read, so that the first person does not read a sixth of it, and then the next person the next sixth. It also does not have to be equally spaced, so that the reading does not go around the room in a consistent circle. The idea you are shooting for is different people from different areas of the room speaking out in a random pattern.

Be sure to highlight the last line (But the greatest...) on every person's paper, so that everyone will read this line.

Then, during group, pass out these papers and ask people to follow along the reading, reading aloud the parts on their sheet that are highlighted.

Conclude this by getting the reactions of your group. (See Questions #7)

The very first time I did this was while teaching a freshman Bible class at ACU made up of 100 students. I passed out each of these sections of text throughout the room totally at random, and without really knowing what they were starting, the students got into the reading. There was this huge crescendo until the final line, which was said not only by those assigned to read, but others who were familiar enough with the passage and jumped in. When we were done, there was this awesome silence, and even though I know our voices did not echo in that classroom, the presence of that text seemed to linger like an echo. Then, completely spontaneously, the students began to applaud. Even to this day I am moved by the power of that memory, because a group of different and diverse students came together as one to bring to life this passage. I think that was what Paul was trying to say—each of you unique individuals really make up one chorus. I am praying that your group finds some of the power in your time of reading this week and it reminds you to love one another.

## For the Kids

### *Puzzle*

One way to illustrate the idea that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12 that may be helpful is to find a small (12-24 piece small) puzzle. Keep one of the pieces in your pocket, but give the remaining pieces to the children/some adults and have them complete the puzzle. (You can see the importance of this being a small puzzle!)

When they “finish,” but are not really done, ask how they feel about being a piece short.

Look at the picture and ask: We have a picture of a (whatever the picture is), which piece is most important? How about the missing piece? Is it as important as the picture of the head/mountain/duck (whatever the case)?

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### For the Kids (cont.)

The point is that every piece is important and without each and every piece, the puzzle, just like our group and the body of Christ, is not complete.

### For Next Week

Encourage group members that as they identify the ways their gifts build up the body at South Plains and your group, begin to think and pray (although not in that order) of ways they can actually use those gifts. Encourage all the members of the group to be in prayer for one another and the ways they exercise their gifts.

### Prayer Ideas

Because people will be sharing how they see themselves fitting into the body at South Plains and into your group specifically, spend some time in prayer asking people to just jump in (We used to call it a “Popcorn Prayer” back in the day—people just popping into the prayer.) and pray specifically for others in the group, that they would use their gifts for the benefit of God’s Kingdom.

### Discussion Questions

1. Do we typically think of our baptism as being something that unifies us with other believers (v. 13)? How could we do an even better job of bringing the idea of this verse to the forefront of our times together?
2. Have you ever felt like a foot or an ear, such as Paul describes in vv. 15-16? Describe how this would take place in 2011. What sort of people would we call the foot or the ear?
3. In what ways do we tell fellow believers—or perhaps fellow group members—that “I don’t need you!” (v. 21)? What things can/should we be doing to prevent this?
4. I have heard it said “If you don’t think the inconsequential parts are important, just stub your little toe.” While that may be true, we often determine what parts of church are most important to us. Why do we spend time giving more honor to the parts (people/ministries/characteristics) of church that we think are most “presentable?”
5. How do you see your gifts and the role you play fitting into the body at South Plains? How are your gifts an asset to the life of this group?
6. Why is it difficult for us to answer the question above? (NOTE: *See the comments in the Preparing for the Lesson section above.*)
7. (NOTE: *For after the 1 Corinthians 13 reading.*) In what ways does reading 1 Corinthians 13 in the way we just did bring the text more to life than if we had one person read it?

### What’s Next

We will begin looking at the 1 Older & 1 Younger areas of the 1 Vision next week. Our primary passage for our discussion questions, if you chose to go that route, will be 1 Timothy 4.

**What's Next (cont.)**

However, because we will be looking specifically next week at our relationships with 1 Younger, we will be asking our children (if applicable to your group) to lead our lesson time and will allow (assist) them to choose a passage they would like to teach.

In order to prepare for next week, discuss with your children that they will be responsible for the lesson. Allow them a few minutes at the end of group this week to discuss a lesson topic and how they would like to go about leading this lesson. It would be good if an adult sat in on their discussion, but let me encourage you to allow the children to shape this lesson as much as possible. Offer to assist them, but do not tell them what they need to do unless they specifically ask for it.

You may need to allow for a few minutes prior to the group meeting time next week, and so offer that to them if they will need that time. Also offer to help them get anything they need, since they may have a more difficult time rounding up materials, etc.

We will still have a lesson similar to this one, but I do not plan to provide a lesson the children can use for the simple fact I think it is more beneficial for them—and your group—for them to create a lesson they want to teach. For us adults, the lesson about 1 Younger is in getting to watch and participate with them in the process.

And for the record, I am calling the “children” anyone younger than “adult” status. For our group, this means those we call the “Under 18” crowd, for your group, it may mean the college students.

## 1 Corinthians 13.4-13 (NIV)

Love is patient,  
love is kind.  
It does not envy,  
it does not boast,  
it is not proud.  
It does not dishonor others,  
it is not self-seeking,  
it is not easily angered,  
it keeps no record of wrongs.  
Love does not delight in evil  
but rejoices with the truth.  
It always protects,  
always trusts,  
always hopes,  
always perseveres.  
Love never fails.  
But where there are prophecies,  
they will cease;  
where there are tongues,  
they will be stilled;  
where there is knowledge,  
it will pass away.  
For we know in part  
and we prophesy in part,  
but when completeness comes,  
what is in part disappears.  
When I was a child,  
I talked like a child,  
I thought like a child,  
I reasoned like a child.  
When I became a man,  
I put the ways of childhood behind me.  
For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror;  
then we shall see face to face.  
Now I know in part;  
then I shall know fully,  
even as I am fully known.  
And now these three remain:  
faith,  
hope  
and love.  
But the greatest of these is love.