

The Body of Christ: What is the Nature of our Unity? Part 1

Why Geno and Matt aren't nearly as important as you think – and why you are

SPEAKER	Wes Neely
DATE	Sunday, June 6, 2021
PASSAGES	1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Matthew 25:14-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10-11; Acts 3:1-16
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:08:08 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Every believer has been given a gift of the Spirit – the primary way God uses them to serve his body – and God has placed each part “just as he wanted.” The visible roles are not more valuable to him than the hidden ones, and gifts are not levels to unlock. So be humble enough to accept the gift you were given, courageous enough to use it, and come to church to give, not only to receive.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Hope does not rally around unity for its own sake, or around agreement, but around the towering figure of Christ our head.
- ◆ Corinth's divisions mattered because a quarrelling church distracts the world from the Savior it is meant to point to.
- ◆ A spiritual gift, Wes suggested, is the primary way God uses an individual in service to him and his body – not a superpower you control. Even Peter said the healing was not his own power.
- ◆ Gifts are given “for the common good”: messages of wisdom and knowledge, prophecy and healing are by nature for someone else.
- ◆ God placed every part “just as he wanted.” Leaders are not there because they are better; your worth to God rests on following him, not on the size of your role.

- ◆ There are no levels of the Holy Spirit. Geno has the same portion of the Spirit as anyone else.
- ◆ In the parable of the talents, the servant with five and the servant with two hear the same words: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Faithfulness, not quantity, is what God rewards.

► 1:08:08

Matt, Hope’s associate pastor, introduced June’s theme. “I don’t think it’d be an exaggeration to say we live in divisive times.” Families and congregations cope in different ways – “in this house we all think the same way,” or “in this house we just talk about the food we’re going to eat.” Hope does not even rally around unity for its own sake: “we rally around this towering, overshadowing figure of Christ the Lord. He’s our head.” So through June, several voices would speak on the nature of our unity, starting with Wes.

Paul’s concern at Corinth

► 1:11:27

Wes would speak on the gifts, Matt said, not as “come on guys, get it together, we have this big project,” but as “this cornucopia of blessing God wants to give to the church as an overflow to the world.” God does not need us, but he includes us as he builds a spiritual temple for his glory.

► 1:12:00

Division is the first thing Paul addresses in the letter:

“I appeal to you... that there be no divisions among you,” for Chloe’s people had reported quarreling.

► 1:13:32

It reached “Jerry Springer level” – flagrant immorality, believers suing each other before unbelievers. The problem with the mess is that it distracts: “the whole point is there’s this wonderful grace-giving Savior... and when we are a total distracting mess, it distracts away from him.” Jealousy and strife show we are of the flesh (1 Corinthians 3:1–3), and it matters because people matter to God, and because he wants the body to articulate the gospel coherently together. That is the setting of chapters 12–14.

Wes: “Why Geno and Matt aren’t nearly as important as you think they are”

► 1:16:04

Wes titled the talk to make a point, promising to tie it in “in a way that’s not completely disrespectful.” Few passages cause as much controversy as 1 Corinthians 12–14, “so obviously I decided that’s what I wanted to talk about.”

► 1:17:30

“Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed... Therefore I want you to know 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. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1–6 ↗ (NIV)

► 1:18:25

Books could be written on verse 3, Wes said, but its thrust is simple: those who say “Jesus is Lord” do so by the Spirit, so everyone in the church at Corinth is on the same team.

What a spiritual gift is – and isn’t

► 1:19:15

His working definition: “a spiritual gift is the primary way that God uses us as individuals in service to him and his corporate body.” Not superpowers handed out at conversion, with odd “power levels” between healing and teaching.

► 1:20:43

Take it to its logical end: if someone could heal anyone at will, why aren’t they at every hospital, “putting everyone out of business and solving the health care problem in America”? Wes was not denying healing. If God chooses to heal Billy’s cancer, he will use someone with the gift of healing – but that person cannot decide God will do it, or every cancer patient would be well.

► 1:22:08

When Peter told the lame man to walk and the crowd stared, he asked why they looked at him “as though by our own power or godliness we have made him walk” (Acts 3:1–16). Even Peter, closest to Christ, said it was not his power – and nothing in Scripture says everyone he met was healed.

► 1:23:28

Verses 4–6 tie gifts, service and working into one package: we are given gifts for the many services we do in God’s work. “Whatever gift you have is the way in which God will use you to benefit the body of the church.”

For the common good

► 1:23:56

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:7–11 ↗ (NIV)

► 1:24:56

“The common good” here means chiefly the good of the church, though gifts spill over as a witness outside. And look at the list: a *message* of wisdom or knowledge is by definition for someone else. “How many Old Testament prophets were like, I’m going to prophesy about myself?”

Placed just as he wanted

► 1:26:40

Then the body: one body, many parts, all baptized by one Spirit, “whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free.” The foot cannot quit the body for not being a hand; if the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? “But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be” (1 Corinthians 12:12–20).

► 1:28:22

Here was the title. Geno, Matt, the elders, the singers – anyone who looks important – were placed by God, not because “Matt is a great guy, I’m going to give him this great responsibility because he is just so awesome.” They received gifts of leadership or teaching to fulfil a role. “Your worth and your value to God is based on how much you follow him.”

► 1:29:54

Some roles are silent – cleaning the building, keeping the calendar, running sound so that those who teach can do it unencumbered. “If I had to figure out how to do all this sound stuff, I’d be shouting, and my voice would be burned out in ten seconds.”

► 1:30:21

Nor are gifts something you level up in – nice Christian, then greeter, then upgraded to something better. Churches rightly vet teachers, but “you’re given a gift, you’re given a role by God... as much as your hand might want to, your hand never turns into a face.” Doing well means more opportunity for the same gift, not a promotion. “Geno and Matt... were given the gift of leadership; that wasn’t because they’re better than us.”

The parts that seem weaker

► 1:33:07

“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... But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21–27 ↗ (NIV)

► 1:34:09

The presentable parts are the band and the preaching – “come and see.” But if everyone were on stage, a visitor would walk in, turn around and walk out; “if everyone was a Geno,” no one would be listening. A body can survive without an appendix, but “I don’t think God is interested in having a body of Christ that is anything less than a hundred percent.” When he builds a church, he equips it with every gift it needs.

► 1:36:12

Wes tried football, admitting he knows little about it. Everyone can name great quarterbacks; no one can name who makes the players’ meals or books the flights, and when the Cowboys win a championship – “which apparently isn’t ever gonna happen again” – fans won’t thank the sports scientist. But if Geno is the quarterback, he can’t do his job without receivers, equipment, people in the seats and money. “Every single person here, though the role might not be as substantial as some others, the role is just as important.”

No levels of the Spirit

► 1:39:12

“Are all apostles? Are all prophets?... Do all speak in tongues?” (1 Corinthians 12:28–31). Obviously not. If someone says you can get a gift if you pray hard enough or have enough faith, “that’s not how it works.” There is no gaining experience “like a video game” until you level up. “Geno has the same portion of the Holy Spirit as anyone else.”

► 1:40:08

We saw an epidemic in America of people unsatisfied with their purpose – and it seeps into the church. If you know someone (“obviously it could never be us”) who feels they are not doing enough, two things may be going on.

► 1:41:10

First, God may already have called you and you said no: “here’s the opportunity,” and “ah, no thanks.” The opportunity you are dismissing may be your gift. Second, you may know your calling but think it is not important enough. Culture says you must have ambition, but “it might be that your pride and your ambition is getting in the way.” If your gift is making coffee for people everywhere you go, “cool, you might have the gift of coffee.”

The famous preacher and the Siberian mother

► 1:43:26

Hold two people in your mind. One is whatever international author or preacher you most admire – Billy Graham, say. The other is a mother of ten in a town of a hundred people in the Siberian wilderness, with no internet, who will never leave her town and spends her life raising those kids. Which does more for the kingdom? “Everyone would be like, well, obviously the guy... But that’s not how God works.”

► 1:44:23

“To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability... The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.’ The man with two bags of gold also came... His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!’”

MATTHEW 25:14–23 ↗ (NIV)

► 1:45:48

The servant who gained five and the one who gained two hear exactly the same words. God’s pleasure is not based on “the quantity of how many people we reach,” but on the quality of our service and following the Spirit. If the preacher could have reached ten million and reached five, he fell short; who is to say the Siberian mother did less?

► 1:47:17

“We’re not all supposed to be earth-shattering, great, monumental people.” Christ could have set himself up as king, but he was not concerned with fame; he was concerned with doing his Father’s will. Maybe you should be doing more; maybe you have what God gave you and he is waiting for you to act. Two bags instead of five “doesn’t mean God loves you any less.”

Church is not a spectator sport

► 1:48:22

You don’t come to hear nice music, get talked at for forty-five minutes and leave. “I think the mindset first and foremost should be: I come to church to give to others what I have to give.”

► 1:49:25

The ordered list – apostles, prophets, teachers, then miracles and helping – is not a ladder of worth, Wes said, but about how much a gift edifies the gathered church. If Paul walked through the doors, “we should probably make time for that.” That is why a Sunday service gives more time to teaching than to watching one person help another.

► 1:51:56

“Just because your gift might not be seen or noticed does not mean that it will go unrewarded.” Those who work silently, never applauded, “just like the Siberian mother, might be doing it more right than we are.”

► 1:52:25

Imagine if everyone came saying, “I’m going to find one person I can be generous with,” or “I’m not leaving until I find someone who needs encouragement.” Like a potluck where every family brings a full meal, “we’d have so much extra... it would just pour out outside of our church.” Soon there would be little left to do inside, “and we’re gonna have to go serve others outside the church and bring them in.”

► 1:54:16

So this week, ask what you can do next Sunday to bless someone with your gift. If you don’t know your gift, “just show up and try something.” Take the first step, and God says, “Okay, cool, now you’re ready to go.”

► 1:55:19

“Let us be humble and accept the gift we were given, but be courageous and use that gift to the best abilities that we know how.”

► 1:56:23

We prayed for courage to use our gifts boldly, “and even if it goes poorly, to give us more courage to do it again and again,” thanking God “that no Christian is better than the other because of their calling... we are all indispensable parts of what you call the church.” The prayer team stayed down front – “and those people will be using their gift for you.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- [1 Corinthians 1:10–11](#)
- [1 Corinthians 3:1–3](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:1–6 \(NIV\)](#)
- [Acts 3:1–16](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:7–11 \(NIV\)](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:12–20 \(NIV\)](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:21–27 \(NIV\)](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:28–31 \(NIV\)](#)
- [Matthew 25:14–23 \(NIV\)](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt said Hope rallies not around unity for its own sake but around Christ as head. What difference does that make when a church disagrees?
2. How does Wes's definition of a spiritual gift – the primary way God uses you to serve his body – compare with what you were taught about gifts?
3. Which parts of the body at Hope go unseen? Who could you honor this week for a gift that rarely gets noticed?
4. Wes named two reasons we feel we are not doing enough: saying no to what God offered, or thinking our calling is not important enough. Which is closer to your story?
5. What is one thing you could do next Sunday to come to church to give rather than only to receive?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Wes Neely is Hope Chapel's associate pastor and youth pastor, and works with the church's middle schoolers and high schoolers. Much of his teaching with them urges them to talk with their friends about Christ, on the logic that you talk about what matters most to you. He preaches from the Hope pulpit from time to time; earlier messages include [Malachi](#) (August 2025) and [On the Incarnation](#) (November 2025).

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1enDSGdmSo&t=4088s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.