

Outdo One Another Ashley Leavens

"And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?" (1 Corinthians 12:16-17). This phrase always seemed like a no-brainer to me. Obviously, your ear and your eye do not have the same function, and you need them both equally. However, I do not think it is quite as simple when it comes to our own talents.

It can be easy for us to spend all of our time comparing our gifts rather than using them. Romans 12:3-4 says, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function." We can get caught up in the idea of trying to outshine others with the talents we have. Maybe we feel like our talents will be more important if we are doing more and better than those around us. Trying to outdo one another with our talents will only make it harder to use them for God's glory. 1 Corinthians 12:25 talks about how God gave a different function to each member, "that there may be no division." "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Corinthians 12:21).

What if your eye decided it would stop seeing just because it could not hear? Although we can acknowledge that it would be ridiculous for an eye to do that, I think we can sometimes focus so much on the talents we don't have that we forget to use the ones we do. 1 Corinthians 12:18 says, "But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose." Later in verse 22, it states, "On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable." It does not matter how insignificant you may think your talents are, they are indispensable in God's Kingdom. Just because your gifts may not look exactly like someone else's does not mean that are not equally as needed in the Church.

Having many different talents is what makes the Church function. Having said that, there is one talent that, if everyone does not have it, the Church will not function regardless. Directly following 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 13 begins by saying, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all

knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." It does not matter what talents we have or what we do for the Kingdom if we lack love. No matter how different our talents are from our sisters', we should all share an overwhelming amount of love for each other. Romans 12:9-10 says, "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." If there is ever a time to try to "outdo" our sisters in Christ, it is when showing them love.

Maybe you do not think your talents are as good as someone else's. Maybe you get caught up in trying to outdo your sisters in Christ rather than using your talents to work together for God's glory. Instead of focusing on the talents you don't have, focus on the talents you do have. God can use your talents for His Kingdom regardless of what they are. And above all, focus on outdoing one another in the unmerited kindness, undeserved grace, and selfless love you give.