



Working Together in His Strength Devotion

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12: 4-11)

Honey bees are fascinating creatures. This insect, with a brain the size of a very small pin head, takes the nectar from the flowers of a plant and transforms it into the exquisite naturally sweet treat of honey. This honey is not only the bees' food, but is a delightful treat for us. Honey doesn't happen if there is only a single bee. It takes 20,000 bees visiting 600,000 flowers several months, working together, to make 16 ounces of honey. If one bee finds a garden of flowers, it fills its honey stomach with nectar and heads back to the hive where the rest of the bees are. This bee shares the news of the bounty, and in just a little while that one bee will be back at that garden with many of its bee friends to harvest all the nectar that is available.

In a colony of bees, not every bee is a food (nectar) collector. Each bee has its own job. Only 10–30 percent of a colony's bees go out and collect food. They collect food not only for themselves but for the others who are back in the home hive doing other jobs. Other bee workers take care of the queen, some feed the babies, some make wax to store the honey, some put caps on the honey to keep it in storage until it is needed, and some keep everything clean and tidy, so that the hive remains healthy. There must be bees to do every one of these tasks or the hive does not prosper and often dies.

The work of bees also reaps other benefits. As bees fly from plant to plant to collect food for the hive, pollen sticks to them and falls off on other plants. This causes pollination which allows those plants to bear fruit. We enjoy apples, pears, peaches, cucumbers, eggplant, corn, and soybeans because of the work of bees. Anything you eat that was grown on a plant was most likely helped along by the work of bees. By God's divine design, as each bee does its job, the hive is productive and provides much fruit for the world.

As the verses from 1 Corinthians 12 explain, the Holy Spirit gives each of us gifts to use to carry out the work He gives us to do. There is not one gift that the Holy Spirit gives that is more important than another. Every gift that the Spirit gives is important in God's kingdom and is given to be used to glorify Him and to point others to Jesus, our Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit works in us and through the encouraging words of other Christians to help us identify the gifts we have been given and to use them. Through God's Word, the faith we receive when we are baptized, and the forgiveness of sins and strength for living as Christ's redeemed people that we receive at Holy Communion, we are able to work together with others in one body. As God

works in us and through us, we bear good fruit in His name and according to His will. It is not by our own abilities or efforts, but only through Him that this happens.

On our own, we all fall short of God's expectations (Romans 3:22b–23). Through the redemptive work of Jesus and the faith we are given in Him, we are made righteous. The Holy Spirit gives us His fruit of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (Galatians 5:22–23). He works in each of us *unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind* (1 Peter 3:8) so that we can work together as one body in Christ.

In a bee hive, each bee has specific work to do. Together as God's children, He gives each one of us specific work to do so that, by His grace, good fruit is produced. May we work together to carry out the work God has given us to do.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, You have redeemed us through Your death on the cross. Through Your resurrection, we have conquered sin, death, and the devil and have a new eternal life through faith in You. Grant us the strength and wisdom to work together to do the work You have given us to do, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, all Your children may come to the knowledge of You and join in the good works You have prepared for each of us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Working Together in His Strength
Written by Crystal Miller, LaVista, NE
Published by Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2019