

A WAY TO SERVE

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 14-18, 19-24

Lucky Lemons | Bowdon Baptist Church | Sunday, August 23, 2026 Built to a 26-minute core. Teacher: Dr. Bobby Gaines.

THE BOARD SENTENCE

God did not add you to this body. He arranged you in it.

THE RECURRING LINE

"You were arranged, not added."

Appears four times: Cold Open (planted), Section Two (harvested from v18), Section Three (turned toward the person next to you), Landing (final).

Never explained. Just said, then left alone.

TIMING GRID

Beat	Built	Clock	Checkpoint
Cold Open	2:50	10:15	yes, start
The Bible Meets Life (class reads)	2:30	10:18	yes, pre-Reader One
Section One (12:12-13)	4:35	10:20	yes on Monday Test, pre-Reader Two
Section Two (12:14-18)	5:15	10:25	yes on Monday Test, pre-Reader Three
Section Three (12:19-24)	6:40	10:30	

Landing	4:10	10:37	yes
Core total	26:00	End 10:41	

What The Bible Meets Life displaced. It costs 2:30, and it was paid for, not added on top:

Cut	Was	Why it could go
The standalone myth-bust card	1:15	The book does the myth-bust this week. It names rugged individualism as the myth and says outright that it fails in the Christian life. That is the covenant's required myth-busting segment, delivered by the class instead of the teacher. One capstone sentence survives.
"A body is not a crowd" as its own beat	0:35	Folded into the end of Section One rather than sitting alone.
"What the fable was for" as its own beat	0:40	Folded onto the fable card. It was always one label and two sentences.

Net zero. The core is still 26:00.

Live-delivery expectation at the 20 percent factor: roughly 31 minutes, landing near 10:46. That is inside the door with the children arriving.

Checkpoint placement note: every checkpoint sits on the card you tap, never on a reader card. The deck does the arithmetic and gives no advice. Format: *Target 10:24 · Now 10:29 · Gap +5*. Actual time populates automatically when the card becomes active.

COLD OPEN

2 minutes 50 seconds

CHECKPOINT: Target 10:15, start of clock.

I spent about twenty-seven years working around the federal court system. Not the trials. The administrative side. The machinery.

And when you think of a courthouse, you think of the names. The judge's name is on the door. The lawyers' names are on the filings. There is usually a name carved in the stone out front belonging to somebody who has been dead a hundred years.

That is what a courthouse looks like from the outside. It looks like names.

(pause)

I had a boss named James P. Gerstenlauer. His name was James, but we all called him Jim.

Jim had been a colonel in the Army, and you could tell it. He had a way with words, and when he walked into a room, people listened.

(pause)

He was the Circuit Executive for the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Now, most of you have probably never heard of that job. I would not expect you to have. But he was the liaison between the federal judges and the administrative office.

And if Jim did not do his job, the judges were going to be upset.

(pause)

And ain't nobody wanna be around a mad judge.

(let them laugh. Do not add anything on top of it.)

(pause)

That is the whole point.

You did not see Jim's name on the judge's door. But take away the part he was doing, and everybody noticed real quick.

(pause)

Hold onto that. We are coming back to it at the end.

Because Paul is about to write a letter to a church full of people arguing about whose name ought to be on the door. And he is going to tell them something that I think is the most freeing sentence in this whole chapter.

You were arranged, not added.

Let's read.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

2 minutes 30 seconds | LifeWay p. 109

CHECKPOINT: Target 10:18.

(This is the class's own ritual. They read it together and they like it. Do not narrate it, do not set it up, do not preview the point. Just open the door.)

Say: Somebody open to page 109 and let's read The Bible Meets Life together, same as always.

(Let them read it around. Hoover, the rugged individual, Daniel Boone and George Washington Carver and Amelia Earhart. It ends by saying rugged individualism might work in politics but it fails in the Christian life.)

When they finish, one sentence only:

That last line is the whole morning. Rugged individualism works fine in politics.

(pause)

Paul is fixing to tell us it will kill a church.

And read The Point off the page:

God has empowered and equipped us to serve His church.

(No commentary. Straight to Reader One.)

TEACHING NOTE: the book has just done the myth-busting work for you, and the class did it out loud instead of hearing it from the front. That is better than you doing it. Do not repeat it in Section Two. There is a one-line callback built there and that is all it needs.

Question 1 in the book, about pioneers you appreciate, is not being used. One discussion question per lesson. If somebody answers it out loud during the reading, take it warmly and move.

SECTION ONE

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 | 4 minutes 35 seconds

READER ONE: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, ESV.

(Reader stands and reads from their own Bible. Bobby watches the room, not the screen.)

The one word

(after the reading, let it sit one beat)

Count the word "one" in what we just heard.

One body. One Spirit. One body again. One Spirit again.

Two verses. That word will not leave.

(pause)

Now, that is a strange thing to hammer at a church, unless the church has a problem with it. And this one did.

Label that: TEXT. We are not guessing about the problem. Paul has been naming it since chapter one. This church was split. They had picked sides. They had favorites. And by chapter twelve we find out the split had gotten into their spiritual gifts, of all places. They had turned the Holy Spirit into a scoreboard.

(pause)

So Paul writes them two verses with the word "one" stamped on them four times, like a man pressing a seal into wax until it takes.

Who was actually in that room

Look at the pairs Paul names. Jews or Greeks. Slaves or free.

Label that: TEXT. He wrote it.

Now here is the part that helps you see it.

Roman Corinth was not an old city with old families. It had been leveled by Rome in 146 BC and left mostly empty. Julius Caesar refounded it about a hundred years later, and he populated it heavily with freedmen. Former slaves.

Label that: PROBABLE. That is the standard reconstruction from the historians and the

inscriptions, and I am comfortable telling you it, but I want you to know it is a historian's reading and not a verse.

(pause)

So picture the room. A man who owns people, and a man who is owned, drinking from the same cup. A Jew who grew up on Torah and a Greek who grew up on Poseidon, in the same house on the same morning.

That is not a nice church. That is an impossible church.

And Paul says: one Spirit put every one of you in there.

(pause)

The sticky sentence

A body is not a crowd. A crowd is people who happen to be in the same place. A body is people who cannot be pulled apart without something dying.

(pause)

MONDAY TEST

So what does that change on Monday morning?

It changes who you think you are stuck with.

Because if the Spirit put you in this body, then the people in this room are not your preference. They are your assignment. You did not pick them and you do not get to unpick them.

And that means the person here who gets on your last nerve is not a mistake in the seating chart.

SECTION TWO

1 Corinthians 12:14-18 | 5 minutes 15 seconds

CHECKPOINT: Target 10:24, carried on Monday Test 1, the card before Reader Two.

READER TWO: 1 Corinthians 12:14-18, ESV.

(Reader stands and reads. Bobby watches the room.)

The story nobody expects

(after the reading)

Now. I want to tell you where this picture came from, because Paul did not invent it, and knowing that makes what he does with it about ten times better.

(pause)

Five hundred years before Paul, in Rome, the working people walked off. Whole city. They marched out to a hill and said we are done, we are building our own town, you people can carry your own water.

And the senate sent out one man to talk them down. A fellow named Menenius Agrippa. And he did not send soldiers and he did not send money. He told them a story.

He said: once upon a time, the parts of the body got mad at the belly. The hands said, we do all the lifting. The teeth said, we do all the chewing. And the belly just sits there getting fed. So they quit. They starved that belly out.

And the whole body withered up and nearly died. Because it turned out the belly was feeding them the entire time.

(pause)

And the Roman working men heard that story, and they went home.

Label that: TRADITION. Livy tells it, Plutarch tells it, and it is the single most famous piece of political persuasion in the Roman world. Whether it happened exactly that way five hundred years earlier, no historian can tell you. But everybody in the empire knew the story.

Now watch what Paul does with it

That fable had one job for five hundred years. One.

Its job was to tell the little people to be quiet and get back to work. Stay in your place. The belly knows best. The top of the body is the top of the body for a reason.

Label that: PROBABLE, and it is a strong probable. That is what the scholars who work on this passage will tell you the fable was for.

(pause)

And Paul picks it up.

And he does not tell the foot to be quiet.

(pause)

He tells the foot it belongs.

(pause)

Read verse fifteen again in your own Bible. The foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body." And Paul does not say, you are right, know your place. He says that does not make you any less a part of the body.

(pause)

Folks, that is not the same story. That is the same story with the point cut out and a new one put in.

The old fable was told to the ones on the bottom to keep them there. Paul tells it to the ones on the bottom to tell them they were never on the bottom.

The callback (one line, then move)

And go back to what we read on page 109 this morning. Rugged individualism, works in politics, fails in the church.

That old Roman fable **is** the politics version. Menenius Agrippa is rugged individualism's answer to a church.

(pause)

Paul had it in his hand and he would not use it that way.

TEACHING NOTE: stop there. The myth-bust already happened at 10:18 and they did it themselves. If you re-preach it here you will spend ninety seconds telling them something they just read out loud, and you will lose the landing.

(pause)

Verse eighteen

And then he lands it. God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

Label that: TEXT. Two words in there are doing all the work.

Arranged. Not gathered up. Not accepted. Arranged. That is a word for somebody standing over a table putting things exactly where they go.

As he chose. Not as it worked out. Not as people volunteered.

(pause)

You were arranged, not added.

God did not run out of eyes and settle for you.

(pause)

MONDAY TEST

So what does that change on Monday morning?

It changes what you do with the thought you have been having.

The one that goes, *nobody would notice if I stopped.*

That thought feels like humility. It is not. It is a quiet argument with God about where He put you. And verse eighteen says He put you there on purpose, with His own hands, on a Tuesday, before you had any say in it.

SECTION THREE

1 Corinthians 12:19-24 | 6 minutes 40 seconds

CHECKPOINT: Target 10:29, carried on Monday Test 2, the card before Reader Three.

READER THREE: 1 Corinthians 12:19-24, ESV.

(Reader stands and reads. Bobby watches the room.)

The turn

(after the reading)

Notice something. Paul just switched who he is talking to.

Section two was for the foot. The one who thinks she does not belong.

This one is for the eye. The one who thinks he does not need anybody.

Label that: INFERENCE, but an easy one. Verse fifteen is somebody counting themselves out. Verse twenty-one is somebody counting somebody else out. Two different sins, same root.

(pause)

And Paul says the second one out loud so we can hear how it sounds. The eye says to the hand, I have no need of you.

Nobody has ever said that sentence at church.

We just live it.

The Corinth detail

Now, one piece of background, and I am going to label it carefully because I want you to trust me on the Sundays when it matters.

They dug up Corinth. And out at the healing temple on the north side, the archaeologists pulled hundreds of body parts out of the ground. Clay ones. Life-size. Arms, legs, feet, ears, eyes. At one count, more than a hundred and twenty hands alone.

People made them and hung them on the temple wall, on a cord through a hole, asking the god to fix that part or thanking him because he did.

Now the honest label: SPECULATION on whether Paul ever laid eyes on them. Those particular pieces are about three hundred years older than his letter. I cannot put him in that room and I will not pretend to.

Here is the part that is solid, and label it PROBABLE: that city had a long habit of thinking about a body as something you could take apart. A hand was a thing you could hold. An ear was a thing you could hang on a wall by itself.

(pause)

And Paul writes into that city and says: a hand that comes off is not a hand. It is just clay.

Verses 22 through 24

And then he does the thing that should stop us.

He does not say the weaker parts are still useful. He says they are **indispensable**. The ones we consider less honorable, we give greater honor. God Himself composed the body that way, giving the greater honor to the part that lacked it.

Label that: TEXT.

(pause)

I told you about Jim. You do not have to have your name on the door to be indispensable.

(Do not retell the story. One sentence and move.)

(pause)

You were arranged, not added. And so was the person sitting beside you.

THE ONE DISCUSSION QUESTION

(Ask it. Then be quiet. Count to ten in your head before you say anything else.)

What are the dangers of comparing ourselves and our gifting to others in the church?

(This is the book's Question 3. It is the strongest of the three and it runs straight back into A Humble Attitude, so people already have language for it.)

If the room is slow, one nudge only: "Not the obvious danger. The quiet one. What does comparing actually cost you over about ten years?"

Do not stack a second question. Take two or three answers and move.

MONDAY TEST

So what does that change on Monday morning?

It changes what you do when you catch yourself measuring.

Because comparison always ends with somebody in the church being unnecessary. And here is the thing nobody tells you. It is usually you. Comparison up makes you bitter, comparison down makes you proud, and both of them end with you sitting out.

LANDING

4 minutes 10 seconds

CHECKPOINT: Target 10:37.

Let me take you back to that courthouse one more time.

I told you the names are on the doors and in the stone out front, and that Jim's was not one of them.

Here is what I did not tell you.

Jim knew exactly how much his part mattered. He just never expected anybody outside that building to know it existed.

(pause)

And I think that describes about half of this room.

You know your part matters. You have made your peace with nobody noticing.

(pause)

But Paul will not leave that alone. He will not let it stand. Because verse twenty-four says God Himself went out of His way to give the greater honor to the part that lacked it.

So the noticing is not optional. It is God's own habit.

What this says about God

(slow here)

Think about what kind of God arranges a body this way.

He could have made a church of eyes. Impressive, visible, everybody looking straight ahead. He did not.

He built something where the invisible parts are the load-bearing ones, and then He said out loud that He did it on purpose so that we would have to need each other.

(pause)

And He did that because that is what He is like. He is the God who came into the world with

no name on any door. Born where nobody was watching. Working a trade for thirty years in a town nobody could find. The head of the body took the lowest place in it.

(pause)

He is not asking you to be content with being unseen. He is telling you He was there first.

THE QUIET MOMENT

(Ask the room to close their eyes. Do not fill the silence. Ten seconds minimum.)

Two questions. Just between you and the Lord.

First: is there a part of this body you have been telling yourself you are not?

Second: is there a person in this body you have been living like you do not need?

(silence)

THE ONE ACT OF OBEDIENCE

This week. One thing.

Find the person in this church whose part nobody sees, and say their name out loud to them.

Not a general thank you. Not "we appreciate everything you do." Name the thing. "I know you set those chairs out every Sunday and I know nobody says anything about it. I see it."

Text it if you have to. Say it if you can.

One person. This week.

Because God gives greater honor to the part that lacked it, and He mostly does it through somebody's mouth.

THE CLOSE

You were arranged, not added.

Not one of us in this room is a spare part. Not one. God put every single one of you exactly where you are, on purpose, with His own hands.

(pause)

Learn. Love. Live.

(Twelve seconds. No explanation. Then pray.)

PRAYER

Father, thank You that You did not gather us up. You arranged us. Thank You that You put the honor where the world would not put it, and that You went first. Help us this week to see the ones we have walked past. In Jesus' name, amen.

APPENDICES

A. STICKY SENTENCE BANK

1. **You were arranged, not added.** *(the recurring line)*
 2. A body is not a crowd.
 3. God did not run out of eyes and settle for you.
 4. Comparison always ends with somebody being unnecessary, and it is usually you.
 5. A foot that quits does not stop being a foot. It just stops walking.
 6. The thought that nobody would notice if you stopped feels like humility. It is a quiet argument with God about where He put you.
 7. A hand that comes off is not a hand. It is just clay.
 8. The head of the body took the lowest place in it.
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B. LEADER'S CHEAT SHEET (claim labels)

Claim	Label	Note
Corinthian church was factional, including over gifts	TEXT	Chs. 1-4, 12

"One" appears four times in vv. 12-13	TEXT	Count it
Jews/Greeks, slaves/free in the congregation	TEXT	v. 13
Roman Corinth refounded 44 BC, heavy freedman population	PROBABLE	Standard historical reconstruction
Menenius Agrippa's belly-and-members fable	TRADITION	Livy 2.32; Plutarch, <i>Coriolanus</i> ; set c. 494 BC
The fable's standard function was to restore hierarchy	PROBABLE (strong)	Well-supported in the scholarship on this passage
Paul reverses that function	PROBABLE	The clean scholarly reading of 12:12-30
Terracotta anatomical votives excavated at Corinth's Asklepieion	TEXT (archaeology)	Hundreds of pieces, 125+ hands
Those votives date c. late 5th-3rd c. BC	TEXT (archaeology)	Three centuries before Paul
Paul saw them / alluded to them	SPECULATION	Say so out loud. Do not soften it.
Corinth had a long habit of thinking of bodies in parts	PROBABLE	The safe version of the above
v. 21 addresses a different sin than v. 15	INFERENCE	Easy one, but label it

Why the SPECULATION label is the most important line in the lesson: saying "I cannot put him in that room and I will not pretend to" in front of fourteen people is what buys you credibility on the Sunday the text is hard. Do not skip it to save fifteen seconds.

C. SCRIPTURE READINGS

Three readers, ESV, from their own Bibles as usual.

- **Reader One:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-13
- **Reader Two:** 1 Corinthians 12:14-18
- **Reader Three:** 1 Corinthians 12:19-24

Note on the LifeWay book: the printed text on pages 109-112 is CSB, not ESV. If anyone is following in the book while a reader reads from the ESV, the wording will differ slightly. Nothing in this lesson turns on the difference except one word: the ESV of v. 18 reads "arranged," which is the hinge of the recurring line. Make sure Reader Two is on ESV.

D. VERIFIED OUTSIDE SOURCES

Charles Stanley / In Touch, both verified to exist:

- In Touch daily devotional, "How to Serve the Body of Christ," May 5, 2025. Text is 1 Corinthians 12:14-26. Direct hit on this passage. Uses the big toe steadying the whole body, and closes with a call to look for a need God can meet through you this week.
- In Touch sermon, "The Holy Spirit: The Giver of Gifts." Supporting passages include 1 Cor. 12:14-21. Theme is feelings of inadequacy and spiritual inferiority robbing believers of usefulness.

Video clip: NOT VERIFIED. I did not confirm a specific link this round. BibleProject has a 1 Corinthians book overview, but I am not going to tell you it covers chapter 12 usefully until I have actually checked the runtime and the section. Say the word and I will verify before Saturday rather than have you recommend something sight unseen.

E. DIG DEEPER (fenced, only if the room runs early, which it will not)

1. "Baptized into one body" in v. 13. Whether Paul means water baptism, Spirit baptism, or the two held together is a live question among careful readers. Label it PROBABLE either way and do not litigate it in a Sunday school class. The point he is making is not the mechanism. It is the *one*.

2. The other body fable. There is a Greek fable from Babrius, written roughly the same time as 1 Corinthians, that uses the same body imagery with speaking parts including an eye. It runs the hierarchical direction, not Paul's. Useful if somebody pushes back and asks whether Paul really was subverting anything. Label: PROBABLE.

3. The missing belly. Paul's version of the body has no belly in it, which is the one part the Roman fable was built around. Scholars have noticed. Interesting, but it is a footnote and it will eat four minutes. Leave it out.

F. RESERVE QUESTION BANK (only if the one question dies)

1. What is the difference between saying "my part doesn't matter" and saying "I don't matter"? Are they the same sentence?
 2. Who in this church holds something up that most people never see?
 3. Paul says God gives greater honor to the part that lacked it. What would that actually look like here?
 4. The book asks about pioneers you appreciate. Flip it: who is someone nobody appreciates who ought to be?
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G. HOOK LEDGER, updated

Week	Hook	Type
Luke 19	120% vs 400%	Unexpected number + finance
1 Cor 1	Ten names in ten verses	Unexpected number + Greek word
1 Cor 3:5-15	<i>architekton</i> / the carpenter's word	Greek word
1 Cor 3:18-4:7	<i>(A Humble Attitude)</i>	not logged
1 Cor 10	<i>(Lay It Down)</i>	not logged
1 Cor 12	Menenius Agrippa's fable, borrowed and inverted	Historical fact
1 Cor 12 (secondary)	Corinth's clay body parts	Archaeology
Banked	The missing belly; Babrius 134; the freedman colony	History

Illustration world used this week: COURTHOUSE (administrative side). Named source: James P. Gerstenlauer, called Jim. Circuit Executive, Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Former Army colonel. Bobby's boss. All facts supplied by Bobby.

RETIRED THIS WEEK: the unnamed docket clerk from the first draft of the cold open. Invented composite, replaced by the real person. Not to be reused. Farm: not used. West

Georgia classroom: not used (used last week). Rotation is clean. Farm is available next week; West Georgia should rest one more.

H. NEW STANDING RULE (adopted this build)

The Sourced Illustration Rule.

When a lesson needs a personal illustration, the build stops and asks Bobby one narrow question. It never fills the slot itself, and it never writes a composite, a placeholder person, or a generic stand-in that could be mistaken for a real one.

The question must be narrow enough to answer from memory in two minutes. Not “tell me a courthouse story.” Instead: “Do you have a true story from the courthouse where somebody behind the scenes held everything together?” Ask for the job or title, what they actually did, and the one thing that went wrong when it was not done.

Once Bobby supplies the fact, it can be shaped for timing, order, and payoff. It cannot be added to. No invented details, no improved job titles, no dialogue Bobby did not say.

Why this became a rule: the first draft of this cold open built an unnamed docket clerk to occupy the slot. It read fine. It was also fiction sitting in the load-bearing position of the lesson, and one question replaced it with an Army colonel, the Eleventh Circuit, and a line about a mad judge that nobody outside Bobby’s life was ever going to write.

Per the Prospective Architecture Rule, this governs the next build forward and does not trigger retrofit of locked lessons.

I. THE FINAL TEST

- **Did they see it?** Yes. Jim walking into a room, the hill outside Rome, the working men going home, the clay hands on the temple wall.
- **Did they understand it?** Yes. Verse 18 turns on one word, *arranged*, and it is labeled and defended.
- **Will they remember it?** “You were arranged, not added,” said four times, never explained.
- **Will they obey it?** One person. One name. Said out loud. This week.
- **Did they leave loving Jesus more?** The landing goes to Christ taking the lowest place in His own body before it goes anywhere else. Yes.

J. FILING NOTE

Actual finish time last Sunday: 10:51 (36 min against a 30-min build). **This week's build:** 26 min. **Actual finish time this Sunday: 10:51.** Built core 26:00.

The number that matters is not the overage. It is that the overage moved and the finish time did not.

Sunday	Built	Finished
Aug 16, A Humble Attitude	30:00	10:51
Aug 23, A Way to Serve	26:00	10:51

Four minutes came out of the build and nothing came out of the morning. Two data points is not a pattern, and the start time this week was never stamped, so it is still possible the lesson simply started later. That is precisely the ambiguity the timing instrumentation resolves.

What this does mean, with reasonable confidence: cutting the manuscript is not the lever. Something other than build length is setting when class ends, and until the deck stamps a start time we are guessing which. Do not respond by cutting Session 7 to 22 minutes.

Open before final publish: read-aloud timing pass. Restoring verbatim manuscript speech to the deck made two cards longer than their assigned seconds. TEACH-06 runs about 178 spoken words plus four pauses against 55 seconds. OBEY-01 runs about 128 words against 55 seconds, plus pauses and an explicit twelve-second hold. Read both aloud at teaching pace, then redistribute seconds inside the fixed 1560 total. Word count cannot decide what to borrow from, because The Bible Meets Life includes the class reading and the discussion card includes waiting. **Do not cut spoken copy to make the old numbers fit.**

Capture it before you leave the room, along with the 60-second voice memo. Two Sundays of this and we will know the real conversion factor instead of estimating it.

Card ID note: the S06-C## labels in this manuscript are planning references only. Permanent IDs live in `LL_1COR12_TEACHER_MANIFEST.json` under the `LL-1COR12` namespace.

Freeze point (registry rule, settled this build): an ID becomes permanent when it enters the canonical manifest handed to the reader or to Grok, or is otherwise published as the lesson build. Before that point it is draft scaffolding. Draft-only IDs may be changed or

discarded and **do not enter the retired ledger.**

Accordingly, the five Session 6 draft IDs from the first pass are not retired. They were never canonical. The retired ledger carries only the two genuine entries it already had, LL-CAP-01 and LL-1COR10-TEACH-03.

Folded during the revision pass (draft beats, no ID implications): "A body is not a crowd" into Section One, "What the fable was for" onto the fable card, and the standalone myth-bust into The Bible Meets Life reading.

Slot tokens: QUIET, OBEY, PRAY, and CLOSE are live conventions and used as such. LAND is withdrawn. **BML is established as of this build** for the class's recurring LifeWay-page reading ritual, which is not Scripture reading, teaching, or discussion, and had no existing token.