

One Spirit, Many Gifts: For the Common Good of the Church

1 Corinthians 12:1–11

BIG IDEA: *The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different believers for one shared purpose: to glorify Christ and build up the church.*

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND: Paul writes this section to a church that was spiritually gifted but spiritually immature. The Corinthians loved displays of power and eloquence, and they were drawn to the more dramatic spiritual gifts—especially tongues—often elevating those certain gifts and those who had them as more “spiritual” than others (*sound familiar today?*). This bred pride, comparison, and division. It seems that some forgot that these gifts were never meant to spotlight individuals, but to glorify Christ and build up the whole church. Coming from a pagan background, some were also confused about how to discern the source of their spiritual experiences, remembering their past in idol worship, where ecstatic speech or supernatural phenomena could happen apart from the Spirit of God. Paul writes to correct their misunderstanding: *true spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit, they always exalt Jesus as Lord, and they are given to every believer*—not as personal trophies, but as tools for the “common good” (*for the benefit*) of the body. This passage is the foundation for Paul’s larger teaching in chapters 12–14 on unity, diversity, and the proper exercise of gifts in corporate worship.

1. Be Informed About Spiritual Gifts (vv. 1–3)

A. Spiritual gifts are from the Holy Spirit, not human ability (v. 1)

- Gifts are charismata — grace-gifts, not earned talents.
- Every believer has at least one (Romans 12:6).

Application: *Don’t confuse spiritual gifts with natural skills; they are Spirit-empowered for gospel purposes.*

2. True Spiritual Gifts Always Point to Jesus as Lord (vv. 2–3)

- Paul contrasts their pagan past with Spirit-filled worship.
- The ultimate test of a gift’s authenticity: Does it exalt Jesus as Lord?

Application: *When you evaluate any ministry or gift, ask: “Does this make much of Jesus or much of me?”*

3. Recognize the Diversity of Gifts From the Same God (vv. 4–6)

- Paul uses a threefold repetition—*varieties of gifts...varieties of ministries...varieties of activities*—but each comes from the same God.

A. Different gifts (v. 4) — The Spirit’s variety in the body

- No two believers are gifted in precisely the same way.

B. Different ministries (v. 5) — The Son’s direction in service

- Ministry opportunities differ, but they serve the same Lord.

C. Different activities (v. 6) — The Father’s power at work

- Even with the same gift, results may differ; God controls the outcome.

Application: *Stop comparing your gifts to others; use yours for God’s glory!*

4. Understand the Purpose of Gifts and Appreciate Them (vv. 7–10)

A. Gifts are Spirit-revealed (“manifestation of the Spirit”)

- They display the Spirit’s presence and activity in the church.

B. Gifts are for the common good of the church (body of Christ)

- Not for self-promotion but for strengthening others (Eph. 4:11–16).

Application: *Before you use your gift, ask, “How will this serve others?”*

C. Paul lists some gifts given to the early church: A word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

D. These gifts demonstrate the Spirit’s freedom

- He gives what is needed in the moment for the mission of the church.

E. No gift is greater in worth than another

- All are valuable because they come from the same Spirit.

Application: *Don’t envy someone else’s gift or despise your own—both attitudes dishonor the God, who is the Giver.*

5. Submit to the Spirit’s Sovereignty (v. 11)

A. The Spirit decides who gets which gifts

- You can desire gifts (v. 31), but you can’t demand them.

B. The Spirit empowers the gifts He gives

- You don’t have to strive for someone else’s gift—you can be faithful with the one you’ve been given.

Application: *Trust the Spirit’s wisdom in how He has equipped you, and be faithful where you are.*

Practical Applications Recap

A. **For Believers:** *Let your gift draw attention to Christ, not yourself.*

B. **For the Church:** *Use your gift for the common good, building unity, not division. A gift hoarded or misused is a gift wasted.*

C. **For the Mission:** *Remember—your gift is for the advancement of the gospel, not personal gain. God gave it to you for His glory and others’ good, not for your own applause.*

Conclusion: *When Paul wrote these words, he wasn’t just giving the Corinthians a lecture on spiritual gifts—he was calling them back to the heart of the gospel. Gifts are not about status; they are about service. They’re not proof of your spiritual worth; they’re tools given by a gracious God to bless others and glorify Jesus. So the question isn’t whether you’ve been gifted—you have. The question is: will you use what God has given you for the common good?*