

Spiritual Gifts and My Ministry

1 Corinthians 12–14

1) Our ministry brings glory to God.

“Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order **that in everything God may be glorified** through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 4:11)

2) Our ministry builds up the local church.

“From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, **when each part is working properly, makes the body grow** so that it builds itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:16)

3) Our ministry confirms spiritual life within us.

“So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And **cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness**. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:28–30)

“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.” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6)

– **Ministry for the glory of God and for the building up of the church is possible only for those who have the Spirit of God.**

“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.” (1 Corinthians 12:8–10)

– **Since gifts vary from person to person, ministry will also vary.**

“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...” (1 Corinthians 12:7–8)

- A spiritual gift is not some super-spiritual personal ability, but an opportunity for ministry.
- There is a difference between temporary gifts and permanent gifts.

I. The Lord Sovereignly Determines Gifts and Ministry

“For to one is given **through the Spirit...**” (1 Corinthians 12:8)

“All these are empowered by one and **the same Spirit**, who apports to each one individually **as he wills.**” (1 Corinthians 12:11)

“But as it is, **God arranged** the members in the body, each one of them, **as he chose.**” (1 Corinthians 12:18)

“And **God has appointed** in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...” (1 Corinthians 12:28)

“They wanted to be in God’s kingdom while keeping one foot in the kingdom of this world. They wanted to have the blessings of the new life but hang on to the pleasures of the old. They wanted to have what they thought was the best of both worlds...” (John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*)

A. God’s sovereignty in gifts should humble us

“For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, ‘**Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,**’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. 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? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?” (1 Corinthians 12:14–19)

“As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 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.**’ On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require.” (1 Corinthians 12:20–24)

B. God's sovereignty in gifts serves the unity of the body

"But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." (1 Corinthians 12:24-27)

"If you think you have a spiritual gift, but no one needs it, then it is not a spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is always needed by someone." (Pavel Togobitsky)

Resolution #1: Accept what God gives me for ministry today and serve with it for the sake of Christ.

II. Any Ministry is Useless Without Love

"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. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

A. The Results of Ministry Without Love

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." (1 Cor. 13:1)

"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." (1 Cor. 13:2)

"If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." (1 Cor. 13:3)

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (Matt. 7:21-23)

B. Characteristics of Love for Ministry

"Love is patient and kind..." (1 Cor. 13:4a)

"love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful..." (1 Cor. 13:4b-5)

"[love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth..." (1 Cor. 13:6)

"[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Cor. 13:7)

"Love never ends..." (1 Cor. 13:8a)

"Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is from God**, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**." (1 John 4:7-8)

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom. 5:5)

"Love is a way of being as a person, a way of thinking, acting, and living. It is, in fact, being Christ-like. . . Love is the way of being that is so all invasive that it affects the whole of the way life is conducted." (Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*)

In our ministry, the relationships between Christians are significantly more important than achieving a result.

Resolution #2: Always evaluate my ministry in terms of the presence of love and pray to God that He would grow this love in me.

III. Ministry Must Be Directed Toward the Building Up of the Church

"...the one who prophesies speaks to people **for their upbuilding** and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies **builds up the church**." (1 Cor. 14:3-4)

"...the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that **the church may be built up**." (1 Cor. 14:5)

"So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in **building up the church**." (1 Cor. 14:12)

"What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done **for building up**." (1 Cor. 14:26)

The word "upbuilding" is οἰκοδομή (oikodomē) - οἶκος (oikos - house) and δέμω (demō - to build).

"If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them **keep silent in church**..." (1 Cor. 14:27-28)

Resolution #3: *Always evaluate my ministry in terms of building up the church and ask myself: for what purpose am I doing what I am doing?*

- **Resolution 1: *Accept what God gives me for ministry today and serve with it for the sake of Christ.***
- **Resolution 2: *Always evaluate my ministry in terms of the presence of love and pray to God that He would grow this love in us.***
- **Resolution 3: *Always evaluate my ministry in terms of building up the church and ask myself: for what purpose am I doing what I am doing?***

"On the supposition, that there never was to be but one individual in the world, at any one time, who was properly a complete Christian, in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity always shining in its true luster, and appearing excellent and lovely, from whatever part and under whatever character viewed: Resolved, to act just as I would do, if I strove with all my might to be that one, who should live in my time." (J. Edwards, Resolution #63)