

**09/07/25 The Variety of Spiritual Gifts
1 Corinthians 12:8-11**

Welcome...

We are studying the book of 1 Corinthians and last week we saw in 1 Corinthians 12:1-7 that Spiritual gifts are sovereignly given for the purpose of exalting Jesus and edifying the church. Unfortunately, spiritual gifts were not uniting the church in Corinth; they were dividing the church. It was obvious that some of the Corinthians were placing such an inordinate emphasis on showy displays of spirituality, particularly speaking in tongues, that it was disrupting the church's worship, dividing the church's fellowship, and demeaning the witness of the gospel. The Corinthian church thought they were exercising the gifts of the Spirit, but they were not exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit!

Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-11...

Have you ever noticed how people have very different abilities? Some of you can fix anything—others of you can break anything. Some of you can cook a meal that belongs on the Food Network—others can burn water. Some of you sing beautifully—others (including me) make a 'joyful noise.' Isn't it interesting how different we are? And yet, when God puts us together in the church, He uses all those differences to build something far greater than what any of us could do alone.

What we see in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 is that the Holy Spirit gives different spiritual gifts to different believers, not to compete with one another, but to complete one another. Our text this morning reminds us that the Holy Spirit distributes different gifts so the body of Christ can actually function the way it's supposed to.

Main point: 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 provides three aspects of how the Holy Spirit sovereignly gives diverse spiritual gifts to believers for the building up of the church, displaying both the unity and the power of God at work among His people.

The Design of Spiritual Gifts in verses 8-9a

The Diversity of Spiritual Gifts in verses 9b-10

The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts in Verse 11

My prayer is that we each know Christ and want to make Him known by keeping in step with the Spirit and exalting Jesus Christ by serving His body the church with the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has given each of us.

I. The Design of Spiritual Gifts

Nine gifts are mentioned in our text, gifts which enable believers to fulfill various important functions in the Body of Christ. And it is the Holy Spirit who is specifically named as the source of this enablement. Note verse 7, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Notice in verses 8-9 "the same Spirit" and "the one Spirit" is repeated. Look also at verse 11...

The Greek word for spiritual gifts in the New Testament is *charismata*, from which we get our English words "charisma" and "charismatic." The root word is *charis* which means "grace."

Spiritual gifts are given by God's grace. They're not earned; they're not the result of hard work; they're not even ones we choose for ourselves. And they may, or may not, be related to our natural skillset.

God's design for spiritual gifts is that they have a unity in source, the Holy Spirit, and they also have a unity in purpose. They were given, not for personal enrichment (cf. 14:4; 1 Peter 4:10), but for the common good of the body of Christ, the building up of others (1 Cor. 10:24; 14:12).

J.I. Packer writes precisely about this ministry of the Spirit pointing us to Jesus and says, "The truth of the matter is this: the distinctive, constant, basic ministry of the Holy Spirit under the new covenant is so to mediate Christ's presence to believers, that is, to give them such knowledge of His presence with them as their Savior, Lord, and God, that three things keep happening." First, there is communion with Christ in authentic spirituality. The truly spiritual person is about knowing Jesus and having fellowship with Him.

"Secondly," Packer says, "personal transformation of character into Jesus' likeness. Galatians 5:22-23..." So that the truly spiritual person is about more than simply having a wonderful quiet time with Jesus; they're about being like Jesus, reflecting His character to the world.

And then thirdly, he says, "The Spirit-given certainty of being loved, redeemed, and adopted through Christ into the Father's family leads you to serve others with the opportunities and the spiritual gifts God has given you."

Does that describe your life? Does that describe the aspiration and longing of your heart? Do you first know Jesus as your first love? Is the Holy Spirit leading you to adore Jesus, to become more like Jesus, and to humbly love and serve others ahead of self? This is God's design for us.

Now you may ask: Are spiritual gifts given to us when we receive Christ, or are they cultivated through our walk with God? The answer is both. Spiritual gifts are given at salvation but also need to be developed through spiritual growth.

As we seek to serve God out of love for the purpose of building up others for His glory, God will bring glory to His name, He grow His church, and honestly you will grow tremendously when you avail yourself to be used of God in service.

(Slide) The New Testament lists spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6–8, 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28–30, and Ephesians 4:11.

Now when we look at the New Testament lists of spiritual gifts the question is this: Do they all still exist and are in practice today? Notice in that list there are some gifts that are clearly miraculous and there are others that are non-miraculous. There are miraculous gifts like healing, the working of miracles, and prophecy. Then there are non-miraculous gifts like teaching, exhortation, evangelism, serving giving, leading and mercy.

This brings us to point number two:

II. The Diversity of Spiritual Gifts

Before we start going through each spiritual gift listed in our text. We still need to answer the question: Are the miraculous spiritual gifts still in practice today?

Our statement of faith here at Cornerstone church is described in a document called What We Teach. We give a copy to each person who attends our Discovering Cornerstone class and What We Teach is also available on our church website, just click the top tab that says "About" and from the dropdown list click on What We Teach.

In section 4 of What We Teach, the section on the Holy Spirit, we read: We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ. Every believer

possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit. As He indwells all believers, He sanctifies, instructs, and empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of final redemption. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13)

We teach that the Holy Spirit is sovereign in giving spiritual gifts for the perfecting of the saints today so as to bring glory to Christ through the redemption of the lost and the building up of believers. Further, we teach that the gifts of tongues and other sign gifts in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of all believers. (John 16:13,14; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 12:3-11; 13:8-10; 14:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7; Hebrews 3:1-4).

In other words, we teach what is called a cessationist view. Meaning that we divide the spiritual gifts in the New Testament into two basic categories: the non-miraculous, permanent gifts and the miraculous temporary gifts.

In the first category of non-miraculous, permanent edifying gifts, there are eight different gifts: teaching, exhortation, evangelism, pastor-teacher, helps/service, giving, leading/administration and mercy.

It isn't as if every believer gets only one gift. Rather, the Holy Spirit takes those gifts and blends them as He sees fit for each believer. Every believer, then, has been given a special giftedness uniquely crafted by the Holy Spirit. For example, my gifts are leading and teaching.

A second category of New Testament gifts is the temporary sign gifts, also known as the miraculous gifts. The New Testament lists ten such miraculous gifts. Those ten gifts fall into two divisions.

Some miraculous gifts were for the purpose of revelation: apostle, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, word of wisdom, and word of knowledge.

When these gifts were functioning, the New Testament hadn't yet been completed, so God through His Spirit used these gifts to reveal His truth to the church.

The focus of other miraculous gifts was confirmation: miracles, healings, languages ("tongues"), the interpretation of languages, and likely also the miraculous gift of faith. Those gifts were signs or identification markers of the true apostles in the first century.

2 Corinthians 12:12 says, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." The purpose of these gifts was to authenticate the apostles and confirm the message they preached. In the apostles' case, their message was authentic revelation from God—the true Word of God. A true New Testament apostle had to (1) see the risen Christ, (2) be directly commissioned by Him, (3) be confirmed by miracles, and (4) serve in a foundational, non-repeatable role.

Divine revelation continued until the written Word was completed in the late ad 90s, with John's writing of the book of Revelation. Then, the written Word, authored by the apostles and their associates, became self-authenticating by the power of the Holy Spirit. From that time forward, because the written Word of God was complete, there was no longer a need for the miraculous sign gifts. That is the cessationist view.

Continuationists believe the miraculous gifts either continued unabated since the birth of the church at Pentecost, or waned during most of the church age but were restored early in the twentieth century. So, cessationists believe that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have ceased, continuationists argue that those same gifts have continued through the church age.

Now, while I am a cessationist I have dear brothers and sisters in Christ who are continuationists. In a few weeks I will be visiting one of my triplet sisters who I love very much. She is charismatic and believes all the gifts are still active today.

The cessationist and continuationist debate is not inherently a first-level doctrinal issue (like the essence of the gospel or the deity of Christ). In other words, one's position regarding the continuation or discontinuation of the sign gifts is not ultimately determinative of his or her standing before God. But that does not mean that this issue is unimportant. It is very important because it has significant implications for both one's private devotional life and the corporate body life of the local church.

For example, there was a time when Paula and I were dating that her mother's pastor told Paula that she and I were unequally yoked because Paula spoke in tongues and I did not. Unequally yoked means a believer married to an unbeliever. So I asked Paula, "Does that pastor think I am an unbeliever? Do you think I am an unbeliever?"

The most hotly-contested passage of Scripture regarding the miraculous gifts is 1 Corinthians chapters 12 thru 14. It is important to remember that, in those chapters, Paul is emphasizing love for fellow Christians and unity within the body of Christ. We need to keep that theme in mind as we discuss this issue.

So, with our remaining time let's look now at the list of spiritual gifts starting with verse 8.

The first gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8 are among the hardest to define. The "word of wisdom" and "word of knowledge" are difficult to pin down.

Some Charismatics/Pentecostals view the word of knowledge and word of wisdom spiritual gifts as the Holy Spirit speaking from one believer to another, giving special direct revelation regarding a decision or situation. Those who define and use these gifts in that way will often say something to the effect of, "I have a word from the Lord for you." In doing so, they claim to be speaking on behalf of God and claim that their words are to be strictly obeyed.

However, this understanding of the word of knowledge and word of wisdom gifts conflicts with the sufficiency of Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16-17...

Teaching" – The Scripture is sufficient for teaching doctrine and instructing in the truth. Everything we need to know for our spiritual life is found in God's Word.

"Reproof" – The Scripture rebukes us, identifying where we have sinned and acted wrongly.

"Correction" – The Scripture corrects us by putting us back on the right path.

"Training in righteousness" – The Scripture trains us for spiritual life just as parents train up their children.

God has given His all-sufficient Word to His people so "the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (v. 16). The Greek word for "adequate" occurs only here in the New Testament. It means "capable and able to meet all demands." Paul is teaching that Scripture makes the man of God adequate and capable of meeting everything it requires of him.

The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit—His illumination of the Scripture that we saw in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13—is not the imparting of new information but of a spiritual understanding of inspired Scripture.

This is not to say that God never uses another person to speak to us. I have been blessed by sitting under biblical preaching that inspires and convicts me, but it is the faithful teaching of God's Word that the Holy Spirit uses not a supernatural prophetic "word of knowledge" about not a direct message to me about if we often need direct

messages from God through other people in order to live our lives, is God's Word truly sufficient, as it declares itself to be?

So, do these two gifts exist today? The continuationist would say Yes and the cessationist says No.

No, these were temporary sign/revelatory gifts given in the apostolic era to establish the church and authenticate the apostles' message. Once Scripture was complete, these gifts ceased. Today, wisdom and knowledge come through God's Word illuminated by the Spirit, not through special revelations.

The Gift of Faith

The gift of faith (1 Cor. 12:8) can't be the same as saving faith since all believers have the latter. Thus, the gift of faith must refer to an extraordinary faith and vision for the future. It seems that Paul has this gift in mind when he speaks of a faith that "can move mountains" (1 Cor. 13:2). Perhaps the "prayer of faith" exercised by elders when one is sick (James 5:15) may also be an example of the gift of faith.

When Paul was sailing to Rome as a captive, the ship encountered a terrible storm. After throwing all cargo and tackle overboard, they went for many days without food and without letup of the storm. At the height of danger Paul told his fellow travelers, "I urge you to keep up your courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you'" (Acts 27:22–24). Paul's confidence took special faith. His great faith exercised in the midst of disaster laid hold of God's promise and brought hope and safety to everyone with him.

Healing and Miracles

The gifts of healing (verse 9b) and miracles (10a) belong naturally together. A miracle might be broadly defined as an extraordinary work of God in which He suspends or overrides the normal courses of nature so that the result cannot be explained by any natural cause.

Those bestowed with this gift were empowered by God to perform supernatural signs and wonders. The working of miracles validated them as spokesmen for God.

The gift of healing involved the ability of a person to cure other persons of all forms of sicknesses. An examination of New Testament healings by Christ and the apostles is noteworthy. These healings were:

- instantaneous (Mark 1:42)
- complete (Matt. 14:36)
- permanent (Matt. 14:36)
- unconditional - including unbelievers who exercised no faith and did not even know who Jesus was (John 9:25)

As in the case of the other sign gifts, the gift of healing terminated with the completion of the canon of Scripture; there was no further need for the gift of healing given to an individual. Can God still answer the prayers of His children who pray for healing? Absolutely, but He does not give today the gift of healing to an individual.

The apostle Paul understood that his miracle-working ability served a purpose beyond that of just grace and compassion towards people. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:12, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." Paul's miracle-working ability confirmed Him as a true apostle of Christ. This unique calling came with verifiable evidence or signs that demonstrated He was truly speaking on Christ's behalf (Rom. 15:17–20).

As with the Old Testament prophets, the apostles were spokespersons for God, and the miracles they performed validated their unique position in ministry. Just as with the two Old Testaments periods of miracle-working men, the miracles of the New Testament also lasted only about 65–70 years. They began with Jesus’s ministry and lasted at the longest until John’s death at the end of the first century.

The Gift of Prophecy

Some have said that prophecy is the same as preaching. However, the prophets were not engaged in interpreting Scripture. They gave oracular pronouncements, words of the Lord; they were not dependent on texts in proclaiming the word of the Lord.

Those who prophecy may speak forth God’s word (and in that sense it is similar to preaching), but it differs from preaching and the gift of teaching since the one who speaks isn’t working from a written text; they are not expositing and explaining the Word of God.

So, the gift of prophecy doesn’t fit with what we call preaching today since those who preach rely on a text of Scripture and explain and apply what the Scriptures teach. Those who prophesy, however, don’t proclaim God’s word from a written text but convey what God has revealed to them.

The difference between cessationists and continuationists is in some ways insignificant at the practical level when it comes to prophecy, for what continuationists call prophecy, cessationists call impressions.

God may give a person impressions, but they should not be received with the same level of authority as Old or New Testament.

Distinguishing between Spirits

“Distinguishing between spirits” (1 Cor. 12:10) reflects the ability to discern between what is true and false. The basic meaning of distinguishing has to do with separating out for examination and judging in order to determine what is genuine and what is spurious. Acts 16 is a good example.

Verse 10b...

The Gift of Tongues

Regarding the gift of tongues, we will go into much more detail in verses ahead. But let me just say that tongues is supernatural ability to speak in a known language.

The first occurrence of tongues happened on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. In Acts 2, the gift of tongues is clearly human languages, because people from all over the world hear the apostles “speaking in their own language” (2:6), and “each one” heard them “in their own native language” (2:8). The apostles were declaring the works of God “in our own tongues” (2:11).

It seems quite clear that tongues in Acts refers to speaking in languages unknown by the speaker, but many interpreters think that speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12–14 refers to speaking in ecstatic utterances instead of in other languages. We read, for instance, in 1 Corinthians 14:2, “For the person who speaks in another tongue is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands him; he speaks mysteries in the Spirit.”

But in both Acts and 1 Corinthians, languages with a discernible code are in view. If no interpreters are present, then no one understands what is being said except God. However, if an interpreter is present (either someone who understands the language from birth or someone with the gift of interpretation), then the tongue (i.e., language) is no longer mysterious.

Just as many who think they are prophesying are actually sharing impressions, there are those who claim to have the biblical gift of tongues aren't speaking in other languages but in ecstatic utterances and that is not the same thing as the gift we find in the Scriptures.

We look again at tongues more closely when we get to chapter 14.

III. The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts

Verse 11...

The gifts were not meant to be selected by individuals or personally solicited by them, but were instead given by the ... Spirit ... as He determined. "The Spirit" is referred to six times in verses 7–11

Despite the fact that spiritual gifts are sovereignly distributed, the individual believer has to choose to function in the capacity God has gifted him. The whole purpose Paul has in mind in discussing this subject is not to teach the doctrine of spiritual gifts, but rather to get believers to function as gifted people. And unfortunately, many are not.

Imagine being on a sports team and never stepping onto the field. Sure, you'd cheer from the bench, but you'd miss the thrill of actually playing the game. God didn't design us to sit out; He gave us spiritual gifts so we could get in the game. The joy is not in spectating but in serving!

The Church will function properly, and will not mature, without God's people properly and faithfully using the gifts God gives for ministry.

I think of all the different servants who make even a worship service of a ministry event happen here at Cornerstone. From printing bulletins to folding bulletins, from greeters at the door to those who set up the chairs, to the audio visual crew to the music team, to the elders who lead, shepherd and pray, to the servants who prepare and set up communion, to the children Sunday school teachers, to the ushers and security (yes, you are in good hands) to the preacher, and the prayer partners. Each serving for the glory of God and serving the body. Spiritual gifts are given to every believer to bless the church, build up the body of Christ, and edify believers. But if a spiritual gift does not in some way edify the church, it is no longer a used gift; it is an abused gift.

Have you ever worked on a big jigsaw puzzle, and then right near the end you discover—you're missing a piece? Frustrating, isn't it? But when that last piece fits into place, the picture is complete and you feel a sense of joy. God has given each of His children spiritual gifts. Each of us is a piece designed to fit perfectly into the body of Christ. And when we use our gifts, not only does the picture come together, but we experience the joy of being exactly where God designed us to be.

Let's pray...

Spiritual Gifts Listed in Scripture

Romans 12:6-8

Prophecy
Service
Teaching
Exhortation
Giving
Leading
Mercy

I Corinthians 12:4-11, 28

Word of Wisdom
Word of Knowledge
Faith
Healing
Miracles
Prophecy
Distinguishing of Spirits
Speaking in Tongues
Interpreting Tongues
Apostles
Teachers
Helps
Administrations

Ephesians 4:11

Apostles
Prophets
Evangelist
Pastor / Teachers

1 Peter 4:10-11

Speaking
Serving