

# Spiritual Gifts

## 1 Cor. 12

### INTRODUCTION: Do you think it would build your faith if?

- **Holy Land** - Would it help your walk with God if we could send you to the Holy Land and you could see the Jordan River, you could see the streets of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, you could see Golgotha, even the empty tomb? Every year dozens of our people visit there with Julie and I and they confess that it does build their faith.
- What if we could send you **back in time** and you could see all those things in real time? You could see the water turned into wine, you could see the transfiguration on the mountain. Would that help you to walk with God?
- What if **Jesus** could **personally** walk through life in the flesh with you? If you didn't know how to handle a situation – ask Jesus! If you get sick, don't pop a pill, talk to Jesus! I mean you have god in the flesh with you.

I would agree, those things would be amazing to see. That being true, you can imagine how odd it sounded when Jesus said the words of, **John 16:5-7 (ESV)**

**7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away,**

### For 3 years the disciples had walked with Jesus –

- In the face of a deadly storm they called out to Jesus and He calmed the storm.
- When they lacked food, Jesus had multiplied the loaves and fish.
- In the face of sickness Jesus had healed.
- He had demonstrated His authority over nature, demons, sickness
- Jesus had even raised Lazarus from the dead.

**7b - for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.** - That helper is the 3rd Person of the Trinity God the Holy Spirit.

**HOLY GHOST** - I remember when I was a small child and I heard about this comforter. My home Church was King James only. So I didn't hear about the Holy Spirit, I heard about the Holy Ghost. That wasn't comforting to me at all. I remember laying in bed at night and praying that God would protect me from vampires, werewolves, monsters, and the Holy Ghost.

**CONTEXT:** Today's text will highlight a specific ministry of the Holy Spirit called Spiritual Gifts.

- King David had prophesied in **Psalm 68:18** that after the ascension of Jesus Christ that gifts would be given to His followers.
- Paul tells us in **Ephesians 4:8** that if fulfilled through the work of the Holy Spirit and His distribution of Spiritual Gifts.

Now the Church at Corinth was simultaneously a **VERY gifted** church and a **VERY immature** church. Incidentally, it is possible to be both.

***Giftedness and ability is no sign of spiritual maturity.  
Some of the most immature people I have known have gifts I can only dream of.***

***That's the danger so many Pastor's fall into -  
their gifts taken places that their character cannot keep them.***

One of the marks of maturity is understanding the proper way to USE one's gifts. That is what 1 Cor. 12-13 is all about. This week we are going to look at the first 11 verses as an introduction to Spiritual Gifts, next week we will get into their appropriate use.

Before we get into the text, let me show you...

### **THREE OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS:**

#### **1. There are two categories of Spiritual Gifts:**

- **Motivational Gifts** - The book of **Romans, Ephesians and 1 Peter** detail Motivational Gifts. These are the particular motivations each Christian has toward a particular area of service. They are the areas of greatest fulfillment and usefulness.
- **Miraculous Gifts** - Miraculous gifts are what is described in **1st Corinthians**.  
<sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

#### **2. There are two camps related to Spiritual Gifts**

- **Cessationism** - That is to say that the new Testament Miraculous Gifts ended with the completion of the New Testament. This seems to be an over-reaction to some of the excesses found within the charismatic movement of the 70's and 80's. A cessationist would argue that the gifts ceased after the completion of the NT, which would make today's chapter pretty meaningless.
- **Non Cessationism** - Non Cessationists would teach that since the scriptures don't tell us that the gifts would cease we should not expect them to do so. We have every expectation that these gifts will exist in our churches.

#### **3. Miraculous Manifestations were never Normative**

One of the reasons people give for believing that spiritual gifts ceased is that after the founding and establishing of the Early Church we don't see them regularly referenced in Church History. I would argue that a fair reading of scripture should cause us to expect them to be more normative early in church history and less so as history progresses. Let me explain - **When you step back look at the entire bible you see something interesting.**

The Bible covers about 4,000 years of history. It is not primarily a history book but rather a written form of Revelation from God to man. As such, it covers the high

point of history when God stepped into time. That being understood - we do not see the miraculous moves of God being normative, but rather we see 4 times when they seem to peak.

- During the time of **The Exodus** with Moses and Joshua
- During the time of **Prophets** with Elijah and Elisha
- During the time of the **First Advent** with Christ and the Apostles
- During the time of the **Second Advent** - with two Prophets mentioned in the book of Revelation.

**So MOST of scriptural history is NOT extraordinary moves of God.**

Those times in history were unique. God was doing something very unique.

- It does great harm to come to church expecting a repeat of Pentecost every Sunday. People begin to question their faith, when actually it is their understanding of scripture that is at fault.

Also, EVEN DURING THOSE SEASONS - the spectacular work was often localized to particular people.

**Luke 4:25–27 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup>But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land.<sup>26</sup> and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.<sup>27</sup> And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

So it wasn't like EVERYONE was healed, or EVERYONE was fed. It's just good to keep that in mind.

NORMATIVE Christianity is getting up, reading your bible, walking with God, loving your family, sharing your faith, stewarding God's resources. And if God wants to use you in a spectacular way that's His business. You see?

- **Avoid Normalizing** - Even by the closing of the NT you see that the gifts were poured out in the same way...So you see in latter letters statements like: **1 Timothy 5:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) Paul did not tell Timothy, “well just find someone with the gift of healing”.
- **Avoid Denying** - At the same time you want to avoid the error that MANY churches fall into and that is acting as if there is NO HOLY SPIRIT. Many are guilty of what Paul warned of in **2 Timothy 3:5 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

*With these things in mind, look with me at chapter 12 verse 1.*

**TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.

**Led astray** (*apagō*) was often used of prisoners being taken under armed guard to prison or execution. Paul says before you followed Christ you were imprisoned by your idols. They held unreasonable influence over your life. But now you know Jesus. His influence has brought tremendous freedom. He is the single greatest factor in your life.

Jesus compared someone finding Him to a man finding a pearl of tremendous value. Or a man finding a buried treasure in a field, then selling everything he owns so that he may purchase that field and hold its treasure.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

Since Jesus is the ultimate focus of the Kingdom of God - the Spirit of God will always work in concert with Jesus’s agenda.

There is a negative and a positive test.

1. **Negative Test** - The Holy Spirit will never attack the person, the work, or message of Jesus Christ. Not matter what spectacular ability a person might display, if they diminish the person and work of Jesus, they are not influenced by the Holy Spirit.
2. **The Positive Test** - The Holy Spirit will always echo and affirm the person, work, and message of Christ.

So, not only will they avoid attacking Jesus, they will lead with Jesus.

**ILLUSTRATION:** So much of modern preaching may be described by what Christian Smith called, **“Moralist Therapeutic Deism”**. In other words, it’s morally good, it’s practically helpful, and it refers to God occasionally. That is NOT Christian preaching - a person motivated by the Spirit of God will lead with Jesus, they will point to Jesus, they glorify Jesus.

We live in a time when we can’t be generalist theologically, we must speak with specificity. I often think of it this way - If a Jewish Rabbi, a Muslim Imam were seated on the front row as I preach and I just taught moralism... speak the truth for example. They would both agree fully. But it becomes a Christian sermon when I say, “Speak the truth, because Jesus Christ is the way the truth and the life and by speaking truth we best glorify Jesus”. That’s when they get off the bus.. you see?

<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of **service**, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of **activities**, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

**Three categories mentioned there:**

- **Gifts** - has reference to the specific category of gift. For example the gift may be encouragement.
- **Services** - Has reference to the expression of the gift. So, the gift may be encouragement, but that gift may be expressed through singing, teaching, visiting, serving... you see?
- **Activities** - Has reference to a particular ministry within the church. So for example, you may have the gift of encouragement, you may be talented in singing and when people hear you sing they are encouraged. The activity may be singing in VBS, or Choir, or a solo.

Sometimes people will say, "You have to let me use my gift, so I want to sing a solo". We do have to let you use your gift, but do not have to assign that activity to you. It may be the wrong time, or perhaps we need to know you better. But that does not mean you can't use the gift of encouragement. You can encourage in the hallway, in a small group.

<sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

So the purpose of YOUR gift is OUR good.

**Adrian Rogers said**, "*Spiritual Gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with*".

You have no right to withhold it from our corporate benefit. AND, the gifts God has given to US are for YOU. We have no right to withhold them from YOUR benefit.

**In Verse 8, Paul begins to list a few of the gifts.** This list is not exhaustive, but likely these were gifts that were predominant at the church at Corinth.

**1. Wisdom**

<sup>8</sup> For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom,

- The Gift **Wisdom** is the supernatural ability to understand and apply God's will specifically in areas not directly addressed in scripture.

Sometimes we need wisdom about life decisions that are not specifically addressed in the Bible. For example, we know we are to work - but which job? We know we are to marry a Christian - but which Christian? We know some of us are to have children, but how many? A person with the gift of wisdom can help you answer those questions.

**EXAMPLE:** The decision to move forward with the construction of a new wing on our

campus was a big decision. Frankly, there was not verse that commanded to build or not to build. We see precedence, but not precept. So we leaned on people who have expressed a consistent gift of wisdom over decades - what did they think was the right thing to do. The church affirmed their decision unanimously.

These are the people you want to surround yourself with when making key decisions. Get their perspective.

## 2. Knowledge

8b. and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,

- The Gift of **Knowledge** may be understood as the supernatural ability to understand and apply God's Word.

**EXAMPLE:** Sometimes you will meet a person who has insight into God's Word far beyond their education would take them. **Acts 4:13** (ESV)<sup>13</sup> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.

**EXAMPLE:** Jesus in the Temple at the age of 12 - **Luke 2:46–47** (ESV) <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> **And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.**

**EXAMPLE:** This is a gift that I believe God has given to me. When I was a new believer I recognized an ability to think categorically about scripture. It made perfect sense to me, while others seemed to read it like an unfamiliar language.

The various parts of scripture formed like images in my mind and I could access them at ease. When I taught the scriptures, I did so with a confidence and authority that was unnatural.

This wasn't true of other disciplines. I my grades didn't reflect a sudden ability to comprehend other subjects - it was limited to biblical truth.

I began to receive invitations to do school assemblies, but I was not allowed to use scripture when I spoke. I discovered that taking a Bible from me was like giving Samson a haircut... my strength was gone.

When I'm in the text, I'm comfortable, I'm confident, people seem to benefit. When I depart from the text, I'm just like anyone else. That is how a spiritual gift works.

## 3. Faith

<sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit,

- The Gift of **Faith** is the supernatural ability to hear God's voice and believe it regarding situations not addressed in scripture. If it's addressed in scripture we should all believe it. The Gift of Faith is for things NOT addressed.

The person with the gift of faith is typically very drawn to extended times of intercessory prayer. This is the person you want praying for you, but more importantly believing for you.

God has instituted a Spiritual Principle that the administration of his Kingdom advances by faith. So God reveals His intended plan, then it is incumbent upon us to express faith in God's nature, ability and word.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Percy Ray was a Pastor in rural Mississippi. He was known by many as ***God's spoiled child***. It was said that he got everything he asked for in prayer.

**-Gift of Land** - Once he was praying for land for a new Church, they had no money. He was led by God to go to a field and dig a footing for a new Church. He said, "God we don't own that field" But God told him to go so he went. At the same time God spoke to a business man in Memphis and told him to drive to that area and he would find a man in overalls digging the footer for a Church. He was to give him the land. It happened just as God said.

- **-Death of Trouble** - The story is told of a young Pastor who came to Percy Ray telling him of a particular Church member who did nothing but cause trouble. He was threatening the Pastor, disrupting the service, the Church had done everything in their ability to quiet the man to no avail. Finally, the young Pastor went to Percy Ray and who bowed down on the spot and prayed, "Dear God, bring this man to repentance or kill him." The story goes that as they were praying a man lost control of his automobile and crashed into the home of this troublesome church member putting an end to his life.
- **Adrian Rogers** said, *"There are a lot of people I want praying for me, but Percy Ray is one I don't want praying against me"*.

#### **4. Healing**

9b, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

- The Gift of **Healing** is the supernatural ability to serve as God's instrument to bring physical healing to a person.

#### **Luke 8:45–47 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."

God at times expresses His healing through a vessel. AND, at times he won't do it without the vessel.

Now, this doesn't mean that the person can heal at will - that was an Apostolic sign not a typical spiritual gift. But the person with this gift is God's vessel. They are drawn to those who are physically hurting.

You may have this gift. I am a big believer in the medical profession. I thank God for good physicians, but I also believe that a Christian ought to always call on God for healing. Now, if you don't do that - you may have the gift and not realize it.

## 5. Miracles

<sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles.

- The Gift of **Miracles** is the supernatural ability to serve as God's instrument in effecting extraordinary changes in the ordinary course of life.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Manley Beasley was a Southern Baptist Evangelist who used to preach all over the world. He had was preaching in Russia soon after the fall of the iron curtain. It was a marvelous opportunity. On day one of the meeting thousands gathered to hear him preach and a torrential rain fell. Which it didn't bother the people they were standing in several inches of water. But the sound crew told Bro. Manley that he could not go on stage with a sound system because the rain would ruin the system. Bro. Manley prayed for the rain to stop and they say the clouds literally moved around the crowd and it maintained until the sermon was complete. ***Incidentally*** in the airport there was some confusion and he got through the tariff agent without paying the taxes that were due. He asked his associate if he ought to say anything - to which he replied, ***"You don't have to, but don't expect to stop the rain again"***.

## 6. Prophecy

10b. to another prophecy.

- The Gift of **Prophecy** includes but is not limited to the supernatural ability to speak directly to the heart of a person concerning things known only to them and God.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Sometimes Prophecy is tell a person what they already know to be true. **1 Corinthians 14:24–25 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, <sup>25</sup> the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

Now, throughout history God has used the office of Prophet to be His spokesman to National Leaders. That is not what is being referred to here. This is a gift,

**ILLUSTRATION: Charles Spurgeon** - told of on occasion where a young man had

stole a pair of gloves and in the midst of the sermon he stopped, pointed directly at the young man and said, “Young man you’ve stolen those gloves from your employer”. On another occasion a man had cheated in a business deal. Spurgeon stopped in mid sermon and called him out on it. In his auto biography he said, “*I could tell of a dozen such occasions where the same thing has happened*”.

## 7. Discernment

10c. to another the ability to distinguish between spirits.

- The Gift of **Discerning Spirits** is the Supernatural Ability to discern the underlying personality working in and through and individual whether it be the Holy Spirit, Fleshly or Demonic.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I had a Pastor visit our church (*in Alabama*) once and he was here one day and he said, “Pastor, this is a good church, the Spirit of God is on this Church, however, there are a few people who have the Jezebel spirit and he told me who they were. He said, “till they are health with you will not be able to make much progress”.

## 8. Tongues

10d. to another various kinds of tongues.

- The Gift of Languages or **Tongues** is the Supernatural Ability to communicate God’s Truth in a language you cannot normally speak. The new testament refers to the tongues of men, that is a known language and the tongues of Angels, that is an unknown language.

## 9. Interpretation of Tongues

10e. to another the interpretation of tongues.

- The Gift of **Interpretation of Tongues** is the Supernatural Ability to interpret for the edification of the body those who have the gift of Tongues.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Al Jackson was preaching at Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, AL several years ago. In the midst of the sermon a man stood and began to speak in a foreign language... he was preaching. Dr. Jackson said, “This is an example of the New Testament Gift of Tongues... then he said, “Do we have an interpretation of this word?” No one responded, so he turned to the original speaker and said, “Since there is no interpreter I must asked you to please be seated”. The person complied and it was over. At the end of the service a lady approached him and said, “Pastor, I understood every word he was saying, but I was so caught off guard I didn’t want to say anything”.

<sup>11</sup> All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

So these gifts are EMPOWERED by the Holy Spirit.

You can have the gift, but lack the power to function in the gift.

How do you get the power? You plug into the power source - the Holy Spirit.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:** Swedish hypercar manufacturer Koenigsegg (KO NUG SIG) has produced the QUARK. An electric motor that it claims will be the most power-dense electric motor ever built.

Far more powerful than anything in existence today.

But apart from the appropriate battery source. It is nothing more than an expensive paper weight.

Sadly, some of you have tremendous spiritual gifts that you may not even know exist. Being filled with the Holy Spirit may be the single greatest change you've experience since conversion. And it could be a massive blessing to our church and community.



The Holy Spirit is a person not a thing - He may be offended, he may be welcomed.

**Luke 11:11–13 (ESV)**

11\_What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12\_or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13\_If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!?"