

The Holy Spirit
Gifts of the Spirit
1 Corinthians 12:1-31

November 25, 2018 a.m.

HDBC

This time of year most of us are thinking about gifts; buying them for others and receiving them for ourselves. This can be a source of great joy but also great stress. We enjoy buying them when we know they are going to be received with excitement. We can be stressed when we can't seem to find just the right gift.

God is a gift-giving god. James 1:17 *Every good thing given and every **perfect gift** is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

He has given us the gift of salvation, eternal life, the Bible, the Holy Spirit. These are just a few of the wonderful gifts that God has given to us. In addition to those, He provides spiritual gifts to every believer. **1 Corinthians 12-14** provides the most extensive explanation of spiritual gifts in the Bible. There are other passages, but this morning I want us to **focus on 1 Cor. 12.**

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

Supernatural endowment from God which enables a believer to fulfill his God-given task on earth. God has a ministry calling on every believer. Spiritual gifts enable us to do what He has called us to do.

I want us to read the chapter together. Then I am going to point out **10 things** that you need to know about spiritual gifts. I'm not going to dive into the individual gifts and give a description of them. We can do that another time. Today, I want you to get the big picture of the importance of spiritual gifts.

Read 1 Corinthians 12

1. There are Many Different Gifts (4)

4 places where spiritual gifts are mentioned. Each gives a partial list. There are twenty listed in all. Range in character and in function. Some are open and obvious, others are hardly noticeable. They are different.

The book, *Fast Food Nation*, exposed the dark side of the fast-food industry. At one point it described a food-production plant that runs twenty-four hours a day, 310 days a year, turning potatoes into French fries. Quote:

Conveyor belts took the wet, clean potatoes into a machine that blasted them with steam for twelve seconds, boiled the water under their skins and exploded the skins off. Then the potatoes were pumped into a preheat tank and shot through a knife. They emerged as shoestring fries.

Four video cameras scrutinized them from different angles, looking for flaws. When a French fry with a blemish was detected, an optical sorting machine time-sequenced a single burst of compressed air that knocked the bad fry off the production line and onto a separate conveyor belt, which carried it to a machine with tiny automated knives that precisely removed the blemish. And then the fry was returned to the main production line.

Sprays of hot water blanched the fries, gusts of hot air dried them, and 25,000 pounds of boiling oil fried them to a slight crisp. Air cooled by compressed ammonia gas quickly froze them, a computerized sorter divided them into six-pound batches, and a device that spun like an out-of-control Lazy Susan used centrifugal force to align the French fries so that they all pointed in the same direction.

They were sealed in brown bags, the bags were loaded into boxes, and the boxes were stacked onto wooden pallets. What's the end goal? Millions and millions of French fries that look and taste exactly the same.

The point? **We like uniformity;**

But God likes diversity within unity. Spiritual gifts reflect that.

2. The Gifts are Sovereignly Given by the Holy Spirit (4, 11)

The Holy Spirit is the one who decides who gets which gifts. It is His prerogative. He knows the needs of the body, and He knows the temperament of the individual. Therefore He is best qualified for making this decision.

3. The Gifts are Ministry-Focused (5)

Just as there are a variety of gifts there are a varieties of ways in which the gifts can function. **Three people** may have the same gift, but utilize them in three different ways.

Leadership Gifts

Leading

Apostle

Administration

Pastor/Teacher

Ministry Gifts

Service

Helps

Giving

Wisdom

Knowledge

Discernment

Exhortation

Mercy

Faith

Proclamation Gifts

Evangelism

Teaching

Prophecy

Sign Gifts

Miracles

Healings

Tongues

Interpretation of

Tongues

4. The Gifts are Empowered by God (6)

Effects - Energizings, works, activities. God's power in action.

You may have gifts within you, but unless the power of God is unleashed through you they remain dormant. Remember that we are warned against quenching the Spirit. We quench the Spirit when we fail to allow Him to work through us in utilizing the gifts which He has given to us. I cannot exercise my gifts in my own power. **Gas to engine.**

5. Every Believer Has at Least One Gift (7a)

There is not one believer alive today who does not have at least one spiritual gift. When you were saved you were added to the body of Christ. And you were added not to be excess baggage, but to join with the other members as a significant member of the body with a specific function or task.

6. The Gifts are Given for the Common Good (7b)

Each person's gift is observable to others within the body of Christ as he or she uses it. They are to be used for the common good, or for the general well-being of the body of Christ. They are not given for the purpose of lifting up individuals, but for the good of the church.

7. Each Gift is Valuable to the Church (14-20)

Paul is pointing out the absurdity of one member of the body trying to function as another member. Consider the examples which he uses.

A. Foot (15)

No one would depreciate the importance of the foot. With it we can stand and walk and kick a flat tire. Yet Paul pictures an unhappy foot. It would rather be a hand. Maybe it was tired of its limited view. Maybe it was tired of carrying so much weight all the time. Who knows. **At any rate**, it has decided that if it cannot be a hand it may as well be dislocated from the body. Yet this declaration did not make it any less a part of the body.

B. Ear (16-17)

All will acknowledge the importance of this member. By it we can be warned of an approaching train, hear the doorbell or answer the phone. With it we are able to learn basic skills which will help us all through life. **With the ear we can listen to Handel's Messiah, or the gentle breeze.**

Yet here we have an ear, who is dissatisfied with being an ear. It wants to be an eye. Why? Maybe because the eye was always getting the attention. Whenever a little speck of dirt enters the eye, the body immediately gives it all the attention needed to clean it out. Who cares what enters the ear.

Maybe it was because the eyes were always being complimented. Nobody ever compliments ears. Because it was not an eye, it was therefore not a part of the body. But again, this declaration did not make it any less a part of the body.

Verse 17 Paul shows the folly of this kind of thinking. If the whole body were one member, any member, think how ugly it would be and how useless it would be, how vulnerable it would be.

8. The Gifts are Designed to Work Together (21-25)

Paul now goes back to his human body scenario and presents another angle. This time it is not a case of one member considering itself of no importance, but of one member considering another member unimportant.

Here he has the eye telling the hand that the hand is unimportant. That would be a foolish eye indeed, and it would find out the next time the wind blew a speck of sand into itself. There would be no hand to extract it. Likewise it would be suicide for the head to tell the feet to get lost.

They need one another. And Paul has even gone so far as to say that God has caused those gifts and members of the body which might seem to be the least significant as the most important.

Aircraft carriers and cruise ships sail the oceans with great freedom. One is devoted to war, the other to leisure. Both, however, are massive, floating independent islands of power. Freely traveling the oceans.

Tugboats, on the other hand, are limited to a specific harbor. To be a tugboat is to be committed to a specific place and to know it intimately. Tugboats have to be maneuverable and responsive to the slightest variation in the sea floor or the local currents. Tugboats are not especially impressive, mechanically or visually. But they are indispensable. Tugboats, you might say, are servants. They don't navigate for themselves—they navigate to bring other ships safely to shore.

9. We Must Not be Jealous of Other's Gifts (27-31a)

Since it is the Holy Spirit who decides on the recipients of the gifts, it would be presumptuous and foolish to ask for anything different. We must graciously and trustingly accept the gifts given to us, remembering that he has given them for the glory of God and for the edification of the church.

They had elevated certain gifts above others so much so that the members all wanted to have the same gifts, the ones they felt were more important. Two things:

A. Accept God's Design (27-30)

Every person does not have the same gift. And that this is exactly the way God wants it to be. He urges them to accept God's plan.

B. Strive for Most Productive Gifts (31a)

This almost seems to be a contradiction to what I have just said, but I do not believe that it is. They had been elevating the gifts which would give self-gratification.

Paul is saying, "if you must strive for certain gifts, strive for the ones which will be the most productive and fruitful." All of chapter fourteen is an amplification of this very thing.

10. Must Operate the Gifts in Love (31a)

No matter what gift or gifts one has, if they are operating apart from love, they are useless and counter-productive. That is the basic thrust of chapter 13. Love is greater than tongues 1, prophecy 2, knowledge 2, faith 2, giving 3. It will outlast them all. Whatever you determine your gifts to be, remember, they must be operated in love.

HOW DO I DISCOVERY MY GIFTS?

1. Explore Possibilities

2. Experiment

3. Examine Feelings

4. Evaluate Results