

1 CORINTHIANS SERIES – 52
“CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS”
INTRODUCTION
I Corinthians 12:1-6

INTRODUCTION

Well, we are finally here. Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians.

I recalled this past week when we started our study through the book of 1 Corinthians, 51 messages ago on 09/23/2018.

I remember many of asking are we going to study spiritual gifts?

More specifically are we going to learn about what the bible says about tongues?

My answer then was, yes, but you'll have to be patient as we work our way to those specific chapters.

Well, here we are. Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians.

Starting with chapter 12 and going actually to the end of chapter 14 we have one of the most interesting fascinating and controversy of sections of God's Word.

It deals with spiritual gifts.

So far our study through the book of 1 Corinthians has revealed many of the problems that the Corinthian church faced.

In fact, there is a problem in almost every chapter of the book.

Paul wrote to the believers living in this city to give them God's answers to these many problems:

Just in way of reminder...here's some of the problems we have dealt with so far...

- The Problem of Divisions in the Church (1 Cor. 1:10-13)
- The Problem of Worldly Wisdom (1 Cor. 1:17-2:16)
- The Problem of Carnality (1 Cor. 3:1-4)
- The Problem of Immorality in the Church (1 Cor. 5:1-13)
- The Problem of Bringing a Fellow Believer to Court (1 Cor. 6:1-8)
- The Problem of Fornication (1 Cor. 6:15-20)
- The Problem of Marriage and Divorce (1 Cor. 7:1-40)
- The Problem of Meats Offered to Idols (1 Cor. 8:1-13)
- The Problem of Men and Women Roles within Christ's Church (1 Cor. 11:1-17)
- The Problem of Abusing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-34)
- The Problem of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-31)
- The Problem of a Lack of Love (1 Cor. 13:1-13)
- The Problem of Speaking in Tongues (1 Cor. 14:1-40)
- The Problem of Wrong Teaching in the Resurrection of the Dead (1 Cor. 15:1-58)
- The Problem of Collecting for the Saints (1 Cor. 16:1-3)

Obviously, the church of Corinth had some issues. Every church does.

If you ever find the perfect church, please don't join it, because it will no longer be perfect.

So this section dealing with spiritual gifts goes from chapter 12 through chapter 14. We will be working our way through this very important section of scripture, verse by verse.

The hottest subject in evangelical churches today is that of spiritual gifts, especially the spectacular gifts such as speaking in tongues, healing and miracles.

This is such a controversial issue because for years mainline denominations have forgotten to teach about spiritual gifts of any kind, and the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement is the fastest growing group in Christendom.

Martin Luther said in the hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” the following: *“The Spirit and the gifts are ours.”*

Luther obviously believed the gifts were somehow in the Church.

One thing you can notice from the outset, between chapter 12 & 14 is chapter 13.

Most believers know what chapter 13 is known for...the love chapter.

I find it interesting, right in the middle between 2 chapters dealing with the very controversial subject of spiritual gifts, Paul speaks about love.

“If we love Christ as we think we do, as we pretend we do, we shall love his church and people.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon

In a Nutshell

Paul points out that Christian love is the most important of all gifts from the Spirit of God. He called the Corinthians to pursue love, without which all of their spectacular gifts amounted to nothing.

Perhaps no area of biblical doctrine has been more misunderstood, abused, and divisive, even within evangelicalism, than that of spiritual gifts.

Yet no area of doctrine is more important to the spiritual health and effectiveness of the church.

Apart from the direct empowering of God's Spirit, nothing is more vital to believers than the ministry of their spiritual gifts, their God-given endowments for Christian service and ministry.

We have to understand, Paul is teaching us in these chapters that our spiritual gifts should unite the church, not divide it.

It is the misunderstanding of spiritual gifts that divides the church.

The Corinthians had a very skewed view of spiritual gifts.

CORINTHIAN FAILURES IN AREA OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

They took personal pride in their gifts as if they had earned them or deserved credit for showing them.

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

They were more interested in using their gifts for personal fulfillment than for the good of the body.

Remember, the Christians in Corinth were having issues being united as a body.

They were too busy focusing on themselves as individuals and they didn't even consider the greater good for the body of Christ.

This even applied to their view of their spiritual gifts.

They were acting prideful and selfish concerning their spiritual gifts.

Fighting over whose gift was more important.

ILLUSTRATION

Their dilemma is illustrated by the story of a certain sea captain and his chief engineer who were having an argument as to which one of them was the more important to the ship.

Failing to agree, they resorted to the unique idea of swapping places.

The chief ascended to the bridge, and the captain descended into the engine room.

After a couple of hours, the captain suddenly appeared on the deck covered with oil and soot.

“Chief!” he yelled, wildly waving aloft a monkey wrench.

“You’ll have to come down here; I can’t make her go!”

“Of course you can’t,” replied the chief. “She’s aground!”

Just when you think that Paul has run out of things which unite the church, he reaches back into his seemingly limitless resources and brings out yet another—the gifts God gives to the church members.

These particular chapters can be of great help to Christians and churches today in their effort to build unity within the fellowship.

We see all around us in the world the principle of which Paul speaks.

We go to an athletic event where there are several players on one team.

And while they have different positions to play and differing skills, that very fact is the source of their unity and the thing that makes it possible for them to play the game.

The same is true when we go to the symphony.

There is great variety in the instruments played and the skills required of the players, but all those instruments and all those different musicians create a musical unity as they give a concert.

But often in the church we have a tendency to seek unity in conformity.

As Paul writes to the Corinthians about their gifts, we can learn from his letter valuable lessons for ourselves and for the church today.

They failed to realize the importance of the smallest gifts.

Sometimes it's the smallest of things that has the biggest impact.

ILLUSTRATION

I was building a computer from scratch years ago. It was kind of fun, putting all the parts together and then finally turning it on...only thing was...it wouldn't start up.

The power supply would fire up and almost immediately, shut down.

After checking everything I could, much frustration, I called the manufacturer of the mother board.

After speaking to a very polite nice gentleman with a very heavy Indian accent for about 1.5 hours on the phone and running through all these different scenarios, he finally asked me 1 simple question about the position of a dip switch on the motherboard itself.

He said, move the switch to the other position and see what happens.

Well there you go...my computer fired right up with no issues whatsoever.

Sometimes the smallest of things has the potential for the biggest impact.

Well they also failed to recognize the importance of those people whose gifts were seemingly least useful.

The same thing can often be said about the modern church.

We respect and honor those in church who do the most for the ministry.

We act as if they do God's work by their own human abilities and not by God's grace.

We fail to see the importance of every member of the church, focusing attention instead on those whom God is using most visibly at the moment.

Like the Corinthians also, when we exercise our spiritual gifts, we frequently do so because it gives us a sense of personal fulfillment and enjoyment—not for the good of the body, Christ’s church.

Let’s take a few minutes to remind us what we are talking about when we talk about “the church”.

The true church of Jesus Christ is not a visible human organization run by a hierarchy of officials.

It is not a social agency to meet the needs and demands of the community or simply a convenient place in which to be married, buried, or baptized.

It is certainly not a religious social club in which people of like-minded beliefs and standards get together for fellowship and occasional service activities.

The church, as established by Jesus Christ and described and defined in the New Testament, is a living organism.

I put a definition in your outline for you of the church.

THE CHURCH: *It is a supernatural living organism which is the spiritual body of Christ, which He established and rules over as Head and Lord, made up of all those who are true believers in Christ.*

The members of that body are entirely and exclusively those who have become new creatures through faith in Him as their Savior and Lord.

Those who are true believers in Christ.

Though composed of human members, it is not a human organization.

It is a supernatural organism, created, established, empowered, and led by the Lord Himself.

Because its Head is eternal and indestructible, the church is eternal and indestructible.

Jesus assures us that even *“the gates of Hades shall not overpower it”* (Matt. 16:18).

We need to be reminded of the purpose of the church today.

In the Old Testament, Israel was God’s vehicle to reach the world.

In the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Christ Himself and His disciples were the vehicle to reach the world.

Today, and since the 2 Chapter of Acts, right up until today, the Church is the vehicle through which God has designed to communicate to the world.

And it is not only by the words that we say that we communicate, but it is also by what we are that we communicate.

And that’s the reason that Jesus said in **John 13:34-35** ³⁴ *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* ³⁵ *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

And also in **John 17:21** that all men would know that the Father sent Christ if we were one.

And He prayed that they may be one, ²¹ *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

Our witness then is not only a verbal witness, it is not only a communication of the Gospel in specifics, it is the witness of love and unity.

And when we are one in love, the world will find our witness devastating.

And so, the Church then is the vehicle by which God designed to communicate to the world His nature and His truth.

And that's been the case since the 2nd chapter of Acts, when the Church was begun on the day of Pentecost.

A unity within the Church on the basis of humility and love becomes then our greatest testimony.

Well with that as our introduction today, let's read our text from 1 Cor. 12:1-11.

READ 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ 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.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

PRAY

CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS OUTLINE

THE PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS - I Cor 12:1-11

The Holy Spirit In The Life Of The Believer. – 1-3

1. The Nuance Of Spiritual Gifts – 1a

“Now concerning” – change from physical to spiritual

1 Cor. 11:18 - ¹⁸ *For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,*

So Paul has just finished speaking of mostly physical issues within the church of Corinth.

- The Problem of Bringing a Fellow Believer to Court (1 Cor. 6:1-8)
 - The Problem of Fornication (1 Cor. 6:15-20)
 - The Problem of Marriage and Divorce (1 Cor. 7:1-40)
 - The Problem of Meats Offered to Idols (1 Cor. 8:1-13)
 - The Problem of Men and Women Roles within Christ's Church (1 Cor. 11:1-17)
 - The Problem of Abusing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-34)
- “now concerning”* ...Paul's way of changing the subject..from physical to spiritual.

1 Cor 7:1 - *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”*

1 Corinthians 7:25

The Unmarried and the Widowed

²⁵ *Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.*

1 Corinthians 8:1

Food Offered to Idols

8 *Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.*

1 Corinthians 12:1

Spiritual Gifts

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

1 Corinthians 16:1

The Collection for the Saints

16 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.

1 Corinthians 16:12

¹² Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

2. The **Nature** Of Spiritual Gifts – 1a

“spiritual gifts”

“spiritual” – Greek: *pneumatikos* – that which has spiritual qualities to it
spiritualities

What Spiritual Gifts Are Not...

- **They are not natural talents or abilities**

This is a common misunderstanding among Christians.

Someone perhaps there appears to be gifted musically baby to play an instrument or to sing and so we right away believe that's a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Actually it can be used with your spiritual gift but that natural talent or ability is not a what we mean by spiritual gifts.

- They are not natural talents or abilities
- **They are not the same as the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit – Galatians 5:16-26**

This helps you to explain how the carnal Corinthian church could be using gifts.

They were using all of the gifts but they were carnal they weren't spiritual.

“works” of the flesh – plural – *evident* – made plain

“fruit” of the Spirit – singular

Not a cornucopia of fruit you get to pick from each day...today I'll try some joy, or maybe I'd like a little peace today...no if you have the fruit of the Spirit...all 9 of them are operative in your life...or they should be.

It is always best to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit when using your spiritual gift.

If not...your gift could harm and not help. Burden and not bless.

Galatians 5:22

*¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the **works of the flesh** are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*²² **But the fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- They are not evidence of spiritual maturity and growth
- They are not given to you because you pray or ask for them
- They are not acquired abilities or talents which a person is able to learn and/or produce

What Spiritual Gifts Are...

- They are the result of God's grace – we do nothing to earn or to deserve them
- **Romans 12:6**
- They are given to all believers. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift.

3. The **Need** For Understanding - 1b

“brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.”

The **problem** of ignorance – 1b

Rom. 11:25; I Thess. 4:13; II Peter 3:8-9; Ephesians 4:17-18

1. Identifying the Spirit (12:1–3)
 - a. False spirits (12:1–3)
 - b. The true Spirit (12:3)
2. Diverse Spiritual Gifts (12:4–11)
 - a. There are many different gifts (12:4–6, 8–10)
 - b. One God determines and works all these gifts (12:4–6, 11)
 - c. All gifts are given for the common good (12:7)
3. Unity and Diversity of Members in the Body (12:12–30).
 - a. The church is a unit made up of many parts (12:12–13)
 - b. No one should think too lowly of himself (12:14–20)
 - c. No one should think too highly of himself (12:21–26)
 - d. The church is the body of Christ (12:27–30)

Introduction: ***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

CARNAL **DIVISIVENESS** - NOT REMOVED! - ***1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21***

MORAL **DISCERNMENT** - NOT PRACTICED! - ***1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20***

MARITAL **DIFFICULTIES** - NOT RESOLVED! - ***1 Corinthians 7:1-40***

LIFESTYLE **DISAGREEMENTS** - NOT SETTLED! - ***1 Corinthians 8:1-10:33***

MALE/FEMALE **DISTINCTIONS** - NOT HONORED! - ***1 Corinthians 11:1-16***

SPIRITUAL **DEVOTION** - NOT EXPERIENCED! - ***1 Corinthians 11:17-34***

MINISTRY DIFFERENCES – NOT ACCEPTED! - ***1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40***

1A. **THE PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS** - 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

1B. The **DISCUSSION** focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer - 1-3

1C. The **Nature** of these spiritual gifts – 1a

“spiritual” – Greek: *pneumatikos* – that which has spiritual qualities to it

1D. They are not natural talents or abilities

2D. They are not the same as the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit

3D. They are not evidence of spiritual maturity and growth – *I Cor. 1:7*

4D. They are not given to you because you pray or ask for them
I Cor. 12:11

5D. They are not acquired abilities or talents which a person is able to learn and/or produce

6D. They are the result of God’s grace – we do nothing to earn or to deserve them - *Romans 12:6*

2C. The **Need** for understanding 1b-3

1D. The **problem** of ignorance – 1b
Rom. 11:25; I Thess. 4:13; II Peter 3:8-9; Ephesians 4:17-18

2D. The **practice** of idolatry – 2 “*carried away*” – Greek: *apago*

3D. The **principle** of interpretation – 3

1E. **Negatively**
“no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed”
I John 4:1-6

2E. **Positively**
“no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”

Rom. 10:9-10

- 2B. The **DIFFERENCES** among the believers are caused by God – 4-6
- 1C. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift – ***1 Peter 4:10-11***
- 2C. The differences in the nature and use of spiritual gifts are the result of God's grace - ***Romans 12:6***
- 3C. Not all believers have the same gift
"diversities of gifts"
- 4C. All spiritual gifts are given by the same Holy Spirit
"but the same Spirit"
- 5C. Believers who have the same gift will use it in different ways
"differences of administrations"
- 6C. Every believer's gift should be used to serve the Lord
"but the same Lord"
- 7C. The extent to which each believer's gift is used is determined by our sovereign God

"diversities of operations, but it is The same God which worketh all in all" - 1 Peter 4:11

SUMMARY – different words for "gifts"

(1) ***dorea*** – the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself - ***Acts 2:38*** - ³⁸ *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

(2) ***charisma*** – special abilities given by the Holy Spirit – ***1 Cor. 12*** and other passages

(3) **doma** – gifted men given to the church to equip the believers to use their giftS.

Eph. 4:11-12 - ¹¹ *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,* ¹² *to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*

(4) **merismos** – special miraculous sign gifts to confirm the message of the apostles.

Heb. 2:1-4 – *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

Mark 16:17-20 - ¹⁷ *And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”* ¹⁹ *So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.]]*

Number 2, not only are they not natural talents or abilities but they are not the same listen carefully as the fruit of the Holy Spirit of

Galatians 5:22

goal to Galatians 5 pleasing your Bible and look at verse 22 and 23 spiritual gifts are not the same as the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22 it says but the fruit of the spirit while the word but makes me want to go back and take a look at what these contrasting verse 19 though works of the flesh risotto nor carnal person are manifest that is a very obvious first 22 but the fruit of the spirit not so obvious very interesting item we identify all these other wonderful characteristics but you can always put them in a test tube and make a scale of 1 to 10 I how much joy you have promised bijou God or a much love you have and what really goes on in your heart the Lord knows and I may never know so you see there's a very interesting point there the works of the flesh are very obvious in the lists all this junk and then he says but the fruit please notice of singular and not world it in safe fruits but when he spoke about carnality use the plural the works of the flesh but it's the fruit singular of the spirit like some people say well I got joy but I'm little short on long-suffering know if you have the fruit of the Holy Spirit all nine of them are operating in your life love joy peace long-suffering gentleness goodness Faith meekness temperance or self-control and against such there is no wall praise God for all for you manifested the fruit of the spirit however is not the same as spiritual gifts but you might put a little footnote if you're writing this down it would be good that I manifest the fruit of the spirit while I'm exercising my get billboards make your gift much more enjoyable and beneficial and meaningful to other people that you are ministering to if you are controlled by the Holy Spirit if you're

not your gift can hurt rather than help in Burton people rather than less than so again what's the nature of the spiritual gifts while they're not natural talents or ability you may be a good carpenter terrific mechanic and you acquired that but that's not a spiritual gift it's not the same as the fruit of the Holy Spirit number three very important they are not evidence of spiritual maturity and growth is a very deep misunderstanding in the churches of our country are so many people actually believe if they exercise one or two of these gifts that somehow they are more spiritual because of it there is no evidence of that whatsoever as a matter fact we have evidence to the contrary in first Corinthians where were studying go back to chapter 1 and look at verse seven and remember in chapter 3 verse one is followed carnal church so it's not spirit fill but in first Corinthians 1 verse seven it says so that you can't behind in waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ they at all and gifts there but it was a carnal church and they were not growing in the Lord they were not mature the Lord but they were using all the gifts so the fact that you have spiritual gift is no evidence of spiritual maturity or growth and is that pride's IPO spiritual pride of it in it creeps into you believe me you have trouble ministering to people and loving people that spiritual pride creeps into you that you know I have this gift of its obvious of people told me etc. etc. what is all that about you know we need to love people with the grace of our Lord and sometimes I think we we think were helping out the Holy Spirit like the Holy Spirit is a quite sure what gift you have monies God is and we don't help out the Holy Spirit it amuses me sometimes immediate person is love the Lord for 4050 years and has been a blessing to many people and you find them saying I just don't think I have the spiritual in everybody's been blessed for 4050 years by the uniqueness of their

ministry the truth of the matter is it doesn't matter when you ever discover what your gifts are the Holy Spirit is fully capable of manifesting it in your life even when you don't even know it and maybe it's good that you don't the rest of us don't have to listen to your great testimony below all right number four when you're describing the nature spiritual gifts we must understand this they are not given to you because you pray for them or ask for the public people self I only pray all night I'll get this gift knoll you got whatever gifts of Holy Spirit wanted to give you your already got them when you got saved you don't have any a chance to get gifts you don't have a baby you carnally want to have a gift one of funny things to be there is a gift as you know of giving I don't find many people really praying that God would give up that you have it all the one guy told me so I can get that deficit why because I have the gift of receiving oh well that's not in the Bible I strive the gift of giving a black frame for that boy for spectacular or if it gives people false assurance of their spirituality they wanted watch out first with the Islam 11 but all these work of Babylon in the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will this is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit you don't get because you prayed for duress for it number five the fifth thing we need to really understand because I see this a lot among believers they are not acquired abilities or talents which a person is able to learn and/or produce I see a lot of people thinking that if I just learn how to do that I'll have it again that's self in there that's humanism and they're trying to do what only the Holy Spirit can do and many people they'll go to a class to learn about a particular gift believing that if they learned it really hit it down they'll have to know you have it with you ever learn anything about and they're not acquired abilities by going to school being educated I think we need an

example here one of the gifts that God is given is the gift of teaching and is a very interesting gift really if you want to study and we were invited bit about it in the spiritual gifts men but I have found especially among those who go to graduate school after college sometimes in Bible college well as well but especially if they've already spent all his time gone to graduate school in seminary in a study so hard they really believe that they can acquire the gift of teaching is a very interesting thing the folks of the gift of teaching is a gift from the Holy Spirit and I've seen some of the smartest people most knowledgeable students of the word flat out Teach and as a shock to their system to the expense of its time but the fact is there's no harm studying the Bible so thank God that you study the Bible I had a gentleman who graduated out of the seminary was a very wonderful Bible teaching seminary and he believed God it called in to teach the word is trying to help them in so I gave them a Sunday school class just had about 1015 people in it all into monster when anybody and and I thought well that it also has not fair to judge them for that so I gave him another one about 20 people in this and they all moved out went to another one within weeks and I did it a third time I said I'd I just want to get the benefit of the doubt so we gave another class by the way he made straight A's in Wasilla cum laude new Greek and Hebrew and had languages down and knew the word of God I know that from time to do it and so I gave a third class and he bombed again people left like all them in my office I am never forget this day I called of in my office and utilize really nervous myself I know he was nervous but I was nervous how you tell this so what I said when we sat down was you know I most exciting things in life is to discover what is not your gift in order that you may concentrate on what is the start crying IPO real bad he said I

can't teach I said you have a lot of knowledge and there's ways that you can use your gift of the Lord and I don't know what that might be well it turned out he really did have what I think was the word of knowledge and I don't mean coming up. That is in the Bible I'll talk about that later but he had a gift of knowledge and he was perfect for research at the day that is what he does and he's remarkable and remarkable because he found his place it wasn't his place to try to teach people he wasn't gifted in that area and then would you believe I run into people and never been out of that a sixth grade of school and slot of the King's English and have a great ability to change the word of God is it wise I come from they do that in the answer is is given to them by the Holy Spirit of God it manually by okay so they're not acquired abilities and only a price. In that way or think that we've got to go to school in order really had no and number six from Romans 12 six we learned this that spiritual gifts are the result of God's grace Romans 12 six is having gifts differing according to the grace that God's given us of that flat out means we do nothing to earn it or to deserve the grace gives us what we don't deserve and I like that God gives you instant gift the very meaning of the word gift charisma is on the word race car rests that which God gives to us that we do not deserve any gives it to us so that we will be a blessing other people and by okay now that's the nature of the gifts the second thing in the opening three versus about the discussion on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is the need for understanding look please at the end of verse one how he says this I would not have you ignorant and then verse three wherefore I give you to understand the need for understanding and then I look at what's really going on among the churches talk about a need for understanding week we miss this point right off the

but three things I point out to you here in the simple versus one is the problem of big nobody wants to be a but in the Bible several times it assumes that it's our natural tendency to be a great about something or an example in Romans 11:25 we learned of people are naturally ignorant about what happened to Israel and so he says I don't want you to be a great blindness and Parviz happen Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles become in and then all this row will be say so right away the problem with pigments is a natural probably will have on many subjects there's another one a problem of ignorance first Thessalonians 4:13 I don't want you to be a good brother concerning them which are asleep but it is ever been involved with many funerals you know that good people who love the Lord and know that when their loved ones die there immediately with the Lord but at the time of the funeral is there looking at that dead body they lose perspective I've seen it hundreds of times we need to be reminded over and over again that those who have died in Christ God is bring with the work of the same again is currently a great reunion we don't sorrow like those web noble toys adult me a good about that there's lots of examples same thing about why has God delayed the second coming why has it become almost 2000 years and second Peter three he says I don't want you to be a great about this one thing that 1000 years is like a day or days like 1000 years to the Lord and the Lord is delayed because he's long-suffering us were not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance but the final day of the Lord is going to come is either a lot of things that we naturally and normally become ignorant about and one of those areas which I think all of church life proves that we are often a good about his spiritual gifts anger about where it comes from how it works and what it's for so there's a

need for understanding and the problem of ignorance is powerful bullet Ephesians chapter 4 and let me just say one more thing about ignorance it may be coming from something else as well Ephesians 4:17 and 18 it says this I say therefore and testify in the Lord that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity the emptiness of their mind having the understanding darkened being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart being passed feeling Given themselves over under lasciviousness Selby means no standards of morality to work all uncleanness with greediness which are not solar Christ really felt the believers don't walk like the average of the labor apparently some believers do and ignorance happens according to this passage because of the blindness sets is like a callous I have one on my finger here right right a lot and little callous side demonstrated the truth of God's word many times myself by sticking up an industry that would hurt and it does is the callous there is eight we get beyond being hurt and we don't feel the grieving of the Holy Spirit there's a king reason is because of the callousness of our what causes the callousness is described in verse 19 were passed feeling any pain because we gave ourselves over basically the liver like them whatever we want without any regard for the standards of God all the sudden were part of this age and we don't really care what God said and that produces a callousness of hardness and and ignorance powerful solution me it's very clear and you been a Christian for a long period of time you seen this matter spiritual gifts may be a different churches over a long period of time you are well aware that there's a general ignorance about spiritual gifts and I just simply point this out one of the reasons may be the same one in foreign because our lifestyle is not pleasing the Lord because we are entertaining

and coveting centered in our life about dealing with it it produces the hardness that results in ignorance and why we don't exercise our gifts away God wanted us to which is exactly what was the problem in car every understanding is really serious come back again to first Corinthians chapter 12 there's the problem of ignorance but the practice of idolatry also affected them here and there was a need of understanding and for all of us today were trying to figure out what they are many people skip over this person commentaries they don't comment on it they don't teach it why this is hard to understand what it says ye know that you were Gentiles now the word Gentile most often means a non-Jew but there are several instances in the writings of Paul was a very strong Orthodox Jew in which Gentile would be the same as saying pagan or even or unbeliever many examples of that. Simply a non-Jew and here's where I believe he's also talking about the unbeliever the pagans of ancient Corinth you were a set and needs a no longer are but they were that he said you know what you are like you are carried away carried away the Greek word up a gold needs to be led astray you are led astray under these, I don't is not just throwing the work done about this for fun or to be ridiculing the means that they don't speak that's what the Old Testament Pontus in the book the stall about idols they don't speak you don't communicate with you that don't help you you said you are led astray by dumb idols they never talk you never give you information but even as you were last he said what's he talking about I I don't have the time nor is this the place to go into background on client in depth beyond what is necessary but let me just tell you about this one of the things that was going on in Corinth and in many other of the Greek Roman cities was what we call mystery religions secret groups that were built around

some particular pagan God and there's a word in Greek which we use in English but was a common practice in these idolatrous meetings are giving the English word at the scene ecstasy it's a Greek word set in the English and are referred to somebody losing a normal sanity as a human being might be talking to somebody and going into a frenzy the position of some sort of another had her world where you'd really went bonkers and the person would all the suddenly they were communicating with this dumb idols who in fact does not speak as everybody must play his status dominated ancient Corinth the mystery religions these people are say they come out of it he said you were led astray but watch out because when you come to spiritual gifts or might be a tendency for you to think that's what these are and the answer is no they're not you don't check your brains off of the door and a little wild ecstasy on the moment of exercising your gift that is simply not what God wants so is very interesting that he brought up the practice of idolatry because some people in their effort to read duplicate spiritual gifts in their life actually follow the Caribbean pattern rather than the biblical they actually want that kind of experience wanted just pause for a moment say something about the word experience there's a fine line is there not folks between knowledge and experience we all know that part you can experience something and have a certain knowledge a man you tell your child don't stick your finger to fire get burned as knowledge based on some very clear facts which a child because of the majority weight so you go out of the room and decisive stick his finger in the fire to see if it's true Ellis fire the fire burns his finger he has knowledge by experience that backs up the knowledge my fact now I'm simplifying a very difficult problem that we call existentialism it started in the 50s in this country it

led to the me generation the narcissism of our society is wanted me that what ever you experience makes what ever is real real and this false doctrine is really a heresy spreads to the entire culture and we don't even realize we believe it people don't believe something unless they have experienced there by following me something maybe true whether you have experienced it or not whether you even know about it or not it may be true and it stands is true in this whole realm if you really go way out on this that if you took some drugs let's say and this was the whole point behind LSD and other trips if you took up and they put you into this wonderful amazing weird world that you have never seen it was really you and some people wind up in a psychiatric ward and others walk around teaching universities fell below wonderful and it abets out a critical eye could be worse is one most dangerous things that controls our culture is about you just had a trip you really felt I thought about it as I was listening to the radio they were taught about Valentine's Day at the radio and how to express the feelings you have of love and meet we all enjoy feeling but that doesn't mean that it's a truth and the truth of the matter is that were all being plagued by this our society without knowing it and when you come to the example spiritual gifts there are a lot of people that want to feel something they want to experience something so that they can believe it's real and what would you do that you're off of the subject of biblical Valley Junior on the subject of your family your experience becomes a criteria by which you decide whether it's true or not the buddy okay but we got a headache now like me to move on it is very important understand this because that's what was going on in Corinth as with the mystery religions were all about and you could take a little potion with a mixed together talk about drugs they had

a ball over the Roman great world and you could flip out for a while and think while I had a heavy duty spiritual experience I think I was actually talking to the God by this or Zeus listen my friends you were that he said but it's different now in other words don't check your brains out the door don't make your feelings your experiences as the test of the barometer of what's true and what is it and that's the whole problem we have what we come to spiritual gifts and a lot of people are scared to discuss this by self and the purses that next to them or somebody will say a few tried to discuss and explain it will say something like what I know what I experienced so what you know sometimes I have weird dreams and other nightly cabbage fell on my head otherwise thinking about cabbage I guess it would sleep mythologizing Mollusk you are really believe it is a big cabbage of their no and and I'm not here to ridicule the wonderful experiences that you might be having that I'm here to warn you that that's the gateway the satanic deception at the way the devil will take you on a path that will get you away from the Bible watch out the first two is there in the Bible for a very important reason because that is a common thing we see among people you want the ecstatic experience of something and that all the sudden is reality to you is a you don't care what anybody says US very soon so that's all that matters watch film and told me this week your farmer he loves the Lord he said you wanted me to know that I was wrong about Jesus being in heaven all his time is that really he said yes he's visited me quite a number My home once is out in the barn and I knows him look look just like after I gave him my little Jewish spiel about Jesus he wasn't so sure was him I said no he has not left is at the right hand of the throne of God and he didn't pay you any private visit I saw him I don't know what you saw but the Bible says the

devil can transform himself into an angel of light watch out it's easy as in it to get confuse I know I saw had one lady told me I I I floated up to the top of the roof that I saw myself there will God bless you but your dad your dad of your believer you with the Lord why would you become an actor looking at your dead body in the operating table at some of the body present with the Lord that you want to come back and you don't know anything about what it is to be present with the Lord in his presence is fullness of joy at his right hand are pleasures for evermore you see folks if your experience is what is controlling you why you believe something is right or wrong or true or false you're going to get way off base in the matter spiritual gifts very easy I we had the problem of ignorance we have the practice of idolatry in verse two noun verse three we have an interesting principle of interpretation and it's both negative and positive look at the negative firms verse three wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the spirit of God, Jesus occurs or dad while Bothe first John chapter 4 if you have the Holy Spirit speaking through you you would never say that about Jesus ever the Holy Spirit of God always glorifies Jesus says John 14.60 in first John four years an interesting subject below beloved believe not every spirit but try or test the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone on the world is where we learn that demons are evil spirits and actually be in somebody and you don't know what and their speaking they may be a false prophet hereby no need the spirit of God every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is, in the flesh is of God is a clear statement of the deity of Jesus Christ that God was manifest in the flesh and every spirit the confesses that you know his real but when you have a person who does not agree with that who denies the deity of Jesus Christ this dear

lady on a farm lady she was telling me about a pastor she had she said all he is the most wonderful speaker I just loved hearing him speak as she says just one little thing is that but what's the little faith she said well he he doesn't believe that Jesus is God the general it's a small matter now I'm a guest in her home solo at the careful but I said you know man that simply is not true and I I know he must've been a blessing to you but to according to the Bible is a false prophet you know how many of God's people are deceived by listening to somebody is very smooth says it such a nice way but as they deny that Jesus is God Almighty in human flesh there a false prophet and there's a spirit in them causing them to say that I keep reading every spirit verse three that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not God and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof you heard it should, and even now already it's in the world year of God Little children and have overcome them because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world the air of the world therefore speak they of the world of the world here that we are of God even know it God here at us D that is not of God here is not us hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error apparently one of the dividing points between truth and falsehood is dealing with the person of Jesus Christ what you believe about him so the principal here of interpretation as we are saying whether or not the Holy Spirit of God is doing this or whether I'm doing it in the flesh negatively you would never say anything that would offend the glory and majesty of our Lord and positively you can only declared to be your Lord the Lord of all you can only do that by the Holy Spirit who works in you and causes you to be a believer in it you actually believe that he is the Lord of lords and King of Kings and the Holy Spirit of God is the cause one who helps you to understand that interpreted correctly is a

very interesting point I why would he do the first three verses like this and introducing spiritual gifts were not teaching chapter 14 yet but I'm going to tell you that the real battle among Christians is how to read chapter 14 outer read it is a condemning something or is he commending it that's the big problem will talk about a low we get to but the reason why he started out with this is because what happened at client and happen anyone of the moment you decide that spiritual gifts are not the work of the Holy Spirit or that somehow anybody can have and whether your believer or not your way off base the point of this whole discussion in verses 1 to 3 is the show us the critical nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in giving the gifts and in using the gifts in our lives ballots come to verse four look at the differences this is quite a fascinating little section that a lot of people need to pay more attention to my opinion as a relates to the differences among first of all of me clarify something that in the old King James in verse four we have the bird word diversities of verse five differences and then back to diversities all three words of the same in Greek thought about differences among my point here in verses 4 to 6 with a Paul saying is the differences in the gifts are caused by God and I want to give you several points and you might want to jot these down here seven of them it will help you understand the spiritual gifts that you have one every believer have at least one spiritual gift every believer if you come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior you have at least one spiritual gift I'm sure some people have more peers appalled in others but we have at least one say what's a proof of that go to first Peter police chapter 4 first Peter chapter 4 and look at verse 1011 every believer has at least one spiritual gift first Peter four 1011 as every man hath received the gift now there's no definite article in the Greek text that just says a

gift even sold minister of its award to serve the same one new another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God the very clearly in first Peter 4:10 everyone is received at least one gift number two according to Romans 12:6 the differences in the nature and use of gifts are the result of God's grace but suppose that there are five of you in the audience who have the gift of expectation or counsel there will be differences in how the five of you use your gift and we need to be very careful that we don't look at someone who uses it differently and say we are not doing the right way I do the right way be very careful because whatever differences they are the result of God's grace not human ability or initiative is what God has done you received it from his grace and that causes the difference the actual text in Romans 12:6 says having gifts differing according to the grace of God given to us those grace of causing number three in verse for a first Corinthians 12 we have the third thing we need understand about our gifts and the differences not all believers have the same gift a man imagine if you were in some sort organization that needed some leadership as a gift of administration a gift of leadership but imagine if you had 10 people in a group at all 10 of them have the gift of leadership I mean that is chaos were talking real serious problem I try call the security people in Oregon have a fight know it's very clear in the Bible not all believers have the same gift first four says their diversities of gifts but the same Spirit so there are differences in the actual number of gifts and some of you say right now will how many gifts are there you have to come to our next message and I'm a tell you at the title of it how many gifts are there right now know that not all believers have the same gift number four the other interesting thing from verse for a first reviews 12 is an all spiritual gifts whatever they really are are given by

the same Holy Spirit he says diversities of gifts but the same Spirit what he's trying to tell you is don't split up over this we we need to be unified it's a same Holy Spirit doing this so that we all working together can build up each other and be more effective in our testimony for the Lord towards the same spirit number five in verse five we have the statement differences of administration now the King James really stretched that Eric is the simply the word to serve service believers who have listen carefully the same gift as another believer will use it in a different way than that person you that the main point of that verse there are differences in the way it is used or minister or serve never expect that the gift that you have is going to be used exactly like John down the aisle who also has the same gift as a matter fact by the way this is worded he won't use it in the same way we all use our gifts differently very insightful point that no charges follow somebody else let the Lord working your heart easier to use you in a way he will not use somebody else God loves the differences number six every believer's gift should be used to serve the Lord alone it says there are differences of the way its minister but the same Lord we serve in different ways but were all serving him know where this all gets messed up and were people get hurt is when you stop serving the Lord you're doing what you're doing so the people think well of the Lord give you strokes to say thank you 1000 times listen folks we serve the Lord keep your eyes in the Lord is a much aim was good happen in the Ministry of gifts given a run of the people that don't like the way you're using your gift as a matter fact this might be a shock to somebody you but among the Christians are you running the people that don't like you. They don't like you don't like what you're doing don't like how you doing it and believe if you only listen to them they could change you in shape you up the

way you should be in a way we ever going to relax and just love the Lord's love the Lord with all your heart stop trying to change everybody around you stop trying to pressure them to be something is taken like they are because God is getting used people in ways it maybe don't understand and yada be thanking God for people set of trying all possible multimodal what you want them to do or want to want to be a whatever is a very interesting point number seven we have one of the most interesting verses in verse six and a were told in first Corinthians 12 six that there are differences in operations it's our English word energy said writing from the Greek and the English is talking about the way a gift is operating the effects the extent to which it is you would all serve the Lord but some of us even though we have the same gift are going to use it in a different way than another in terms of the of fact or the extent of it let me put it another way the extent to week two which each believers gift is used is determined by our sovereign Lord not by circumstances which is what most people think a given good illustration there are definitely people as they could get the teaching again a more comfortable talking about that but let's let's talk about the gift of teaching there some people who are very good at teaching a small group 3 to 5 people are very good at it they love the intimacy the love the closest that love how to do it but you put them in front of a group of a couple hundred couple thousand and they lose it they can do it it it just as a mental block something happens they Function and and peoples a wealthy got the gift of teaching and should make any difference wrong because according the Bible are differences as to the extent to which any given gift is used of me put it another way but supposing you have a gift of teaching toddlers out that is a gift I assure you I have tried it myself that is a gift that I praise God for every person

man a woman is able to change and fiber you are special From the Lord outset you flowers take care of them all right now I have seen people who teach adults to think of the person teaching toddlers doesn't really have the gift of teaching on the contrary I think the person teaching adults on a bequest anybody could teach toddlers is a master teacher in my opinion that by understanding the UC God will determine how that gift of use and I will speak personally here not getting those hallway at all simply to explain it by myself so I don't have to use what you to this day I do not understand this but it does not make any difference to me how many people are there never has I don't know why I can get excited teaching 10 people in the class and I can speak to 10,000 people doesn't make any difference I spoke to the Crusades with hundreds of thousands of people in foreign cultures it is not bother me one bit I don't know why that exists I really don't and I could have just as much fun with a small group of people teaching the word of God I love the process of teaching everything about and sometimes people think he loves us so much he didn't even know I don't know what he thought about them actually having five appear you understand I really like this but again just in the simple point there's only one answer to that believe it is only one answer and that's the Lord it so I don't know why it's true it's always been true ever since I started up now all these 42 years of preaching and teaching it's always been the say I think that's a Lore the Lord knows that he doesn't and it's his work and I praise him for it and I don't understand there's another thing I love the study God's word I never in 42 years got tired that I never been bored I've never wanted to do something else they have to put me away from it just be a normal person for a while I love studying God's word I go down in all holes sometimes you don't know where I

went where you go me come back up and talk to the normal people you understand I love studying, isn't it interesting as it is very important to study in order to teach a man you see what God does as he puts that joy in you you delight yourself in the Lord to give you the desires of your heart and they often go together and who's doing it if you walk around thing here so great doing that you're not this is coming from the Lord the Holy Spirit of God is going to cause these differences God the father who works all of these gifts and all people says verse six these the one that should be glorified and prayers 90 to give you a quick summary before they wrap up this first message on gifts is a quick summary would you believe that there are four words in the Greek language translated gift in the New Testament I don't want to confuse you I want to help you and as we go on were going to describe the differences between these four you write them down now I'll spell about an English so you can look it up in a concordance of you want to first word Delray D whole RE a it means free gift in acts 238 Peter said repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of sin and you shall receive the what gift of the Holy Spirit it's not charismatic like some people argue that associates say God I have a certain gap know it's talking about the Holy Spirit himself it's the same word use of salvation in Romans chapter 5 the free gift of God's righteousness Delray is the gift of the Holy Spirit himself and you must have that gift in order to have any charismatic gifts you must first receive the Holy Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ and be born again in order to have spiritual gifts number two is the word your most familiar with charisma CH a R I SM a charisma we talk about a certain personalities a boy he has charisma or charismatic the word car as is the word grace these are talking about special abilities given by the Holy Spirit

only to believers special abilities given by the Holy Spirit only to believers and of course that's our passage in first Corinthians 12:14 will be talking about number three the third kind of gift Thomas D all and a in Ephesians 4 we learned verses 8 to 12 that our Lord ascended up on high and left for the church since he'll no longer be here gifted man apostles prophets evangelists pastor teachers it says he gave gifts on the man is not charismatic its dome which means the thing that is given namely the person so I believe I'm a dome I believe I'm a gift to the church and I have a specific job according to Ephesians 4 and that's to equip believers so that they being equipped with God's word will be able to use their gifts with understanding and effectiveness and a whole body is built up so everyone has their job dome is the gifted man given to the church to equip believers to use their gifts one last one that a lot of people don't mention number four met risk models and we are I SM all tests turned to Mark chapter 60 Marissa Marissa Moss is referring this special miraculous sign gifts that were given to confirm the message of the apostles that we now have in the New Testament in Mark chapter 60 this is the night of the resurrection the disciples really didn't believe Jesus actually appeared to them that night and rebuke them for their unbelief the pick it up in verse 17 of March 60 these signs shall follow them that believe in my name shall they cast out devils are demons they shall speak with new times they shall take up serpents and snakes and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover so then after the Lord it's spoken under them he was received up into heaven and set on the right hand of God and they these apostles they went forth and preached everywhere the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following about turn pleasing

Hebrews chapter 2 they would meet us for a moment and were not Hebrews chapter 2 probably one of the most misunderstood subjects in the New Testament is that of the miraculous sign gifts in Hebrews chapter 2 we never never want to question God's ability to do any of the miraculous ever documented miracles but there were special sign gifts to confirm us of the Bible says the message in Hebrews 2 verse one therefore we ought to give the more earnest see the things which we have heard less than anytime we should let them slip or if the words spoken by Angels was steadfast and of course it was and every transgression and disobedience received the just recompense of reward and of course that happen how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed the same word is Mark 16 on to watch the pronouns by them that heard him okay folks of five following this we who heard the apostles speak the New Testament is not written Otto we know that they are giving us additional revelation that should be added to what we knows the Jewish Bible that the back to knock why would we take their message and believe it if you think about the Jewish problem first Corinthians 1 tells us in verse 22 Jews require a sign and at what sign what evidence do we have that what you're saying is surely from God the answer is miraculous signs were given they would follow their and they would confirm the word which they spoke and so what we have here is a very clear specific and direct definition now the word in verse four gifts of the Holy Spirit is Marissa Moats not charismatic not dome Marissa moment Rizzo means to divide or distribute the Holy Spirit distributed some very special miraculous abilities on the men were speaking the message is now reported in the New Testament and the Jews had to know whether or not this is from God and that's

how God did it now all of these are gifts will be focusing on the charismatic gifts those special abilities given by the Holy Spirit but we need to have a broad understanding and know how else is used and will be commenting on it as we go along in our study well we just got started and I think without all go out just yellow one another better gift for anything to scream and shout tell everybody why you don't have the right God gave these wonderful things to all of us so that we would be a blessing to one another we would build each other up it would draw us together the will we wouldn't act like were independent we would sense that we need each other I got open our hearts and father we thank you so much for your word and for the privilege we have to just take time out of our busy schedules and learn from the word of God thank you Lord for this wonderful section of of your word helping us to understand that you gave us some wonderful things to bless us bless others through us Lord thank you is wonderful to know that we are important to you and how you will use us to bless the lives of other people you told us in every cup of cold water given in your name will receive a reward shall never forget what we've done in showing love to others administering to the about we thank you for what you're going to teach us throughout this section thank you for all the differences that you yourself have caused up us all to relax in the thank you for who we are the light of who you are thank you in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray amen.

- I. THE COMMAND TO KNOW THE GIFTS (12:1–3): This knowledge will help dispel any ignorance concerning the giver of the gifts.

- II. THE SOURCE OF THE GIFTS (12:4–6, 11): They are imparted by the Holy Spirit.

- III. THE EXTENT OF THE GIFTS (12:7, 29–30)
 - A. **Each believer is given at least one gift** (12:7).
 - B. **No believer is given all the gifts** (12:29–30).

- IV. THE DIVERSITY OF THE GIFTS (12:8–10, 28)
 - A. **Wisdom** (12:8a)
 - B. **Knowledge** (12:8b)
 - C. **Faith** (12:9a)
 - D. **Healing** (12:9b, 28e)
 - E. **Miracles** (12:10a, 28d)
 - F. **Prophecy** (12:10b, 28b)
 - G. **Discernment** (12:10c)
 - H. **Tongues** (12:10d, 28h)
 - I. **Interpretation of Tongues** (12:10e)
 - J. **Apostleship** (12:28a)
 - K. **Teaching** (12:28c)
 - L. **Helping** (12:28f)
 - M. **Administration** (12:28g)

- V. THE ANALOGY OF THE GIFTS (12:12–27): Paul compares the body of Christ and its many spiritually gifted members to the human body with its many physical members.
 - A. **Each member in both bodies performs a vital task** (12:12–13, 18).
 - B. **No member in either body can be independent of the other members** (12:14–17, 19–24).
 - 1. *The foot and the ear are not to show envy toward the hand and the eye* (12:14–17).
 - 2. *The eye and the head are not to show pride toward the hands and the feet* (12:21).
 - C. **Each member in both bodies is to rejoice and suffer with the other members** (12:19–20, 22–27).

VI. THE GREATEST OF THE GIFTS (12:31): Paul ends this chapter by promising to show “the most excellent way,” which he does in chapter 13.

The Gifts of the Body, Part 1

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, please. For the last few weeks, in preparation for a study of the book of Ephesians, we have been studying the concept of the body of Christ.

We have talked about the body of Christ in terms of its nature, and we're not talking about His physical body, but the Church which is His new body. We've talked about the witness of the body, that is, the importance of the body communicating. That is we who belong to Christ, who are His Church, who make up this body of believers, witnessing not only by our individual testimony, but by collective love and unity.

Tonight we come to the third in this series entitled "The Gifts of the Body." The Holy Spirit has specially empowered and enabled those of us who belong to Jesus Christ to carry out some very, very important functions.

Now, by way of introduction, some thoughts. God wants to reach this whole world with His truth. Obviously. In the Old Testament, Israel was God's vehicle to reach the world. In the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Christ Himself and His disciples were the vehicle to reach the world. Today, and since the 2 Chapter of Acts, right up until today, the Church is the vehicle through which God has designed to communicate to the world.

And it is not only by the words that we say that we communicate, but it is also by what we are that we communicate. And that's the reason that Jesus said in John 13, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, that you have" – what? – "love one for another." And also in John 17 that all men would know that the Father sent Christ if we were one. And He prayed that they may be one, "That all men might know that the Father sent Me."

Our witness then is not only a verbal witness, it is not only a communication of the Gospel in specifics, it is the witness of love and unity. And when we are one in love, the world will find our witness devastating. And so, the Church then is the vehicle by which God designed to communicate to the world His nature and His truth. And that's been the case since the 2nd chapter of Acts, when the Church was begun on the day of Pentecost.

A unity within the Church on the basis of humility and love becomes then our greatest testimony. But needless to say, although all believers are one in terms of position, that is 1

Corinthians 12:13 says – you have it right there – “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew, Greek, bond, free; we’ve all been made to drink into one Spirit.” So, though we are one in position, though we have been made one in terms of the Holy Spirit’s ministry and salvation and putting us into the body of Christ, though we are one in fact, we are not one in terms of our activities or our actions. And we certainly are not one in spirit and witness.

Christianity’s testimony has been decimated because it has been fractioned and hacked up into pieces, and you’ve got this little group over here, and this little group over here, and that big group over there, and so forth and so on. And people stand up and say that we’re this, and we do that, and it’s all fractioned.

Consequently, though we are one in position, the world does not see us in practice, and we do not have a singular testimony of humility and love. Now you know that if God wants us to be one, that Satan wants us not to be one. And so, while the prayer of Christ was that we would be one, while the activity of the Spirit was to make us one, all of the energy of Satan is to fraction us. So, whenever you come into a situation where you or me or anybody else is a divisive issue, we can be assured, if it’s in the body of Christ, that we are the agent of Satan because Christ wants to unify; Satan wants to divide.

Now, may I add just a footnote? There is no scriptural justification for the existence of all of the present divisions of the Church. You know, there weren’t any divisions denominationally in the New Testament? None at all. In fact, all of the divisions of the Church are totally and explicitly contrary to the straightforward teaching of the Word of God. The whole intention of Christ in forming the body was that we may be one body, not all fractioned into little parts.

Now, how was the body formed? Was it formed in discord, or was it formed in unity?

Obviously, it was formed in unity. In the book of Acts, the body of Christ – the Church – was formed in a prayer meeting. In the upper room of a house in Jerusalem, the disciples of Jesus gathered to prayer. Out of that faith and obedience and waiting in prayer by a company of humble disciples, God brought into being the Church, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

There in that prayer gathering, in an upper room in Jerusalem, the hour of another divine dispensation struck, and men and women, filled with the Holy Spirit and possessing gifts of the Holy Spirit, went down out of that room, into the streets, to preach Christ crucified, risen, and the day of God's free grace.

It was a group of humble people. There weren't any great ones; there weren't any mighty ones. They didn't get an organizational structure; they just prayed and waited. Hardest thing in the world to do. They prayed and waited.

God said to them, through Christ, "The Church will be born in Jerusalem." Christ had told them this, "Not only will it be born in Jerusalem, but you will evangelize the world." Now had Christ said to the Church today, "The Church will be born in Jerusalem," or, "Something will happen in Jerusalem, and you will evangelize the world," immediately we would start master planning, organizing, get the committees going. Got to get a chairman, have an election. You know what they did? They just prayed and sat there. They didn't even have an evangelism committee.

And you know something else? They were told to begin world evangelism, and they didn't begin it for seven years. You say, "It's terrible." No. They wanted a solid foundation. They wanted strong, capable evangelists. It takes time. God said, "The Church will begin at Jerusalem, and you'll evangelize the world," and they prayed, and they waited. And when God's Spirit got ready to act, He could act through them because they were already filled with the Spirit.

And you know something? When they went out of that room, when the Church began, all of them evangelized. And that's the way it ought to be. There is no believer who's not responsible to evangelize. Oh, you may not have the specific gift of evangelism, but you are witnesses. Every one of them went out of that room and publically preached the wonderful works of God. In fact, they did it by a divine miracle in a language they didn't even know. That was the birth of the Church. That was the birth of the body of Christ. It was born in a prayer meeting, where they prayed and waited. It was all in the energy of the Holy Spirit, and every member – every member – that was part of that prayer meeting was engaged in the activity through the Spirit's power.

And from that moment on, friends, every single member that's been added to the Church has been added the same way. "For by one Spirit were you" – what's the next word? – "all baptized into one body." Every believer who's ever come to Jesus Christ, since that birth of the Church, has come the same way by the Spirit of God's power, placing him into the body of Christ. We are as singularly one today in 1971 as we were one in Acts 2. And every one of us entered the body the same way.

Now, that early Church was fantastic. They were exciting. And the reason was this: they were all – now watch this – they were all filled with the Spirit. Now, can you imagine what would happen if a total church was filled with the Spirit? The energy of the Spirit would fire through that body, and it would be devastating. That Church was filled with the Spirit. Secondly, they were all exercising their spiritual gifts. Thirdly, they were all preaching the Gospel. Can you imagine that? All filled with the Spirit; all exercising their gifts; all preaching the Gospel. And they had a unity of humble love that was manifest everywhere. The world was flabbergasted. They couldn't believe it. They gave such a tremendous witness that daily souls were added, weren't they? Daily, daily, daily, daily souls were added.

Now, bring it up to us. In order for us to be an effective witness as a body, as the early Church was, we must be just as healthy as they were. Right? We must also be not organized – Spirit filled. Not super committed – no, just exercising our spiritual gifts and all preaching the Gospel. We have to be just as healthy as the early Church. The standard for us is no different at all.

Now the pressure is different. Right? You know what the missing ingredient in the Church today is that makes it so hard for us to be like the early Church? There's one missing ingredient. You know what it is? Persecution. You know what persecution does? It drives out all the tares. It gets rid of them. Why if all of sudden the United States government declared that Christianity was illegal, and everybody who was a Christian was going to be shot, what do you think our attendance would be on Sunday? And you know what we'd have? We'd have Spirit-filled, redeemed, committed people, and all the rest would just fade by the wayside. Persecution really puts it down to the nitty-gritty. See? And that's the thing we're missing. But the standards are no different. We have to be mature, functioning, loving, humble, Spirit-filled, exercising our gifts, preaching the Gospel just like that early Church.

Now you say, “Yeah, but we didn’t have what they had.” Oh, yes we do. The only thing we don’t have is persecution. But brother, we’ve got everything else, because you know what everything else was? One thing: the Holy Spirit. That was everything else.

Now, Christ wants the Church to be powerful. He wants the Church to be mature. He wants the Church to be functioning. He wants the Church to be growing. He wants the Church to be witnessing and manifesting His love. Now, in order to do that – now here we go – in order to do that, God designed a plan within the confines of the Church, His body. And I’m not talking about a Church building or organized church, but the true Church.

Now, here was God’s plan: in order to make the Church really grow and really have a unified witness, God designed that every single member of His body, every believer, every Christian, every body member would have a certain function or functions within the body.

Now, hang onto your hat. Every Christian then has a function within the body that results – watch it – in the health of the total body. In other words, if God designed that we be a healthy body – growing, maturing – functioning, witnessing – then every member has a ministry that lends itself to the health of that body.

Now, the human body is the analogy, and the human body is all kinds of organs that interact, all kinds of limbs that interact. If you have just one of your organs that doesn’t function, then the whole body is sick. And the same thing is true of the body of Christ: every organ has a function that results in the health or sickness of the whole body.

So, every believer has a vital ministry as a vital organ of the body. And if the body is to be healthy and mature, and thus a single dynamic, edified, built-up testimony to the world, then every believer must actively and intensely involve himself in the function which God has given him. Your service and your ministry makes the body healthy because it carries strength to the other vital parts of the body.

Your failure to serve on the other hand, your unfaithfulness, your carnality, your self-centeredness, your divisive spirit, your laziness spiritually are all non-functions, and non-functions make the body sick, crippled, and retard its health, its growth and maturity. And as a result, they retard its witness. God has designed you into the body as a vital, functioning

organ if you're a Christian. You must – you must minister to the body if the body is to be healthy.

Now, God's will for the body is that we be like Christ. Christlikeness. That's His will for the body. In Ephesians 4:13 it says this, just listen, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith" – unity – "of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man" – watch this – "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of" – whom? – "Christ."

You know what our total body is to be? Like Jesus Christ. Is the total body like Christ? No. No. Is Christ divided? Paul said that, didn't he? Is Christ divided? No. Is the body divided? Yes. Is the body like Christ? No. Is the body supposed to be like Christ? Yes. Why isn't the body like Christ? Because it's divided. Right. Why is the body divided? Because some members are non-functioning organs.

God's will for the body is that we be like Christ. You see, here's what the point is, folks: through the Church – the body – Christ wants to manifest His own character. He wants to manifest His person through us, not only as individuals – and that's what He wants to do as individuals, doesn't He? – but as a body. He wants to manifest His person through the body of Christ. We are to be individually like Christ; we are to be in unity like Christ.

And the method, as I said, to accomplish this Christlikeness is to give every member of the body a function that ministers to the rest of the body. Certain spiritual gifts that each of us have through which the Holy Spirit can manifest himself to the whole body and bring the whole body to maturity and health.

Now, keep this thought in mind, and you're going to have to think with me on this: it's not going to come easy. All the gifts were, in their fullest sense – now watch this – complete in Christ. All the gifts were, in their fullest sense, complete in Christ. The gift of preaching. Could Christ preach? Could He preach? The gift of teaching. Could He teach? Showing mercy. Could He show mercy? Helps. Ruling. I don't care what the gift is, it was complete in Christ. And the reason He gave each member these different gifts is He wanted a composite, Christlikeness. Do you see the point?

Every one of the gifts that we have was complete and perfect in Christ. And He gives us, as members, these various gifts that we might be built up to the fullness of whom? Christ. You see?

The Holy Spirit didn't say, "Hmm, gift. I'll take a couple of those, have those ones. Well, there's a nice one to have." No. Every single gift that the Holy Spirit gave to the Church was a characteristic of Jesus Christ. And He was the totally complete and full person, just as God wants the Church to be. And you as a believer, you want to know something? The only way you'll ever be that full stature man in Christ is when you have all those gifts being ministered to you. Did you know that? You see, you'll never be like Jesus Christ until you characteristically have been built up in all the areas that He was built up in.

That's why I must minister my gift to you, because as I minister my gift to you, it builds you up in that area. And though – let's say my gift is preaching. If I minister to you in the gift of preaching, maybe you'll never have the gift of preaching, but you'll learn just from my ministering to you how to communicate on a better level. And so, I've built you up in that way.

Maybe your gift is showing mercy, and you minister that gift to me, and I learn a little more how to show mercy, and I'm built up in that area. And pretty soon, as every member ministers to each other, we're all built up as individuals to be like Christ and to show forth all His attributes. And then collectively, as a body, we manifest the total person of Christ.

So, you see, every spiritual gift was taken from the nature of Christ, and they are gifts given to His new body, the Church, that we might individually be like Him as they minister the gifts to us, and that we might as a body be like Him, functioning with all those various gifts.

Now, these gifts – and the word in the New Testament *charismata* means grace gifts. They're gifts of grace; you don't earn them. The more spiritual you get, the more gifts you get? No, wrong. You don't earn them; they're grace gifts. They are so critical – they are critical to the health of the body. And a sick body is a sick evangelist. And if we're going to reach the world, if we're going to reach down the street, if we're going to really have a testimony that is devastating, it'll only happen when we are one ministering in love to each other these gifts. Friends, this is important stuff.

Now, go to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 if you're not already there. And I want to show you four things about the gifts, about spiritual grace gifts. First, the importance of the spiritual gifts. Secondly, the source of spiritual gifts. Thirdly, the power of spiritual gifts. Fourthly, the extent of spiritual gifts. The importance, the source, the power, and the extent.

Number one, the importance of spiritual gifts. Now, we have already talked about this, haven't we? Why are they important? Because the body can't be like Christ unless they're ministered. And we all grow up together in the maturity in all of these areas that characterize Christ. How can I say I am like Christ, I have Christlikeness, if I don't know how to show mercy, if I don't know how to teach to some degree? And how can I know these things unless somebody who has that gift teaches me. Right? And, you know, it's not a human capacity in which you use the gift; it's the Spirit through you teaching me. And we'll talk about that more, but basically, see, they are important because unless we minister our spiritual gifts – not in our own energy, but in the energy of the Spirit – but unless we minister our spiritual gifts, the body is not built up. If it's not built up, it's not like Christ, and I'm not like Christ. And the prayer was that we would be like Him. And if we're going to have any witness in the world, it'll be when we're like Him.

All right, the importance of spiritual gifts. Verse 1 – and that's the verse that we'll deal with, no other verse on this subject. The importance of spiritual gifts. “Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” Now, unfortunately, people are ignorant. The Corinthians were grossly ignorant. And people today are ignorant. Some people abuse the spiritual gifts. Some people have gone way out in left field somewhere; they've climbed the fence; they're out in the parking lot in the area of spiritual gifts. All strange things. You know? Emphasizing the sign gifts, the miraculous gifts.

And we often stand back and say, “Oh, look at them; they're way out, man. What's that weird things?” And so, we just take spiritual gifts and file it somewhere. And if some are guilty of abusing spiritual gifts, we are guilty of neglecting them. It seems to be indifference on the one hand or fanaticism on the other hand and nothing in the middle. And here Paul says, “I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, I want you to know about spiritual gifts.”

The understanding of spiritual gifts is so critical to the life of the body of Christ and the testimony of the Gospel in the world, that it ranks with the cardinal essentials of salvation and the Gospel. Dear people, this is essential. It is not a passing fancy; it is one of the keys to all the revelation of God and to the ministry in the world today that you understand spiritual gifts.

And this church right here, Grace Community Church, or any other church, or the total body will never be what it could be, it will never be what Jesus prayed that it would be, it'll never be what the Holy Spirit gifted it and empowered it to be until we are no longer ignorant about spiritual gifts, but rather we understand them and we begin to use them in the energy of the Spirit.

So, we see the importance of spiritual gifts, don't we? Very, very important. If you don't understand spiritual gifts, friend, you are ignorant of a critical basic of God's revelation.

All right, secondly, the source of spiritual gifts, verse 11. We're passing verse 2 to 10; we'll come back. Verse 11, the source of spiritual gifts. Where do they come from? Verse 11, "But all these" – and he's just referred to the spiritual gifts, some of them, "worketh that one and the very same" – who? – "Spirit, dividing to every man severally as" – what are the next to words? – "He will."

What is the source of spiritual gifts? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Where do gifts come from? They come from the Holy Spirit; that's where they come from. And this is so clear in this verse; it's also clear that God is involved. In chapter 7, verse 7, it says, "I would that all men [were] even as I myself. But ever man hath his proper gift of God." God gives these gifts through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit then takes the various gifts and distributes them to the body member. The day that you were born into the family of God, the day that you received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, the Spirit of God distributed to you a certain gift. And through those gifts – now watch it; here's the key – through those gifts, the Holy Spirit wants to minister to you and to the rest of the body.

Let me clarify it. Through those gifts, the Holy Spirit wants to minister through you to the body. Now, we'll talk more about that in a moment. A spiritual gift – we'll define it for you – a spiritual gift is a Spirit-given ability which acts as a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the body. You got it? Say it again: a spiritual gift is a Spirit-given ability which acts as a channel through which the Spirit ministers to the body. Did you get it? The spiritual gift is not the end in itself, is it? The spiritual gift is only the channel through which the Holy Spirit operates.

Let me add a footnote. Spiritual gifts had nothing to do with spirituality. Every believer has spiritual gifts. Even the backslidden ones. Because a spiritual gift doesn't mean you're spiritual. All a spiritual gift is is a Spirit-given vehicle through which the Spirit can minister. The only question is whether the channel is clear or whether it's all plugged up. That's the only question.

Spirit gifts are only Spirit-given vehicles through which the Spirit of God ministers to the whole body; they are not signs of spirituality. You know, it's amazing how many people think that they've attained some spiritual gift, and they've gotten instant spirituality. No. Never had anything to do with spirituality. You can have all the gifts of the record of Scripture, and it wouldn't mean you're spiritual.

And would you please notice that it says at the end of verse 11, "The Holy Spirit divides to every man severally as He will." It's also amazing to me that people think they can seek certain gifts. You can't. People think they can tarry for certain gifts. You can't do that either. The Holy Spirit gives them as He will to whom He will. Some have even developed gimmicks and devices, little techniques to get certain gifts, and they try to generate artificial emotional and satanic activity, and then they call it the gifts of the Spirit. This goes on all the time, and it usually deals with the miraculous gifts, which we'll talk about in a little while, like tongues and so forth and so on.

I read a little pamphlet entitled "Ten Easy Steps to Speaking in Tongues." And it started out by saying you say a certain word, then hit yourself on the chin. Now, that is the most ludicrous kind of biblical scholarship I've ever heard of. The Spirit of God is the source of these gifts, not some gimmick. Not a little piece of paper that says, "Ten Easy Steps to the Gifts of the Spirit."

The Holy Spirit gives the gift by divine will and divine choice, not ours. The Holy Spirit knows what gifts are needed. He knows where they're needed, when they're needed, and who is to receive them to be ministered. And thus does He give them. And if each member uses His gifts, then there is a total complementing, and the work is accomplished to the glory of God as the body is built up.

You know, you can have the gift, given by the Holy Spirit, and be doing nothing about it. It's interesting that a guy fell into that problem. And his name was Timothy. And Paul, who chased Timothy around like a mother hen, constantly picking at him, which is a healthy thing to do, said to him in 1 Timothy 4:14 – listen to this – “Neglect not the gift that is in thee” – see? He had the gift. Oh, he'd become sidetracked by certain people who were pressuring him, and he was becoming a little upset, and he was even developing an ulcer, you know, and Paul told him to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. And he was really uptight.

And Paul says, “Hey, Timothy, don't neglect the gift.” He didn't lose the gift. He had it; he just neglected it. Second Timothy 1:6 Paul puts it another way. Evidently Timothy still wasn't doing too well. Second Timothy 1:6, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God.” See? “Get it going, Timothy.” You got it; use it.

Well, essentially, beloved, that's what I'm saying to you. You're a believer. You've got a gift; don't neglect it. Stir it up; activate it in the energy of the Spirit. Now, please notice that a gift is not a natural ability. You can't say, “My gift is making pie.” That is not a gift of the Spirit. That's a wonderful gift, and I would be happy to verify whether or not you have that gift. But that is not the gift of the Spirit.

Somebody says, “Well, my gift is to do this kind of thing,” or, “My gift is to work with my hands,” or, “My gift is to sing.” And those are not spiritual gifts; those are natural abilities. Now, the spiritual gifts are sovereignly-bestowed manifestations of the Spirit's power through a divinely-given ability.

Let me illustrate it to you. Now no doubt the apostle Paul was a graphic illustration of the difference between a true gift and just a physical ability. Now let me show you why. Paul obviously had natural ability to express himself publically. He just was – he was glib, sharp, fast, really quick. He had a natural ability to talk. But it is perfectly clear – and I want you to

mark this as critical to understand – it is perfectly clear that Paul never – now watch it – he never regarded his ability to talk as a gift of the Spirit. He was a man of tremendous learning. He could have used his knowledge of philosophy and literature and composed eloquent, convincing orations, couldn't he? And he could have delivered them with magnificent ability. But you know what Paul said? Now watch it, he said this, 1 Corinthians 2:2, just listen, “I came not with surpassing skill of speech or wisdom, for no knowledge did I purpose to display among you but the knowledge of Christ and Him” – what? – “crucified.”

You see what Paul's saying? He's saying, “I have a natural ability to speak; I have a natural ability to communicate; I know philosophy. I took it all, stuck it over there and said, ‘Spirit, speak through me.’” The Holy Spirit expresses Himself through man's powers. He uses a man's knowledge, but it is in a supernatural way, apart from that man's own ability.

And it's interesting about this. Here's another way to illustrate it. There are a lot of people who have the gift of gab, and they aren't preachers. If a man has a natural aptitude along that line, maybe the Holy Spirit will elect to use it; maybe He won't. A gift or a manifestation of the Spirit is of the Spirit, not of the flesh.

And you say, “Well, look as so-and-so, boy, they can get up, and they can just rattle off things, and boy, they are really, really fluid in their speech. Maybe God will put them in a totally different area in the body of Christ. Maybe they'll be ministering in a way that isn't even visible publically, and yet they may have the gift of gab.

On the other side, I had a friend in seminary – a dear friend. He had the worst stuttering problem I have ever seen. So bad – and he and I were very close – that I used to say to him, “If you've got 15 minutes, I'd like to have a 5-minute conversation with you.” But he and I really were close. And he – I said that in love, and he understands, so don't think I was hard on him because – we'll never forget that he got an *A* in pulpit speech, and I got a *B*.

But anyway – I'll never live that down. He gets me about that all the time. But he had a very severe speech impediment. And your first reaction would have been, “That guy – no way does that guy belong in the ministry as a preacher.” Today he's a preacher and a teacher. A pastor at a church. He became beloved, and he is one of the finest expositors of the Word of God I have ever heard, and he is one of the most lucid speakers I have ever heard, and he stutters all

the way from the beginning to the end of his message. But you know what? He may not have the fluid tongue physically, but brother, he has the gift of preaching.

God may elect to use your natural ability. Then again, he may bypass and give you a gift that has no connection with your natural ability. And so, when you talk about spiritual gifts, you're not relying upon physical power for the production of spiritual fruit. All that is is a hindrance. That's a pain in the neck to the Holy Spirit. And oh, that's so clearly shown in so many places in the Bible.

I think of one that comes to my mind, 1 Peter 4 I think it is. Yes, 1 Peter 4:10. Now, here's the distinction; this is beautiful, very graphic. It's illustrating just what I've told you. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." In other words, minister your gift. Right? Minister your gift, 1 Peter 4:10. Now, watch this: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Did you know that some people can speak and not be speaking the oracles of God? Not be really exercising their gift? There's a difference between the ability to speak and the Spirit-given gift of preaching.

So, he says, "If you're going to speak, speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as the ability which God giveth." Did you know that a man could have the gift of ministering and still minister in the flesh? That's what it says. Do you know that a man can have the gift of preaching and still stand in a pulpit and preach in the flesh? And I can verify that by personal experience. Just because you have the Spirit gift doesn't mean that every time you do that you're doing it in the Spirit. And so, he says to let him do it as of the ability which – what? God giveth. See?

Oh, it's so easy. I look at my own, and it would be so easy for me to stand up in front of an audience and just fire out, and I could go on forever. Right? Because I can talk. And it must be a constant battle in my own heart and mind to speak not humanly but as the oracles of God to bring my gift into subjection to the Holy Spirit. Because I could minister my gift, just as you can, in the flesh.

And so, you see, the gift does not necessarily mean you're spiritual. It doesn't at all. it doesn't have anything to do with spirituality. The gift is given by the Holy Spirit, not necessarily in accordance in accordance with what you think is your ability or your disability.

Not only that, thirdly, you can minister your gift either in the energy of the Spirit or in the energy of the flesh. The fact that one has the gift doesn't necessarily mean he ministers it in the Holy Spirit. And the gift is no sign of spirituality. None at all. Just because I have the gift to preach, that doesn't make me spiritual. I have the same struggles with sin that you have. And sometimes I think my struggle is greater than yours must be, although maybe that's not true. But you know you have that.

In 1 Corinthians 14, important statement. See, this is really important. 1 Corinthians 14:32 says this, "And the spirits of the prophets are" – what? – "subject to the prophets." Do you know what that means? That even a prophet's got to subject his own spirit. Just because you've been called to be a preacher, that doesn't mean you don't have to subject yourself anymore. I'm not spiritual because I preach; I'm not even infallible.

Verse 29 of 1 Corinthians 14. 1 Corinthians 14:29, look what it says, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let others judge." Did you know that? Did you know that the prophets aren't even so infallible, they've got to have three people and somebody else judge who's right. Some people think just because they've got the gift, that settles it. No, sir. Even the prophets had to check with two or three, work it out together, and then have somebody else judge who was right.

Gifts are no sign of spirituality; they are no guarantee that you're always right. Gifts are not always necessarily in connection with your own supposed abilities or disabilities. And you can minister your gift in the flesh, or you can minister your gift in the Spirit.

Spiritual gifts are important. They are critically important. They are important because we saw them ranked with the cardinal gifts, the cardinal doctrines of salvation. They are important because they're needed for a healthy body. The source of spiritual gifts we just saw was the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, let's look quickly at the power of spiritual gifts. The power of spiritual gifts, verses 2 through 6. Verse 2, "Ye know" – talking to the Corinthians – "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto those – unto these dumb idols" – that's "dumb" in the sense of they can't speak – "even as you were led." The word "led" there is like leading a prisoner.

He says to the Corinthians, “You know, you Corinthians used to be in real sad shape, going around worshiping dumb idols, praying to God’s who can’t answer.” See? Really kind of a pathetic, hopelessness in idol worship, isn’t it?

“Wherefore” – verse 3, he says, “I give you to understand” – because of your blindness and your incapacity as idol worshippers – “that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by” – whom? – “the Holy Spirit.”

Now, because the Corinthians had such a fouled up background in idol worship, they could know nothing about Christianity and they could know nothing spiritual gifts except the Holy Spirit teach them. “Why,” Paul says, “you couldn’t even know something as basic as the lordship of Christ unless the Holy Spirit told you about it.”

Remember what Peter said? “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” And what did Jesus say? “Flesh and blood hath not revealed that unto you. My Father in heaven.” You can’t know that lordship of Christ apart from the Holy Spirit.

He says, “Corinthians, I don’t want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts, but I know this: you couldn’t know about them because you couldn’t even know the basics. You couldn’t know about spiritual gifts; you couldn’t even know about step one, the lordship of Christ apart from the Holy Spirit.”

The flesh is incapable of knowing anything. If the natural man can’t even understand the lordship of Christ, how could the natural man understand the work of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts? He never could. Spiritual understanding and spiritual work can only be done by the power of the Spirit. Well, who is the power then of spiritual gifts? The Holy Spirit. What did Jesus say? “Ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you.” Who, then, is the power for understanding? Who is the power for operating spiritual gifts? The Holy Spirit. That’s thrilling. That is absolutely thrilling. I mean do you grab that? Whatever we do in our flesh is a waste. Whatever we do in our own – in our own flesh, in our own fashion, in our own will, in our own design is failure and mockery.

But – but – and get this, whatever I do when I’m filled with the Holy Spirit, whatever I do as I exercise my gift in His power is borne along by divine energy. Fantastic thought. Just to think that I can minister with divine energy, wow. So can you. In the service of the body, you can activate divine energy. Isn’t that exciting? You’re not just floating around trying to grunt and groan and build up your own strength and – you know? No. You just say, “Spirit of God, fill me,” and divine energy flows to the body as you minister.

So, in the service of the body, every member’s gift can only be exercised in the energy of the Holy Spirit if it is to be effective. If you operate in the energy of the flesh, you might as well not operate. Anything you do in the flesh is a satanic counterfeit. And, you know, that’s exactly what was going on in Corinth. They had counterfeited all the gifts. They didn’t lack any gift, but through carnality they had quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit, and no power was coming through, and the Corinthian part of the body was sick, sick, sick.

You say, “Well, I’d like to operate my gift in the energy of the Spirit. I’d really like to have the Spirit of God moving out through me. That’d be absolutely fabulous. How do I do it?”

It’s real simple. Is it? Yeah. Four easy steps. There are four basic principles. How can you really operate in the energy of the Spirit? Number one, prayer, prayer, prayer, prayer. You know what prayer is? “God, I want to operate in the energy of the Spirit. God, I want to operate in the energy of the Spirit.” Constantly bearing that message to God, asking Him to cleanse your life, to use you in the energy of the Spirit.”

Number two, “Yield yourselves” – Romans 6 – “as instruments of” – what? – “righteousness.”

“God, here’s my body, myself for righteous thoughts, righteous deeds.”

Third thing, Ephesians 5, “Be filled with the Spirit.”

You say, “What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?” It means to allow the Spirit of God to permeate every part of you. It means to turn every decision, every thought, every attitude over to the Spirit’s control.

Ah, the Spirit-filled life is fantastic. You say, “Well, that’d be great. I’m going to get down, and I’m going to pray, ‘Oh, Holy Spirit, fill me.’” And when he fills you, how long does it last? It

lasts just as long as the moment you asked Him. That's why the Greek says, "Be being kept filled with the Spirit." It's constantly yielding to the Holy Spirit, one thing at a time, one thing at a time.

You know what? You get in the morning, you say, "Holy Spirit, I'm Yours." Next thing you know, Satan comes along and starts tempting you. "Out of here, Satan. Holy Spirit, I'm Yours. I yield to You. Fill me. What do You want me to do? Which way do You want me to go?" Filling of the Holy Spirit is nothing more than living conscious of the Spirit's control of your life. That's all. And turning every decision over to Him.

So, prayer, yieldedness as instruments of righteousness, filled with the Spirit. Galatians 5, the fourth one, walk in the Spirit. One step at a time. One step at a time. One step at a time. Now, we'll take messages on each of these aspects in the future and cover exactly what each of them means. But suffice it to say, at this point, that the Spirit is our energy. The guarantee that you are functioning in the *charismata*, the grace gift, and not a counterfeit is to be filled with the Spirit. That's the key.

Why, when the early Church wanted men to lead, they found men who were full of – what? – the Holy Spirit. They chose men who were full of the Holy Spirit. That's the need of every body member, folks. All we need to do is be filled with the Spirit. Let the Spirit of God have every part of our life, every dimension of our life. And we'll see that when we get to Ephesians 5 in more detail.

Verse 4 to 6. Here he explains the energy of the Spirit. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" – operating through all of them. "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who works all in all."

You notice the Trinity? The Spirit, the Lord, and God. They're all working within us, but the energy is the Spirit's energy. We are on a divine power source, folks. We're plugged into the Trinity. I mean that's exciting. Can you imagine how it would be to be running around on batteries? We are plugged into divine energy. You're not just some little, insignificant, ball of flesh romping around for 60 years. You are plugged into divine power, and that power should surge through your spiritual gift to touch the body and make it healthy that its witness might be healthy.

Man, this is something beyond belief I'll tell you. We actually operate on a divine power supply. And when you minister your spiritual gift, man, the juice is really shooting through. The power is there, friend. And you know something else? The gift is there. The only thing that may not be there is yieldedness on your own part.

I'll tell you something, very honest, personally, I wouldn't want the responsibility of being the crippler of the body of Christ. No thanks. I don't think that I want to be the reason Christ's prayer for oneness isn't answered. I want to operate my gift.

So, we see the importance, the source, and the power of spiritual gifts. Very quickly I want to show you the extent of them, verse 7 to 10. The extent of spiritual gifts. And by that I mean two things: to what extent do believers have them, and how many are there and what are they? And we'll cover this very quickly.

Verse 7, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit." How many believers have the gifts? Every man. All of them. They all have them. They are vehicles given to every believer through which the Spirit manifests Himself to the body. And you notice – isn't it terrific that it says that we profit? – "given to every man to profit." But it's not only – it's not a reflexive, to profit themselves. We not only profit by the exercise of our gifts because we're being used by God, but the rest of the body profits. That's a fantastic thing.

Now, let me show you how this works. As I minister my gift to you, you profit, and you grow strong with me. And so, all the gifts work together for a total perfect man. Where you lack, I'm gifted, and I can minister to you. Where I lack, you're gifted; you can minister to me. Now watch it – by your constant ministry to me, I will be built up in my weaker areas, my non-gift areas. I may never have the gift that you have, but I'll be built up in that area because of the ministry of your gift in that area to me. And even though I have no grace gift there, that area is strengthened until I grow to maturity in all areas. And still, even though I'm mature in all areas, I'll have some special gifts that stand out.

So, you see, your ministry of gifts holds me up and builds me up. And my ministry to you builds you up. You may not have the gifts that I have, but my gifts can build you up in that area to a full, perfect man.

So, we are both strong and healthy when we minister to each other. Now, how many gifts are there? Well, there's some listed in the 12th chapter of Romans and more in the 4th chapter of Ephesians, and here's a few here, verses 8 to 10. These are the ones that are in our passage, there's also some over there in verse 28. We're not going to study all of them tonight, but let me just read verses 8 to 10. Here's a few of them, "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom" – some people have the gift of wisdom" – "to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit" – see, there's till unity in diversity – "to another faith by the same Spirit" – that's another gift – "to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning the spirits; to another various kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues."

Now, there you have a list of gifts. Now, by no means, friends, are those all the gifts; they aren't. They aren't all the gifts. And friends, if the Church is to be built up, if the power from on high is to be manifest, we've got to find our gift by prayer and yieldedness, and we've got to minister our gift to each other. Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father, we just feel like our minds have been bombarded with truth. And Lord I request Your Spirit in giving this tonight and it was of You that I have indeed spoken the oracles of God and not my own flesh. God, You know how this message has burned in my heart for these people. And Lord, I just pray right now that You'll take it and apply it to their hearts.

O God, may we minister in the energy of the Spirit. God, may we this week, by prayer and the Word of God, looking up these verses, just get down on our knees before You and seek to know our gifts and minister. Thank You, Lord, for teaching us tonight. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

FIRST CORINTHIANS 12-14 (SPIRITUAL GIFTS)

Basic Truths About Spiritual Gifts I Corinthians 12:1-7

God does not demand the Christian to do the work of the ministry without giving him the grace and the abilities to do it. He has given the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts to each Christian to accomplish the work of the ministry. A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given by God to believers for the purpose of service. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift, and these gifts are to find expression primarily through the ministry of the local church. The key to a vital local church is to have all the spiritual gifts of each Christian functioning to further the work of the church. Each Christian is to discover his particular gift and put it to work. In chapters 12-14 of First Corinthians, the subject is about spiritual gifts. Beginning in chapter 11, the Apostle Paul has been dealing with problems in the public assembly of the church. The first problem was that women did not have their heads covered when praying and prophesying. The second problem was abuses at the Lord's Table. Now in chapters 12-14, Paul will deal with the abuses in the area of spiritual gifts. The Corinthian church was guilty of exalting the spectacular gifts at the expense of prophecy. He rebukes the Corinthians for their behavior and shows them that the spectacular gifts, namely tongues, are the least of all the gifts and sets down specific roles for how they should be used.

TESTING THE SPIRIT IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS 12:1-3

A Person Does Not Get Involved in Idolatry and Demonism (12:1-2)

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. According to 1 Corinthians 1:7, the Corinthian church had all the spiritual gifts. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gifts as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed (1 Cor. 1:7). It was quite likely that disorders would arise in that local church, especially since they were a carnal church (1 Cor. 3:1-2). There would be some who would be imposters, faking their gift. Some would be dissatisfied with the gifts they had received and envy those who, they thought, had more significant gifts. Others would become proud because they had a spectacular gift, thinking themselves more spiritual than others who had less spectacular gifts. Lastly, there would be the problem of all trying to exercise their particular gifts at one time, causing confusion in the assembly. Therefore, there was a tremendous need to enlighten these Corinthians on the subject of spiritual gifts. When Paul said he did not want them to be “ignorant” of spiritual gifts, this was a slam against their super-spirituality. There were some in the church who thought they knew everything, but in reality they were ignorant. Because some had spoken in tongues, they thought themselves to have arrived spiritually and were better than others who did not speak in tongues. They needed instruction and correction in their understanding of spiritual gifts.

You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute (dumb) idols. Paul reminds the Corinthians that before they became Christians, they were deeply involved in pagan idolatry. With pagan idolatry came the Greek mystery religions in which spiritual experiences were the norm. They had grown accustomed to being moved by some kind of supernatural or demonic force, either in a trance or a state of ecstasy. Speaking in ecstatic utterances was an everyday experience. Mystical experiences were expected and were an authentication of spiritual reality.

One of the key ways that people were led astray in the first century was emotionalism, seen particularly in the religions of Pythia of Delphi, Dodora, Dionysius, all of which practiced ecstatic utterances. It is interesting that the Dionysius cult had one of its centers in Corinth (Knofel Swan, First Corinthians).

Apparently there was a weakness in the Corinthian Christians’ Greek make-up, with their hundreds of mystical religions, to follow idols, false gods and strong

personalities. Paul assumes there might still be that tendency even after they were saved. While he does not state it specifically, he may be assuming that one of the marks or tests of religious error is that it gets involved in idolatry. In the first century, these Corinthians were engulfed in literal idolatry, but as we have said in the past, idolatry may be anything we put in place of Jesus Christ. Any concept or thing that begins to shape our thinking and demands most of our time is an idol. This could be money, a job, a house, a car, a mate, a girlfriend, a boyfriend, sports, politics, recreation, TV, drugs, alcohol or a hundred other things which would be given first place above Christ.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that men are “led astray” which seems to infer some kind of power to which men are becoming subject, and that power is demonic influence. We have already seen that behind idolatry is demonism. No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God (I Cor. 10:20). Behind all idolatry is the power of mind control exercised by demons. The Bible teaches that behind the thinking of unbelievers are demons, and we are constantly fighting wickedness in high places. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12).

There is a mind-control by demonic powers who are in control of the philosophy and thinking of men and women all over this world. Even so-called religious people have a demonic mind bent. They may use religious jargon, biblical terminology and mimic Christian practices, but they lead to some form of idolatry. How is this possible?

First, a false religious leader may become an idol for people. A leader draws attention to himself as a dynamic person and people give him adulation and worship. This can be seen clearly in movements like the Jonestown Incident 25 years ago in Guyana, where 900 people took their lives by poisoning because they worshiped a man, the Rev. Jim Jones. Or it can be seen in the recent Heaven’s Gate movement, led by Marshall Applewhite, where 39 followers committed suicide.

Second, in order to follow a man as an idol, people give up their rights and liberties and their own personality. There is severe regimentation and control over the mind. People lose their identity to follow a man in idolatrous worship.

This is clearly seen in the Moonies, who follow the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the founder of the Unification Church.

Third, these leaders make idolatrous claims for themselves, such as the possession of supernatural powers, giving them special authority over others.

Both Rev. Moon and Rev. Jones claimed to be a messiah for their followers.

Fourth, there is also the idolatrous solicitation of money, the central power of need of the group. One of the tests or criterion to know if a person is led by the Holy Spirit in the use of spiritual gifts is that lie is not given over to any form of Idolatry or demonism.

A Person Does Not Repudiate the Person of Christ (12:3)

Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed.” The city of Corinth was filled with Greek soothsayers and priests who claimed divine inspiration in wild frenzy and foaming lips, so the more fanatical they were, the more they were supposed to have wisdom from their gods. At times, they even mumbled strange sounds. Perhaps some of these wild-eyed soothsayers, speaking in what seemed liked tongues, called Jesus accursed. Perhaps some of these Christians at Corinth either cursed Christ or heard Christ cursed in their mystery cults before they were converted. The Jews also called Christ an accursed one; that is, one who was a criminal, a malefactor, who deserved to die, who had a curse on him. The negative test is that no man speaking by the Spirit of God and under the influence of the Spirit will ever speak of Jesus as being accursed.

How do men in the 20th century say Christ is accursed? Anytime a person says that Jesus was a mere sinful man, a good teacher, a wonderful example, that person is lumping him with the rest of sinful humanity which is under the curse of Adam. Any teaching which says Jesus was only a sinful man is not from God.

Jesus was a man, but a sinless man who was born of the Virgin Mary.

Every modern-day liberal Protestant who says Jesus Christ was a just a great teacher, a moral man, a supreme example but not sinless, is cursing Christ. These teachers are never speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. The positive criterion or test to know whether a person is truly using his gift in the power of the Spirit is that he exalts Jesus as Lord. The title "Lord" refers to Christ's deity: that is, He is God, come in the flesh. "Jesus" speaks of Christ's humanity. Therefore, Jesus Christ is perfect humanity and undiminished deity united in one person forever. No person can speak of the deity of Jesus Christ as central to his theology apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

One of the earliest Christian confessions was "Jesus is Lord." This was a public confession before a hostile world. To make this confession could mean persecution and even death. Anyone can say Jesus is Lord but no public confession can be made before a hostile world unless the Holy Spirit is prompting that confession.

First century Christians died as martyrs for the truth that Jesus is Lord. Rome wanted them to confess Caesar as lord, but they would not bow to Caesar, only to Christ their God. Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord! Jesus is right now in charge of all human events! Jesus rules and reigns supreme in this world and is guiding history as we now know it to culminate at the Second Advent.

Today we hear that science is lord; sex is lord; feeling is lord; power is lord; money is lord; reason is lord; and this all culminates into one concept that man is lord! Not so. Jesus is Lord, and those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit exalt Him as Lord.

Every teacher or group who does not acknowledge Jesus as Lord is not Christian but a false religion. This includes other religions like Muslims, Confucians, Buddhists, Shintoists, Hindus or whatever. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God (1 John 4:2). This includes Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Unity, Unitarians, and every other cult in the world which does not see Jesus as full deity and full humanity.

When someone makes the claim to any spiritual gift, ask the question, "Does that person exalt Christ with his gift? Does he in any way demean the person of Christ? Does he realize that Jesus is Lord over his gift? Any person who claims to

have any spiritual gift and does not exalt Jesus Christ as the God-Man is probably no Christian at all. It is by their fruits we'll know the true from the false. By their fruits you will recognize them (Matt. 7:16).

The burning desire of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ. He (the Holy Spirit) will bring glory to me (Christ) (John 16:14). A mature, growing church exalts Jesus as Lord and does not exalt spiritual gifts. Mature Christians exalt the Giver of the gifts; not the gifts themselves.

This verse may also tell us what a Christian really is. A Christian is not an American, not one who goes to church, not one who believes the Bible, not one who believes in God, not one who believes in the moral teachings of Jesus, but he is a person who believes that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh and who bows his mind and will and emotions to his God, receiving Jesus Christ as Savior for his sins.

TRUE UNITY IN DIVERSITY IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS 12:4-7

Unity in Source (12:4-6)

The key to understanding this passage is in the words "same Spirit, same Lord and same God." Spiritual gifts are the work of the Trinity. Just as in the Godhead there is unity in diversity, so in spiritual gifts there is unity in diversity. Whenever we find God at work, we see unified diversity. When the local church is fulfilling its function and it is what it ought to be, we will find unity-one body, many gifts, many distinctions, many ministries within it; but there will be one group, one body in Christ. Paul argues that the unity in diversity flows out of the nature of God. He is the source of unity.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. While there are many different kinds of spiritual gifts there is only one Holy Spirit who gave those gifts or abilities in His sovereign grace. And he gives them (spiritual gifts) to each one, just as he (the Holy Spirit) determines (I Cor. 12:11). Each person has been given a spiritual gift which is a capacity to serve. The Holy Spirit has not only given different spiritual gifts, but has given different degrees of the same gift to various individuals. For instance, three Christians may all have the gift of evangelism but not to the same degree or with the same intensity.

Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. Yet, there are multiple thousands of Christians who do not even know what their spiritual gift is. They go from year to year and never ask themselves, "What is my spiritual gift and how can I put it to work in my local church?" A Christian will never be aglow with excitement for Christ as he should be until he finds his spiritual gift and puts it to work. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. Every spiritual gift is a "service" or "ministry. The word "service" not only speaks of service for Christ in general but also of the opportunity to use that gift. It is the Holy Spirit who gives spiritual gifts. It is Christ who gives us opportunity to use the gifts. The Lord Himself, as Head of the Church, begins to direct the Christian in the use of spiritual gifts. This is why we must be yielded and submitted to Christ in our daily experience so He can show how and where to use our gifts for God's glory. Don't wait to be asked to do things in your church. Find your gift and begin to ask your leaders where you can serve. Don't ask "What can my church do for me," but "What can I do for my church in light of my spiritual gift?"

There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. The Greek word for "working" is *energenata*, which speaks of supernatural energy. This is God's energy at work in every Christian and flowing out into the life of the unsaved community.

The operation of God's Holy Spirit is not a theory and we must not reduce it to a matter of theoretical debate. The Spirit produces results, varied results which can be noticed: changed lives, transformed relationships, increasing congregations, effective testimony, released talents. As each of these is energized by the Spirit the Lordship of Jesus is demonstrated in as many diverse ways as there are people who possess this energy (David Prior, I Corinthians).

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts sovereignly. Christ grants us opportunity to use those gifts, as God the Father energizes the Christian so as to bring about the proper results from spiritual gifts. We know that when we exercise our gifts there will be action. Whether the result is a big up-front ministry or a behind-

the-scenes ministry, it will never be dull. It will always be exciting. What difference does it make who has what gifts, for they all come from the Triune God and all are important to the proper functioning of the body of Christ. The source of all gifts is God, so there is no room to boast about our gifts. There is no room to get jealous over someone else's gift. There is no room to think you and your gift are unimportant. Whether one person uses his gift of teaching before thousands and another uses the gift of mercy before a few, both are important and both are needed for the proper functioning of the local church. When we get this concept of spiritual gifts, it changes our attitude about ourselves, our value to the church, our worth as individuals and our importance to Christ.

Unity in Purpose (12:7)

God is not only the source of unity in spiritual gifts but also the unity of purpose in spiritual gifts. He has designed the gifts for a specific purpose—to build up the body of Christ.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given. The word "manifestation" means "to make known, produce visible glory." Therefore, spiritual gifts are not to be hidden. Again Paul is simply saying that each Christian has at least one spiritual gift. The Apostle Peter declared the same truth. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms (1 Pet. 4:10). A Christian may have more than one spiritual gift as seen in the Apostle Paul, who was an apostle, evangelist and a teacher. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald (evangelist) and an apostle and a teacher (2 Tim. 1:11). We now that Paul also had the gift of tongues. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you (1 Cor. 14:18). All Christians have gifts and all are valuable and important to the body of Christ generally and the local church particularly.

For the common good. Here it is stated the supreme purpose of all spiritual gifts—to build up and edify the body of Christ. Gifts are not primarily given for self-edification, for self-exaltation or to cause envy and strife among Christians. Gifts are given to the Christian to profit others. God gave spiritual gifts for the common good of the church. Each Christian is a debtor to other Christians to use

his gift within the local church for the edification of other Christians. If we are not using our gifts, we are robbing our brothers and sisters of ministry.

In my opinion, the statement "for the common good" puts a great deal of pressure on those Christians who claim to speak in tongues today to use their gift responsibly so as to edify and profit the whole church. Whatever else this may teach, it says that all gifts must profit others and not be used selfishly. Perhaps tongues could be used in one's private prayer life as some claim. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church (1 Cor. 14:4). Charismatics get around this dilemma by stating that tongues edifies the individual Christian who grows strong so as to build the body of Christ. I don't believe this is Paul's argument here. All gifts, even tongues, must somehow profit, build up or do good for the whole body of Christ. For sure, tongues should never bring glory to self, or draw attention to self, or make a person feel more spiritual than others who do not have the gift. Whatever tongues are, they must be for the common good and build up the body of Christ collectively. Since God has gifted others to minister to Christians, every Christian can then minister to each of us. Our attitude then should be, "Every Christian, no matter how great or small, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, has a ministry to me and you personally. He gets his personal enjoyment and fulfillment in ministering to me, and I get my fulfillment and enjoyment in ministering to him."

CONCLUSION

Christian, do you know your spiritual gift? Are you seeking to discover it? Are you honestly seeking to find out how your gifts profit others? Are you serving others with your gifts through the local church? Are you doing the work of the ministry? Are you involved in the excitement and adventure of using your gifts to help others? You will never be a mature Christian until you discover your spiritual gifts and put them to work in the body of Christ. God has designed you to serve and minister to others.

We have been talking about spiritual gifts for the Christian, but the greatest gift in the world is the gift of salvation which God gives to men, women, boys and girls who receive Christ as Savior and Lord. Salvation is a gift and it is received by

faith. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23). You cannot work for salvation, buy salvation or beg for salvation. You can only receive the gift of salvation by welcoming Christ into your life by faith. The moment you receive Christ you receive the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, a ticket to heaven, the person of the Holy Spirit, and you also receive at least one spiritual gift whereby you can serve Christ and His Church.

We need to live attached to Christ. Now, what I mean by that, we are already attached to Him as believers. When you get saved, you are attached. He attaches you to Himself. You are a part of His body. However, to live attached to Him means on our end towards Him and our willingness to surrender to Him, to yield to His Word, to yield to His will. When that happens, there is automatic growth in our life.

The Signs of Spiritual Immaturity–Part 1

We are finally here in 1 Corinthians 12. As we ease into it, let's look at "The Signs of Spiritual Immaturity." We are going to have to do some review to make sure we are in the flow and getting into chapter 12. We need to live attached to Christ. Now, what I mean by that, we are already attached to Him as believers. When you get saved, you are attached. He attaches you to Himself. You are a part of His body. However, to live attached to Him means on our end towards Him and our willingness to surrender to Him, to yield to His Word, to yield to His will. When that happens, there is automatic growth in our life.

Let me show you this. In chapter 3, Paul beautifully shows us this. Turn to [1 Corinthians 3:6](#). All of this is just simply in review to make sure we have the proper setting in which chapters 12-14 are couched. He points back to when he was the first pastor of the church there in Corinth and very faithfully planted the Word of God in their hearts. He told them earlier that he preached the whole counsel. He didn't leave anything out. He preached the Word faithfully to them.

Then he points to when Apollos, the second pastor, followed him and watered what he had taught. Verse 6 says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." Now that little phrase, "God was causing the growth," or "giving the growth" is in the imperfect tense. And that imperfect tense means that He was consistently, as these two effective pastors were faithfully teaching the word, God working in them and through them and with the Word was causing growth to take place. A man cannot cause growth. God has to do that.

But then in verse 7 he changes the tenses. He moves from imperfect to the present tense. He says, "So then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." He puts it in the present tense. In other words, God is always causing growth. You attach yourself to Him, you've attached yourself to the very principle of life and growth itself, and you

cannot live surrendered to Him and not grow. It is like trying to drink water out of a fire hydrant when you attach yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ. You find a Christian that is not growing, and you will find a Christian not attached, not living surrendered to God's Word and God's will. That is the only problem with him is that he won't surrender. If he'll surrender, God is always causing the growth. Now there was a time in Corinth when the believers were growing. This can only mean that they were taking what they had heard and they were receiving it and obeying it. They were living up under truth attached to, by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, surrendered to His will, surrendered to His Word. But something happened somewhere down the line. He can point back to when they were growing, but now their growth had become stunted and they attached themselves to everything but Christ.

In verse 12 of chapter 1, by the time that Paul wrote this, this was the situation they were in. He says, "Some of you are of Paul, some of you are of Cephas, some of you are of Apollos." You are attaching yourselves to men. You are not attaching yourselves to Christ. Flesh had won out and was now ruling their life.

Now think of it. Corinth, one of the best-taught churches in the New Testament; and by the time Paul writes this, they are now the example of nothing but pure flesh and the havoc it can reap amongst those who know truth but do not live it. Now, solid teaching—now hear me—solid teaching is not enough. Solid biblical teaching is not enough. You ask, "Why?" Because if a person is not willing to respond to what he knows and what God has revealed to him, it produces pride and arrogance in that person's life, and the enigma is that the person becomes deceived by that which he thought that he already knew.

A beautiful example of this is in chapter 8. They knew truth but weren't living up under it. What you understand is not the key, it is how you live and respond to what you understand. In chapter 8 he is dealing with the problem of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Now I am not going to go back and re preach that, but before he answers the question, he acknowledges the wealth of knowledge that the church had, not only from him but from Apollos. And he says in 8:1, "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge." In other words, there was plenty of knowledge to go around. They had an understanding. This understanding had to be in the area of grace. They knew that if they ate meat sacrificed to idols, that would in no way infringe upon their relationship with God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. In no way would that affect their eternal

standing with God. They knew that. They knew that 90% of the meat sold in the marketplace was meat sacrificed to idols. They knew, they didn't even have to ask. They could just go in and buy it. They didn't have any trouble eating that meat. They understood the message of grace.

But that understanding had not helped them whatsoever. Because if you are not living under grace, even though you may understand it, you fail to see an extra piece of the puzzle that needs to be there. In other words, knowledge is not enough. He says in the last part of that verse, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." In other words, if you are not living surrendered to Christ, which is the message of grace, His enabling power in your life, then there is no fruit of His Spirit in your life. So therefore, what you know you will use to break your brother rather than build your brother.

Something had happened to this church. They knew. They had been well taught. They could sit in a group and debate and win the argument every time. They understood, but they were upside down because they weren't willing to live in obedience to what they knew.

As a matter of fact, you can see clearly what happened to them in 3:14. Here is the Corinthian church. Here is what is wrong with them. Knowledgeable, well taught, but babies. They would not grow up. They wouldn't come out of that nursery. In verse 1 of chapter 3, the apostle Paul takes them back to Acts 18 when he first went there and when many were saved. Remember, he went and made tents with Priscilla and Aquila. Then Silas and them came over and so they started witnessing and a church was birthed there. He points them back to that time.

He says in verse 1, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ." That little term "men of flesh," is *sarkinos*. It comes from the word *sarkikos*, which is used in verses 3 and 4. But as far as I can get out of it, that word has more of the idea that you had the attitude of a baby. Now, a baby is going to live like a baby. Babies are babies, but that's okay. When they are first born, you tolerate that because you expect that out of their life. And he is not in any way indicting them. In verse 1 he is just simply saying you were babies back then and you acted like babies and that is okay. There is a time for being a baby.

There is a thirteenth to being a baby in verse 2. He says, "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it." In other words, you couldn't chew the deeper things. And that doesn't mean he watered down what he taught.

What he taught was the Word of God. It is the Spirit who makes it milk to one person and meat to another. It depends on where you are in your level of maturity as to how that communicates in your life. And so he is not indicting them. Babies act like babies; babies drink milk because that is all babies can feed on.

Then comes the indictment in the middle of verse 2. He says, "Indeed, even now you are not yet able." There is the problem. Back then was not a problem because you were growing, you had just been birthed. But the problem is, you are still in that nursery. And I want to tell you what, oh, how these babies, spiritual babies, well taught, had caused such havoc in the church at Corinth.

Now you want to see what a baby can do? You get a bunch of folks my age or more, 55 or whatever over, and you get a bunch of us together. We are going to have a good meal. We are going to have some fellowship. You take one baby, one who hasn't been fed in a while, one who is a little bit tired and put it right in the middle of that group. And I want to tell you, the things you thought you were going to do, you won't do. And the things that you thought you were going to eat, you won't eat. And the time that you thought you were going to have, you don't have. That little baby will control every single thing that is going on.

Now you can imagine, when you have got a whole church full of them, the havoc that was caused in that early church. The symptoms of babies living like babies, who won't grow up, first of all was an apathy to sin. In chapter 5 we see there that they were tolerating a sin that shocked the world. A man in their midst was living with his father's wife, probably his stepmother. You have incest and adultery going on at the same time. And they won't even deal with it. They are just apathetic to the whole thing. "Well, you know, it is his life. He has to learn to figure it out himself."

In chapter 6, we see the vengefulness toward each other. You know, babies offend one another. But not only did they offend each other and live that way, but they took each other to court when it was costly. Buddy, they would sue each other at the drop of a hat. They had no witness whatsoever in pagan Corinth in the courts because of the way they treated one another.

In chapter 6 we also see their fleshly indulgence. Immorality was all over the city, and here are these little babies who won't respond to truth, who won't attach themselves to Christ by faith. And as a result of it, now they begin to be pulled into the immorality of the city.

In verse 18 of chapter 6, Paul has to say, “Flee immorality. Run from it!” We also see in chapter 7 the confused ideas that they had of the family and marriage. Their marriages and their families were in shambles, and they didn’t know what to do. They were totally confused. In chapters 8-10, which is a unit and must be looked at as a unit, we see their insensitivity to one another; people who knew beating up people who didn’t know with the Word of God. They used it as a club rather than the truth that could set people free.

And then in chapter 11 we see all their bitter relationships, factions, divisions, all of this kind of garbage surface at the taking of the Lord’s Supper. They totally desecrated the Lord’s Supper. Now this is the havoc that takes place when you have people who know, but people who don’t respond and live what they know. It completely perverts their lifestyle, and as a result, it causes nothing but confusion and chaos. Carnal, immature, unspiritual, sick and anemic lives are the result of people who won’t live attached to the Lord Jesus by faith and surrender to His will and to His Word.

This is the setting for chapters 12-14. You must understand this. This is a pitiful church, a pitiful excuse for anybody to call themselves Christians. That is the setting for chapters 12-14. Paul is dealing with a group of people who do not walk by faith. They lived in their feelings. They walked by sight. They were attached to their flesh and not to Christ. Truth was nothing but a distortion to the Christians who are in Corinth. You see, you don’t possess truth; truth must possess you. And if it doesn’t possess you, you don’t know truth. You think you do, but you don’t know what you think you know. That is what he said back in chapter 8 when he was referring to this very thing.

In the last two verses of chapter 11, he one more time brings God’s judgment upon them, these Christians who were weak and sick and some were dead because of their behavior. He one more time recalls them to proper respect for one another and care about one another. In verse 33 he says, “So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.” The word “wait” is the word “tarry,” give respect to that other person.

You see, what was happening, the rich would go in and eat all the food. The poor were hungry, while the rich were drunk and full. And he says, “You wait upon each other. Respect one another. This is a sacred time. It is when the body comes together in unity, not in division.

Then in verse 34 he says, "If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment." Don't come to the Lord's Supper that way. "And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come." In other words, that wasn't all. They had been asking questions since chapter 7. He is just answering questions. He said, "There are some more things that you asked me, but when I come I will straighten those things out."

Now that leads us then to chapters 12-14. Now again, chapters 12-14 must be taken as a unit, just like chapters 8-10 must be taken as a unit. We must understand now this fleshly minded, upside down, distorted church as we enter in to chapters 12-14. Paul immediately, once again starts pulling to the surface the signs of spiritual immaturity that exists among them. And you have to see that because so many times you jump into chapter 12 and immediately you go to verse 8 down. But you don't get into verses 1 and 2. Those verses set the stage here. He is telling them something we need to take time and understand.

Ignorance of spiritual matters

The first sign of spiritual immaturity that he brings up in verse 1 is ignorance of spiritual matters. Now, what a task Paul has here, straightening out these upside down believers here at Corinth. It is interesting how we live in two worlds. He dealt with the physical world of chapter 11, the physical public worship. But in chapter 12, now he is going to enter into the spiritual dimension. We live in the physical, but we also live in the spiritual; two worlds at the same time. And that is very confusing to some people. Now, we can ignore the physical and suffer the consequences. That is the law of living in the physical of this world that we live in. It is the same way in the spiritual world. We can ignore the spiritual world, but we have to live in the consequences of ignoring it. The Christians at Corinth were living in the consequences of ignoring their spiritual walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. He says in verse 1, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware."

That little word "now" that starts off the verse is the little word *de* in the Greek language. It is the little word that can be translated "now" or "but." I think it ought to be translated "but" because he is changing gear. He is shifting from the physical world and in the public worship into the spiritual dimension here and is making a definite contrast.

"But," he says, "concerning spiritual gifts." Now the word "gifts" I will deal with in just a second, because it is really not there. Let's talk about the word "spiritual"

first. The word “spiritual” is the Greek word that comes from the word *pneuma*, which means spirit. It is that which refers to the characteristic faculty that God has given us to communicate with Him. Man to God and God to man. It is in that spirit that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell, giving us that access to the Father and giving us that communication with Him.

Now this word stands in contrast to another word, *psuchikos*, which is used over in 2:14 that deals with the soulish part of man. The soul is that aspect of man that he really shares with the rest of this kingdom that is here on this earth. Even animals have something like this. It is what gives you the ability to relate to the world around you; whereas, in contrast, the spiritual part of man is that which gives us the ability, once saved, to relate to the world above us. The soul gives us the relation of the world around us; the spiritual gives us the ability to relate to the world that is above us.

Now, we must make another correction to the task. He says, “Now concerning the spiritual gifts.” The word “gifts” is not in the literal. That is written in by translators. The word is simply “spiritual,” used in the plural, and referring to the many manifold aspects of the spiritual realm. “But concerning spiritual matters,” would be a better way of translating that. Now gifts are a part of these things, but not just gifts.

He says, “You Corinthians, you don’t understand public physical worship and you don’t even understand spiritual things.” He is not just talking about gifts. In fact, this was the problem of the church of Corinth. They stressed only one aspect of the life in the Spirit and, therefore, neglected the rest of it.

That is exactly what is going on in America today. People are zeroing in on one aspect of the spiritual but leaving out other aspects of the spiritual. The flesh always tends to exaggerate what it sees and what it experiences. It lives in the sensual. Remember this. If you are not living up under the spiritual power of God, you are living according to the flesh, and the flesh always exaggerates what it experiences and what it perceives and what it sees.

I will give you an example of that. When you isolate one area of the spiritual life, the spiritual dimension, you become unbalanced. Take the area of prayer, for instance. If that is the only thing you are interested in, you have missed the balance of the Christian life. You perhaps don’t understand spiritual things. You are zeroing in on one thing of the spiritual life. What about surrender to the Word of God? What about living in the fullness of the Spirit of God? What about all the

other things that go along with it? You can't just isolate one thing. You have to have an understanding of spiritual matters, of spiritual things.

Now, in the physical world to give you an example, if you have someone who over-exaggerates one aspect of physical life, then what we do with those kinds of people, if it is a pattern of their lifestyle, we put them in institutions because they are imbalanced. They don't understand where that little piece fits and so they over do and exaggerate that one piece.

It is the same way in the spiritual life. And what happens when you are living like the Corinthians, everything is distorted. You will tend to exaggerate that which you see, that which you touch and that which you feel. So experience becomes a hedge around the things that you tend to exaggerate. Paul says, "This is what your problem is, you don't understand spiritual matters, much less the gifts and the teaching on the gifts."

You see, the world of the spirit is only accessed by faith. It is there all the time, but the only way you access it is by faith in the Word of God and obedience to Him. And when you access it, your senses and what you see, touch and feel, do not in any way prove or disprove the spiritual world. It is only accommodated, it is only accessed, through our willingness to attach ourselves to Christ. If I am not willing to walk by faith, if I am not willing to die to the ugliness of my flesh, if I am not willing to do that, then I have not accessed, I have ignored the spiritual world. The result of that is a distorted view of spiritual things.

Paul was displeased with their obvious imbalance and ignorance of spiritual things. He said, "I do not want you to be unaware." Now the word "unaware" is the word *agnoeo*. We saw that over in Romans, without understanding, without knowledge. It is a transmitted knowledge. It is actually the understanding that comes with that knowledge. "I don't want you to walk around," he says, "as spiritual ignoramuses." That's another way to put that. "You people are so upside down. You are ignorant of spiritual things, so why in the world do you want to talk about this or that? You don't even understand the whole picture. You won't live attached to Christ. You have attached yourself to everything but Him."

It is the word we get the word "agnostic" from. An agnostic is one who has not experienced or cannot experience something, and therefore, he does not know and does not believe. But he is ignorant and he is ignorant not because it's impossible for him to know, but because he refuses to realize that there are

certain things that cannot be known unless there is a capacity for knowing. And until he puts his faith into Christ, then he is not going to know beyond that point. Paul tells them that because of their fleshly living, their refusal to surrender what they know, they do not have understanding of spiritual matters, not just the gifts, but in the spiritual realm itself. He is displeased that they don't have this.

Now, you see, we must be careful to realize that the greatest and most extraordinary miracle that God has ever given to us is putting His Spirit into us and establishing communication between Himself and us. It is amazing, isn't it? You find a person who doesn't live in that daily, that person is always looking for a miracle here, a miracle there, a miracle everywhere. And he completely ignores the greatest miracle, a transformed life. God lives in him to reveal Himself to him. And if he will just accommodate him by faith and attach himself to Him, that is the miracle of salvation and nothing can top it.

But if you are living outside of that miracle and you are not walking in the Word of God and you are not living surrendered to Christ, then no wonder you tend to exaggerate things in the spiritual realm. Not only did Corinth not understand physical public worship, they didn't understand and were completely distorted in the area of spiritual matters. Why? Because they would not bow.

"Now, concerning spiritual things, brethren, I don't want you to be ignoramuses. I don't want you to remain ignorant and unaware." So first of all, he points them to the first sign of spiritual immaturity and that is an ignorance of spiritual things.

The influence of a pagan past

The second thing he is going to point to is going to take me a little longer. If I am not influenced by the Spirit of God, then my flesh is influencing me and my flesh is being influenced by my pagan past. Look at verse 2: "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols." Do you mean that is the only thing that happened when they were pagans? What about talking about immorality? Why not talk about some other things? Drunkenness or other things? Come on, that is not the only thing they did. No, he picked out the main thing that all of them could relate to that goes back to their pagan past.

"You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however, you were led." That is an interesting translation. We will get to it in a moment. The word, "you know" there is a word *oidate*. That tends to have a little different meaning than the word *ginosko*, which means you know by experience. It is transmitted knowledge. But *oidate* is not that way. It is intuitive knowledge.

In the spiritual realm, when you are living attached to Christ and in His Word, there is a knowing that God gives to you. As a matter of fact, it is there whether you are or you are not. It is built in. It comes in with the package. The Holy Spirit of God gives it to you. [Romans 8:28](#), “For we know that God causes all things to work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose.” What word is used there? Intuitive knowledge. You didn’t go to school to get that. Now, when you have this intuition, the spiritual intuitive knowledge, that doesn’t mean that you don’t need more knowledge, but there are certain basic things that Christians just simply know. It is built in, comes in with the package. The Holy Spirit brings that understanding. The first thing you intuitively know when you get saved is the difference of what is now and what is in the past. The first thing you know, you know the roots of every problem that you are facing.

Now let me throw that out to you. If you are not living surrendered to Christ and being under the influence of His Holy Spirit, you are living under the influence of your flesh, then what is that problem that comes back from your past and haunts you? Is it immorality? Is it covetousness? Is it bitterness? What is it that goes back to your past pagan life that used to dominate you? And you know that the roots of what you are dealing with now are set back in the setting of what you were when you did not know Christ. Everybody knows that. That’s intuitive. It is built in. You don’t get saved and start having this problem. You had it before you got saved. However, now you have victory over that problem. But if you are not going to live in the victory, then you are going to have to go back and be influenced by what happened in your pagan past. That is where the roots are.

Now, what was the root of the problem the Corinthian believers were having in chapters 12-14? If you go through chapters 12-14, it is not just gifts. One of the major issues that he deals with is the tongues issue. Everybody has been waiting to see what I’m going to say about it. I am just praying that whatever I say will come forth with such love that you can receive it and if we disagree, we will just choose to disagree. But I am going to do my best to honor the text as much as I know how. But that was the major problem.

Well, if that is the major problem dealt with in 12, mentioned again in 13 but also really picked up in 14, then what was the pagan influence and the root that goes back to before they got saved? Now this is significant, I think, to the text. “You know that when you were pagans.” The word “pagan” translated in the New American Standard is the word translated “Gentiles” in the King James Version.

What is the difference? Well, there really isn't, because the word is the *ethnos*. It means "pagan." That is why it is correctly translated that way. But the word comes from a word referring to ethnic groups, or nations of the world. That is why it can be translated "Gentiles," because you are thinking of the pagan nations of the world.

Now this is a very important point. The word translated "pagan" in its root form comes from the word *ethos*, which means mass or host or multitude, referring to those who are bound by the same customs, by the same language, by the same rituals, whatever. You are bound by that. Now that is that word. It means you have a language that binds you. You have customs that bind you. You have other things that bind you and identify you.

I need to show you the four words that are interrelated when it comes to this kind of thing. When you talk about ethnic groups, when you talk about nations, there are four words and perhaps it would be good for us to know them. Look over in [Revelation 14:6](#). All four of them are found in one verse. Interestingly, some of them are going to reappear in chapters 12-14. [Revelation 14:6](#) reads, "And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth [so these nations live on the earth], and to every nation [number one], every tribe, every tongue and every people." Now there are four different words. I want to show you what they are.

The first one, every nation, is the word that we are looking at, or a similar word that we are looking at there in 1 Corinthians 12. The word "tribe" is *phule*. It has a little bit different meaning than just a people who have a common bond. The word "tribe" refers to national unity of a common descent. It is very similar but just a little bit different.

The word *laos*, or "people," the last word that is used there, is used as a political unity with a common history and a constitution. Then the word *glossa* is the word used for "tongue" which means a known, understandable, common language that binds these people together.

So you see the four words that can be used; all of them very similar, but each one having a little twist and a difference from the other. The word *ethnos*, or pagan nation, as in Gentiles, the word we are looking at, is the lesser or the weaker of all four of those words. So he is simply pointing to the nations that are pagan of this world. He doesn't have anything political in it. He doesn't have anything of their

language barrier or anything like that. He is just saying, “Back when you were a member of the pagan nations of this world.”

Oh, don't miss this. Don't miss this. Listen, that word is always used or most of the time used to differentiate between the Jewish people and the pagan nations of the world, almost every time you find it. Never, never, never can you put Jewish people in this word. This is a pagan word. Understand what I am saying now. Here it is used to differentiate between Christians and the pagan people of this world. But there is a thought in this. Why did Paul use that word? Why did the Holy Spirit inspire him to use that word? Oh, don't lose me here now. I think that what he is saying is that most of you people in Corinth do not have a Jewish background. Now, some of them did, but most of them did not. They had a pagan background. Now there was something about their pagan background that had everything to do with the problems they were facing.

He was saying to them, “Listen, if you can come from Judaism, which is a monotheistic, God ordained nation, if you would have come from Judaism, you would not have any of the problems you have in 1214. But because you come out of the pagan nations of this world, the idolatrous nations of this world, this is having something to do with the problem I am now having to address to you in chapters 12, 13 and 14. Something about your pagan past directly relating to these tongues and these unknown tongues and all that, has something to do with the fact that you came out of a pagan background, not out of a Jewish background, because there is something in your pagan background that lured you and influenced then and influences now your life.”

Now what is he talking about? Go back. “You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols,” however you were led. Now “you were led astray” there is in the present passive voice. Present tense means you were constantly being led. Passive voice means you didn't have anything to say about it. You were captivated. You were being led. Something lured you. Something that was in control of you. Something got your attention. Something swept you away toward these pagan idols.

The little word “to” is *pros*, a motion toward something. Now what I see here is that Paul is referring to something about their pagan past that had to do with the idolatry of that pagan past, and it had to do with a lifestyle that consistently was pulling and luring them toward these idols during their pagan years. They could

relate back to it. It influenced them then and, evidently, because they are living lives after the flesh, had come back to influence them now.

Now what in the world is that? Do you remember back when we started the book of 1 Corinthians, I gave you a little bit of history. Having been in Corinth, I found out that every pagan temple in Corinth, but particularly the Temple of Apollo, which is the main temple in downtown Corinth, had what I would call gurus. That is not what they were called. I'll tell you where they get their influence from. These gurus would go into what they called the state of ecstasy. They would sit crosslegged on a tripod in what they call the holy of holies of their temple. Of course, that was the pagan gods I am talking about here. I am using that to give you a little bit of an idea of how they copied what God's people used. They would be in the inner most sanctum, sitting up on this tripod and they would go into a trance. Now they could have no intelligent thought in their mind whatsoever. When they would get into this trance, they were intoxicated by certain things they would eat and certain things they would drink. And suddenly, they began to speak in an unknown tongue. It was an ecstatic tongue. It was nothing more than pure gibberish. Nobody ever understood it. But let me tell you where this came from. All of this was influenced by the Oracles of Delphi. Delphi was a place not far from Corinth and it was built around the temple to Apollo. Now we must understand something here. This temple of Apollo had affected the temple of Aphrodite and affected the temple of Poseidon and people began to line up under these people who had reached a state of ecstasy and, "I am of him" and "I am of him," and "I am of him." And Paul says, "Hey, you Christians are acting just like the nonChristians. 'You are of Paul', 'you are of Cephas'. They are doing the same thing. They have got their gurus. They have got their people who speak in this ecstatic language, and they think somehow they have been given something by the divine itself." Now that was a lure, idolatrous lure that had captivated these people in their pagan past and now had cropped up again in their Christianity. You see, in Delphi where all this got started—or maybe it didn't get started, but it was really promoted there—a few miles from Corinth in Greece, they had these oracles. Now, what was an oracle? An oracle was a priestess woman through whom a deity was believed to speak. The deity had to pick a person because the stone idols were dumb—remember, that is the word he chooses to use himself—they couldn't speak. Now, it was either that or a shrine to which a deity revealed hidden knowledge or the divine purpose.

What really took place at Delphi? Those who wanted to consult the oracle, who wanted this divine knowledge, would go to this temple of Apollos. They would sacrifice a sheep, a goat, a boar, or some other animal, which they had to pay for, by the way. After which, if the omens were favorable, they entered the room adjoining the inner shrine, the inner sanctum of the temple of Apollo. Now remember that the temple of Apollo was also in downtown Corinth. I want you to keep remembering that. There they awaited their turn and they basically drew straws, but unless one of the priestesses had given you special favor and you could go in ahead of the rest of them, no women were allowed in this, none at all. They handed in questions written on leaden tablets, many of which have now been discovered.

The priestess was called a pythia, the pythia or priestess who delivered the oracle usually was somebody, a pleasant woman over 50 years of age. That was the key one at Delphi. She would purify herself in a spring there in that mountain that they thought was sacred, called a castalian fountain, and then she drank out of another cup that was supposed to be a holy drink or water. And then she would eat of a laurel leaf and then she would get up on this tripod. She appeared to be intoxicated by the breathing in of all the fumes of the drink and stuff that she had. And she kept inhaling, and inhaling and inhaling and suddenly, she would break out into this gibberish that nobody understood.

Interestingly, she had people sitting around her who would put it into some kind of poetry. And the people who went to get the knowledge, were more mystified when they left than they were when they went. But you know what they did? They said, "I don't know what we heard, but it was good. The divine spoke to me."

Well, this was the form of religion that was prevalent in their pagan past, wrapped around idolatry. It brought great riches to Dephi and to the surrounding area, especially Corinth. It began to be famous in the 7th Century BC. It started around the Hedonistic period which was the Greek influence. It continued during Paul's ministry in Greece, both in Athens and Corinth, particularly those two places. It was not until the reign of Emperor Theodocius in AD 394 that the Delphic oracles were ordered closed and the entire area was destroyed. But the peak of their existence was right in the midst of the writing of the letter of 1 Corinthians and that is what we have got to see.

If you ignore this one piece, you are already sidetracking the direction Paul is taking for chapters 12-14. You cannot ignore this verse. He said there was

something in your past tied directly to idolatrous practices that lured you and captivated you and drew you into it. He is saying to these fleshly minded Christians, “Remember your past heathenism. Remember your past that hailed from the Delphic worship.”

That is [1 Corinthians 12:2](#). You must see this influence of pagan practices in the past. It is indeed worthy to note that such a situation as Paul had to address only occurred in Corinth. No other epistle addresses it, only Corinth, which had the close proximity to the oracles of Dephi. Listen to his words introducing this. He says in verse 2, “You know that when you were pagans, you were [passive voice, present tense] being led astray.” That “being led astray” has the idea of helplessness. It goes on to say “to the dumb idols.” The word “dumb” there means that had no voice, it could not speak.

And then he says, “however you were led.” That really means the manner in which you were led, helplessly. He says, “Now I have got something to say to you Corinthians who are upside down, who have a lot of knowledge but won’t surrender to it. You have distorted the whole truth of spiritual things. You don’t even understand. You are ignorant of spiritual matters. And before we can ever approach the gifts over here that you want to talk about, let me first of all show you why you are ignorant. Your flesh is so dominating you that your past pagan life has begun to influence you again, and you have allowed it to creep right into your thinking towards spiritual matters when you have distorted what the truth of those things really are.”

Being pagan, it was natural for them to be led that way. But being Christian, it is unnatural. How many Christians do you know who live in the unnatural instead of living in the natural, because they won’t surrender? They let their flesh rule. This is what happens when flesh rules. It exaggerates the sensual. It focuses on it, isolates it, and exaggerates it. Not only that, but it lets its pagan past continue to be an influence in its life.

Do you think you cannot be influenced by a pagan past? You think the Christians at Corinth weren’t being influenced by a pagan past? Don’t touch chapter 12 until that is nailed down solid in your mind. It is a pitiful, fleshly, carnal, upside down church that had knowledge but their truth was distorted because they wouldn’t live it. And they exaggerated anything that was sensual, showing that they had no capacity to understand the balance of spiritual matters. Look out. The flesh will deceive you.

The Signs of Spiritual Immaturity—Part 2

Several years ago I was up in Montana fishing on the Bitter Root River. It is sort of a vision I have of what heaven is going to be like: beautiful mountains, the water was cold and clear. And if you have ever been in cold, clear, trout waters, you know that what looks like it may be a foot deep may be ten feet deep. It is just amazing how it can distort the view.

I had on a pair of waders that came up to my armpits. One of the things you learn when you are entering into the water—we were fly fishing—as you enter into the water, you move real slow. You don't take big strides. The bottom is going down underneath you, and there are rocks everywhere. The current is strong and you know the water gets very deep. I was able to make it across the river, and we fished most of the afternoon. We caught several trout.

It began to get dark, and I knew that to get back to where we stayed, I had to cross the river. So I started working my way to get across. At first I was very careful, slow, a small step at a time. But then I got in a hurry and I took a big step. Bad move! The current is moving fast. My foot got up under a rock. I got my foot hung up under that rock, and the current was so strong, I couldn't pull it out. And in doing so, I got turned around and I mean, I went right into the water, face first. The water was down in my waders. Oh, it was cold coming off those mountains from the spring meltdown of the snow. My fishing companions had to grab me and literally get me up on the bank so that I wouldn't be swept away or drown in that real deep water there that I was trying to cross.

I learned something. I learned to go slow when you are in deep waters. First Corinthians 12 is deep, fast moving water, if you haven't realized it by now. We are going to go slowly, a step at a time. I know some of you are saying, I wish he would hurry up! How long is it going to take? I don't know. But we are going to ease in. Someday said a long time ago, "Yard by yard, life is way too hard, but inch by inch, life is a cinch." So we are going to go inch by inch as we go through this verse. We are only looking at verse 3 and the characteristics of spiritual immaturity in the church of Corinth. Now, in 1 Corinthians, we have seen already that a person not surrendered to Christ, not willing to live up under the truth that has already been revealed to him, is called an immature believer. We don't have to go back and do that again. That is chapter 3. It must be understood, this is the situation at the church of Corinth. You will never study a church in scripture that is more

immature, upside down and distorted in their spiritual views as you will the church of Corinth.

Paul addresses their immaturity again in chapter 12. Of course, they didn't have chapters and verses. Somebody added that in. So, in the course of his letter, he comes back now and revisits their immaturity and the signs of their immaturity. In verse 1 he shows that the characteristic of spiritual immaturity is an ignorance of spiritual things, spiritual matters. In verse 2 we have the second point, the influence of a pagan past.

You might say, "I don't see how anybody could be lured into that." Are you kidding me? Let's put it in the 20th century for just a second. Have you watched television lately? How about the Psychic Hotline? Oh, you know one thing hits me when I see that commercial pop up. I think about how many Christians actually dial that number. I'll tell you who they are. They are the immature ones who can't hear from God in His Word and will not surrender to His Spirit. They have got to go someplace else to find their answers, and it is sweeping this country.

How many Christians pick up the paper and look at your horoscope? I was some place not long ago and a Christian walked up and said, "Do you know what? You are a Leo." I thought, a Leo? What is a Leo? Somebody said that was a lion. I never thought about being a Leo. Do you think that hasn't captured immature Christians in the country today? I guarantee you it has. People want fast answers. People want anything that pleases their flesh and they are moved towards that. That is what pulls people.

Paul is saying there was something about that idolatry, specifically in Corinth, that lured you passively. You didn't even realize what was happening. You were being swept right into it. And, of course, the people who went would come away just as confused, but having felt like they had gotten in touch with a pagan god. Paul reminds them of this and says "the influence of your pagan past has crept right back into the church."

Evidently some people were speaking in that same, unintelligible gibberish that had caused many of them to think that the Holy Spirit of God had actually influenced it. So, spiritual immaturity is characterized, first of all, by spiritual ignorance of spiritual matters. I mean, you know maybe one area or two areas, but you cannot highlight one or the other, you've got to see the balance. And only God can give you that balance as you are surrendered to Him. And then, secondly, the influence of a pagan past.

Inexcusable speaking

Now we are going to look at verse 3 where it talks about the third characteristic of spiritual immaturity, and that is inexcusable speaking. Ignorance of spiritual matters; influenced by a pagan past; and inexcusable speaking. Now, if you are interested in a person's maturity level, you listen to them when they speak as if they are influenced by the Holy Spirit of God. It is amazing. It was amazing in Corinth the garbage that was being said and done in the name of God, the Holy Spirit. They were attaching the two together. We need to learn a lesson from them: that not only what we say but the way we say it has every bearing on our maturity in Christ as to whether we are surrendered to Him. It must be examined because there are guidelines that we must go by.

Now these guidelines hopefully will help you. They helped me as I was studying this. Let's just wade in carefully. Verse 3 says, "Therefore, I make known to you." "Therefore" connects it. Any time you see "therefore," always look to see what it is there for. Verse 1 and 2 tell us what it is there for. "Therefore, I make known to you, that no one [now watch the words here] speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." You begin to see immediately the area that he is going to approach.

Paul changes the word for "know." He says, "Therefore, I make known to you," present tense. "I am doing it as I speak," in other words. He changes the word "know" from verse 2. The word "know" in verse 2 is *oidate*. Everybody intuitively already knows. You don't have to be taught the problems you had in your past. You know what your flesh is like and you know what dominates you, or at least tries to dominate you.

He changes the word from *oidate* to *gnorizo*. This word has a different understanding altogether. In verse 2 you already know it, why do I tell you. But in verse 3, I am going to have to tell you because you wouldn't know it any other way. It is transmitted knowledge. It is to inform somebody. It is to put something on someone's mind.

For ten years I sat under Dr. Spiros Zodhiates. I did his radio and television with him, seven hours a week for ten years. Talk about the patience of that man working with such a thick headed person as me. You talk about a man who is intense! But you talk about a man who had to be patient to put up with me as he taught me Greek. But I would have never known any of it had it not been taught to me. It had to be transmitted from him to me. You don't know this stuff intuitively,

you've got to put your head in the book and let God, the Holy Spirit, teach you and let others help you. This is what it was all about.

So Paul is saying, "Listen, you know something in verse 2, but evidently you don't know something in verse 3. I am trying to tell you something concerning spiritual matters that you don't know evidently, and therefore, I am going to have to tell you.

Now what is it about spiritual matters that he zeros out and starts attacking? That is, when somebody speaks, notice the word that is so clear there. "Therefore, I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." There was a lot of speaking going on in Corinth in the name of the Holy Spirit of God. And the apostle Paul says, "In your immaturity, you don't seem to be able to distinguish when it's under the influence of the Holy Spirit and when it is strictly nothing more than pure flesh."

When someone speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, what he says will be in an understandable language

Three things he gives to them that were just nuggets. It so blessed me when I was studying them. First of all is this, when somebody is speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, what he says will be in an understandable language. In other words, there won't be some gibberish that nobody has ever heard before.

When God speaks, He speaks clearly and with understanding. Let's wade in.

He says, "Therefore, I make known to you, that no one speaking." The word "no one" is the word *oudeis*. It means absolutely no one in any shape, form or fashion, no one. Now, I hope I can explain the word "speaking" here. Sometimes it doesn't get out like it gets in. The word "speaking" here is the word *laleo*. That word, when you take it and put it amidst two other words, simply means to make a noise. In other words, "Therefore, I make known to you that no one making any kind of noise, whether it is intelligible or unintelligible, any kind of noise," It is very important to what we are dealing with, a gibberish even, if you please. Silence has been interrupted. Somebody has said something that broke that silence. And in this context is going to go on to deal with something that is very reasonable.

But I want you to see the meaning of *laleo*. It really simply means to make a noise. And it can be used in this context very well, but it has got to be clarified by the text. He ties this speaking, this making a noise, to the Holy Spirit's influence.

"Therefore, I make known to you that anyone making any kind of noise, saying

anything, by the Spirit of God,” Now this puts it in another context. In other words, the noise, the sounds, the things that are said, are directly influenced and inspired by the Holy Spirit of God—no one making an utterance or noise by the Spirit of God.

The word “by” could be translated “in” and has the idea of under the control of. If a person says I am under the control of the Holy Spirit of God, whatever noise comes from me—we would say speaking—whatever noise comes out of my mouth that breaks the silence is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Now there is no definite article before Spirit. When there is a definite article, it identifies. When there is not a definite article it qualifies. In other words, it is the full character of the Holy Spirit of God you are dealing with here. “When a person makes any kind of sound that emanates from under the influence and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, when he says any words that breaks the silence.”

Then he goes on and says, “Therefore, I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says.” Now the word “says” that he uses there is the word *lego*. He completely changes the word. This is very significant. How many times do we read this stuff and go right on as if it means nothing? The word *lego* comes from the word *logos*.

Now, when you put up three words for “say” or “speak,” *rema*, subjective word, *lego*, or *logos*, and then you put up the word over here *laleo*, they all have a different meaning. When you put them all together, it makes a beautiful truth. The word *lego*, or *logos*, that is used here, the verb, means intelligent, understandable words. You see, anybody making a sound under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, will say that which is understandable and intelligent. There will be no gibberish in it. Everyone will hear in a language they can understand. Now, that may not mean they understand everything that is said, because the prophets would speak in a language everybody heard, but nobody fully grasped the depths of those things. When the Holy Spirit of God speaks and someone is making a sound that is influenced and inspired by the Holy Spirit, when he says (*lego*) something, it will be intelligent, it will be understandable, it will be full of integrity because it is coming from the Holy Spirit of God.

Now that immediately begins to make your ears perk up as to what is going on in Corinth. No man speaking under the leadership of the Holy Spirit can speak in some gibberish and call that the Holy Spirit. It will be a language that is

understandable. God speaks so that His people can understand what He is saying. He does not speak in gibberish. As a matter of fact, the word *logos* is the word that is used of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the living *logos*. God wanted man to understand God Himself, so He sent His only Son that through Jesus we could understand He is the Father. He came to reveal the lamb nature of God. So many things we know of the Father through looking at Jesus. He was very understandable. He never once spoke in a language that people could not hear and understand. They may not have understood what He said, but they understood the words that came from Him, because it is was in a language that communicated with them.

In fact, if you will turn back with me to [Luke 3:22](#), God the Father speaks out of heaven, identifying who His Son is. I want you to know that God the Father did not use a language that nobody could understand. He spoke in a way that people could have use of communication and to understand it.

As a matter of fact, there are many verses. I just chose two of them because I am going somewhere with this. We could spend a lot longer time on this if I took all the verses, but you check it out. Hey, dig in, check it out to see if it is so, every time God spoke. Verse 22 says, "And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.'" A voice came out of heaven, not in some language that nobody could understand, in a very clear language, whatever that was.

On the Day of Pentecost, what was the key? It wasn't the speaking, it was the hearing. Everyone heard what was said in their own language. Look at [Luke 9:35](#), "And a voice came out of the cloud saying, 'This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!'" How are you going to listen to anybody if you can't understand what they are saying? God chooses to speak in a language that people can understand, whatever that may be. If you have a Romanian Bible, He will speak to you in Romanian. If you have an English Bible, He will speak to you in English. He speaks so that man can understand. So, when somebody speaks and he says that he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, the noise that he makes will be that with intelligence, integrity and understanding. That is the first thing and the first rule of being able to decide. A lot of people are speaking, where is the Holy Spirit in all this? That is the first one he brings up. It is a very subtle one.

When someone speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, truth will always be presented

But then secondly, when the Holy Spirit is influencing someone to speak, truth will always be presented. Truth will always be presented. Not only were there those in Corinth who were speaking in a gibberish which came out of their very pagan past, but there were other parts of their pagan past and idolatry. There were those who discredited the deity of Christ. In fact, there were those who would speak and you could understand them. The problem is, what they were saying completely nullified scripture.

Look at what he says, “Therefore, I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says [there are no intelligent words that can come influenced by the Spirit of God which says], ‘Jesus is accursed.’” The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is no way going to inspire anybody to say Jesus is accursed.

Obviously, any saved person or unsaved person in a fit of anger could say those words. I know there are times in my life and your life we say a lot of things, but it is not under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God. He qualifies—and make sure you understand—when somebody tags what they say to the leadership and influence of the Holy Spirit of God, you will never hear an unbiblical truth. Truth will always be presented.

What is here is a very heinous thing. They said Jesus is accursed. And probably in a fit of emotion of ecstasy, somebody might have got up and spoke in a language nobody had ever heard before. Not only that, somebody else gets up and says Jesus is accursed. Well, are they of the Holy Spirit of God?

The word “accursed” is an interesting word, and if you will look into it, it helps you better understand what is being said. The word “accursed” is the word *anathema*. It is an interesting word. In this context it means something that is given over to the curse in order to be destroyed. In other words, a person without Christ is *anathema*. He is given over to the curse that will one day be destroyed, in a sense that he is set apart from God forever. There is no relationship that can ever be there.

Well, what they are doing here, evidently in Corinth there were those who were taking the deity of who Christ is, the truth of what the Word presents, and they lowered it to where Jesus is just a human being. Now, who are these people? I don’t know who these people are. We can make some educated guesses. Maybe the ones doing the gibberish were the pagans who got in among the service and were trying to make the Christians think that this was really of the Spirit. Maybe, I don’t know. Maybe they are Christians themselves. Maybe there were others who

were Jews. There were some Jews in Corinth, and the Jews were adamantly against the deity of Christ. So they came in and said He is accursed. He is like the rest of us. He is going to be destroyed under the curse. He is not God. They lowered Him down to a humanistic level. No man can do that and claim that he is under the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God.

You think the deity of Christ is not important? It is being attacked more than you realize it in subtle ways in our country today. People get up, well respected people, under the name of the Holy Spirit of God, actually by what they say, completely undermine the very deity of Christ. And Christians just sit there and say, "Isn't he wonderful," with no discernment at all.

Paul is saying that is the same thing that was going on in Corinth. They didn't know the difference. A man could get up and say Jesus is accursed. Perhaps he didn't say it in those same words. Maybe he got up and presented the fact that He is just mere man. You know, we talk about the Godman, maybe they presented so much of the humanness of Christ that they forgot the deity of Christ. And if you don't have that balance, don't speak until you are taught, because you are going to undermine the very deity of Christ. And when you undermine the deity of Christ, everything else unravels. So there are two things right here: when the Holy Spirit of God speaks, He speaks so that you can understand and so that His people can understand. God is not in the business of putting His will in some coded language. When the Spirit of God speaks, the truth is presented and the truth is centered around Christ. It is the essence of who God is and it is centered right in His Word. Scripture will come forth when the Spirit has anything to do with it. I want to tell you something, folks, our flesh will chase an experience if you give it half a chance. It will chase an emotion, it will chase a great whim that is going on in this day and say it is of the Holy Spirit of God.

When someone speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, Christ will always be revealed

Well, first of all, He will speak so that you might understand; He will speak so that you may understand. Secondly, He will honor the Word of God; the Word of God in truth will be presented. But then thirdly, Christ will always be revealed. When the Spirit of God is influencing, a noise, a word is coming out of somebody's mouth, it is going to end up somehow in revealing Christ.

Look in the last part of verse 3, "And no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." Now hang on a minute, hang on a minute. You've got to ease back.

First of all, “no one can say.” Paul uses the same word which means absolutely nobody can say. The word *lego*, coming right out of *logos*, is used. Nobody can say with an intelligent thought and understanding and integrity that Jesus is Lord unless the Spirit of God influences him, because that is the kind of stuff that comes from the Spirit of God. He reveals who the Lord Jesus really is, that Jesus is Lord. You think that is not important? I was doing a meeting down in Mississippi years ago I preached one day on the fact that Jesus is the only well you ever need to drink from, the only well. You don’t need anything outside of Jesus. I finished, and I remember a man came up. He said, “I want to tell you something, Preacher, you have offended me and you have offended the third person of the Holy Spirit of God.” Well, I was concerned about offending the third person of the Trinity, of the godhead. I said, “How did I offend the third person of the Trinity?” He said, “You never mentioned the name of the Holy Spirit one time. You only talked about Christ.” I was able to say to him something and pointed him to scripture.

I want to point you to it. I want you to turn to [John 16:13-14](#). I want you to see it for yourself. I didn’t write it. You know, it is amazing to me how many people are trying to defend the personalities of the Trinity when there is no jealousy in the Trinity. The Father gives it to the Son, the Son gives it to the Spirit, the Spirit gives it back to Jesus, Jesus gives it back to the Father. They don’t have a problem with it. The problem is down here on earth with fleshly, immature Christians running around trying to defend the third person of the Trinity! Don’t defend Him, just bow to Him. And when you do, He will reveal Christ to you, and truth will be presented and He will do it in an understandable way.

[John 16:13](#) says, “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes [that’s Him, the Holy Spirit], He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me [Jesus]” Do you know what “glorify” means? Give recognition to. Do you think the Holy Spirit of God came to this earth to give recognition to Himself?

But what is happening all over our country, folks, people are giving recognition to the Holy Spirit of God. And I want to tell you something that in no way demeans who He is. I bow before Him every day of my life. But He is the Spirit of Christ, He is God, He is absolutely, utterly God. There are three persons to the godhead, but only one God. You say, “I don’t understand that.” Well, if you did, then God would

be no bigger than your brain, so don't beat yourself up. You don't understand that, you bow before it, the Holy Spirit of God.

I told that man, "I did not in any way contradict the Holy Spirit of God. I didn't offend Him. As a matter of fact, I complimented Him." He said, "What do you mean?" I read those verses and said, "The Holy Spirit of God didn't come to present Himself. He came to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." What is wrong with us, folks? Immature people build themselves around things that are emotional and they focus on only one or two aspects of what the whole is all about. And look out if they don't present Him as Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

As a matter of fact, Paul says no one can claim intelligently, no one can say—and he uses the aorist tense—even once, that Jesus is Lord. Oh, do you know what he is doing? He is pointing back to their salvation. He says, "Do you remember when you got saved? You didn't open your mouth and say that Jesus is Lord by the rationalization of your mind. You didn't come up with that in your mind. The Spirit of God revealed that to you, and that is where salvation begins."

That is why it says in Romans that people couldn't come to know God. He was all around them but they couldn't come to understand anything. The whole problem is, He has to be revealed to the human heart. Any speaker who ever stands up and says he is in the power of the Holy Spirit of God knows one thing, he knows there are a ton of things he can't do. He can't make things understandable. The Holy Spirit of God can. He can't do certain things. He can lift up. He can speak in a language everybody can understand. He can present truth, but only the Spirit of God can glorify Christ and reveal Christ. And that is what will happen when somebody does this. No one can say even once that Jesus is Lord.

Verse 14 of chapter 2 says a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. He does not accept them. And in verse 10 of chapter 2, he says, "To us God revealed them through the Spirit for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." So no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit of God.

Now, who are these people who would come in and bypass the Holy Spirit to talk about Christ or to talk about other things? Maybe it ties back to that other group of people we are talking about. I know one of the areas that Gnosticism targeted was the area of Greece and particularly Corinth. We know that Colossians was written to combat Gnosticism and Colossae was there in Greece. So what is going on here? —Actually, Colossae was more over in the Turkey area—But what is going on here? Gnosticism.

Do you know who the Gnostics were? They were the people who bypassed the Word, the Holy Spirit, and came into everything through a mystical knowledge that you could have, that you didn't need any other revelation. Maybe they were the ones. I just don't know. But something was going on, and what Paul had to say to them was, "You can't even say that Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit of God."

Well, there were some people in Corinth speaking in gibberish that nobody could understand, directly tied to their pagan past. There were some who were there who were denouncing the deity of Christ, directly tied to their pagan past, and maybe still pagan. Some of them were doing that. There were some who were trying to rationalize Christ and the message and didn't realize that only the Holy Spirit could reveal Him and could make Him fully understandable. The apostle Paul says you are so upside down, you won't know the difference.

When somebody speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he speaks in a language that is understandable because he intends to communicate something to you. But not only that, when he speaks, he will speak in a message that is truthful and he will present scripture correctly. But not only that, when He causes someone to speak, Christ in the midst of it will be revealed.

There are three things that qualify a person as immature spiritually. First of all, is an ignorance of spiritual matters; secondly, is an influence of a pagan past; and thirdly, inexcusable speaking. All I can say to you is be real careful that you don't make an experience the basis of what you think the truth has to say. The flesh is so powerful. If you ever have an experience, perhaps it is in gibberish or whatever else and you don't understand it, be very careful. Experience never backs up truth. Truth must always back up experience. And if whatever experience we have does not fit exactly into what truth says, then evidently that experience needs to be questioned, not the Word of God.

We are walking through it carefully. We are dealing with a church that is so immature they didn't know enough to get in out of the rain spiritually. They didn't know the difference when somebody spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit, how to watch for the marks and the pillars that give us a clear understanding that yes, this person is under the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is all I can tell you.

God speaks clearly. Scripture and truth is upheld and Jesus is revealed whenever He speaks. Always remember that.

DIFFERENT AND THE SAME

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

When you trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, believing the work that He accomplished on the cross and accepting His perfect sacrifice on your behalf, you received a new identity. You have become a new person. You are not the old person you used to be. You have a new identity. This new identity is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.

Because He is the Son of God, you are also a child of God. Because He has eternal life, you also have eternal life. Because He is righteous, you have also been declared to be righteous. Because He was crucified, you are considered to have been crucified with Christ in the eyes of the law. Because He rose from the dead, you will also rise from the dead and are even today considered to be risen with Christ. Because He is the Heir to the kingdom, you are also a co-heir with Christ.

That is not all. Christ has also given you a spiritual gift. This is a special supernatural ability that is designed for service to the Lord.

Most Christians today believe that spiritual gifts exist, but do not act as though they exist. We do not usually act as though God has equipped us with something special. If anything, we tend to act as though we were completely unequipped for any kind of service.

Paul sets out to teach the Christians at Corinth about spiritual gifts. He does this, not as an end in itself, but to show how there is to be unity within the church, even when we are gifted in different sorts of ways.

THE BASIS FOR OUR UNITY

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. ² You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.

³ Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:1-3).

People often get the idea that the Bible is supposed to be deep and mysterious and that no one can really understand what it is talking about. Notice what Paul says. He does not want you to be unaware. He does not want to keep you in the dark about spiritual matters.

The purpose of the Bible is to reveal truth, not to hide truth. But there is a modifier here. The Bible only reveals truth to those to whom it is written. It only reveals truth to those who are "brethren."

1. The Problem of a Past Ignorance: *You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led (12:2).*

This verse introduces a contrast. Paul is going to contrast the Corinthian pagans of yesterday with the Corinthians Christians of today. He contrasts what they used to be with what they have become.

What You Were	What You Are
Pagans ("nations")	Believers
Led astray to dumb idols	Brought to Jesus
You used to say, "Jesus is accursed."	Now you say, "Jesus is Lord."

This is the same contrast that was seen in the early chapters of this epistle. It was a contrast between the people of the world and the people of God. It was a contrast between those who are of the flesh and those who are of the Spirit. It is a contrast between those who try to come to know God by their own wisdom and those who come to know God through the preaching of the cross.

2. The Partnership in a Present Declaration: *Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. (12:3).*

There is no middle ground between these two positions. You are in one of these two camps. You are saying one of these two things. The entire human race fits into one of these two categories.

At this point, I can hear you objecting, "Wait just a minute! I may not have accepted Jesus as Lord, but I am not cursing Him, either." I have news for you. You cannot be neutral when it comes to Jesus. He will not allow neutrality. You are either on His side or else you are against Him.

"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters" (Luke 11:23).

If someone is not a Christian, then he is an enemy of Christ. He is ultimately against Christ. He is, in effect, an antichrist.

At this point, there is a temptation to become very exclusive. You may be thinking, "This means that anyone who doesn't belong to my particular denomination can be used for target practice." And so, I want to point out the rest of the story.

And John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to hinder him because he does not follow along with us." ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you." (Luke 9:49-50).

One day, the apostle John comes to Jesus with some disturbing news. He and the other disciples had seen a man who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. To make matters worse, this man was not one of the twelve apostles. Who gave him the right to go around casting out demons in the name of Jesus? He hadn't been to seminary. He didn't even have a Bible college education. He didn't have the approval of the Twelve. He didn't belong to their denomination.

John concludes, "Don't you worry, Jesus. We fixed his wagon. Yes sir, we told him to cut that out."

What is the response of Jesus? He says not to stop the man. Why not? Because he who is not against you is for you. If someone is not fighting you, then it is because he is really on your side.

This is an important lesson. Just because someone does not talk like you and walk like you and dress like you and part his hair the way you do does not necessarily mean that he is a pagan. Just because someone does not hold to your prophetic views or does not belong to your particular denomination or worship in your preferred style does not mean that he is not a Christian.

Christians come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. They come from all sorts of customs and social backgrounds.

If that is true, then how can you tell whether or not a man is a Christian? Look at what he says about Jesus. Is he for Jesus or is he against Jesus? Does he try to obey Jesus or is he interested only in doing his own thing? Does he talk like Jesus is his Lord or does he talk as though Jesus is just another man?

This is the basis for our unity. It is that we say the same thing about Jesus Christ. We may do everything else differently. We may come from different cultures and different times; we may have different political ideologies and different philosophical beliefs, but we agree that Jesus is Lord.

THE PRINCIPLE OF UNITY

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

Paul now proceeds to mention three areas in which Christians are different. He does this to show that there is unity even with variety.

Some of my closest Christian friends are people who are completely different from one another. Some are people with whom I would have absolutely nothing in common if it were not for Christ. But when we are bound together in Christ, it is enough.

1. Unity in the Midst of Different Gifts: *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit (12:4).*

When I was a lot younger, I came under the ministry of a man who had the gift of evangelism. This man had a special gift for explaining the gospel and for drawing people to Christ. He personally led thousands to belief in Jesus and he taught others to do the same.

There was only one problem. He did not seem to recognize that there are varieties of gifts. He believe that, since he led thousands to Christ, that everyone else ought also to lead thousands to Christ. He taught that if a day went by and you didn't lead someone to Christ, then you were in sin.

Do you see what he was doing? He was demanding that everyone have the same gift that he had. He did not seem to realize that there are varieties of gifts.

2. Unity in the Midst of Different Ministries: *And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord (12:5).*

Just as all gifts are not the same, so also all ministries are not the same and all churches are not the same.

- Some churches have a plurality of elders while other churches have deacons who elect a single man to be the pastor.
- Some churches observe the Lord's supper four times a year while other churches observe the Lord's supper every Sunday.
- Some churches baptize by immersion while other churches baptize by sprinkling.

Even when two believers have the same gift, it is often manifested in a variety of different ministries. In spite of all these differences, we still have a point of unity. It is that we have the same Lord.

1. Unity in the Midst of Different Effects: *And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (12:6).*

Even when there are two different ministries that are similar in style and content, they still can experience different effects.

One ministry may explode like wildfire, bringing in thousands of people. Another ministry may see a very gradual growth of only a few people a year.

Is one ministry of God and the other not? Is bigger better? Is smaller better? No. They are both God's ministry.

THE PRINCIPLE OF VARIETY

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

We usually think of this passage as one that describes some of the spiritual gifts. After all, nice specific gifts are listed. I've read countless books that cite this passage and then go on to do a thorough study of each of the gifts that are listed. One can even take a test that will tell you in which of these areas you might be gifted. While there can certainly be some value in such exercises, we ought to note that this passage does not describe these gifts at all. It does not tell us any identifying features of any of the gifts that are listed. It isn't meant to.

Don't miss this! Paul's purpose is not to tell us all there is to know about spiritual gifts. His purpose is to tell us that there is variety within the unity of God's people.

I think there is a reason for this. If Paul had given us a detailed description of these various gifts, then we would tend to be very restrictive in their manifestation. We might come up with a regulative principle of spiritual gifts that said we can only use the gifts in the way in which the Bible specifically tells us we can use them.

For example, let us imagine that Paul had related a vivid description of the gift of wisdom. We would then have a tendency to take anyone who did not match up to our expectation of that description and say to that person, "If you want to exercise the gift of wisdom, then you have to look like this and talk like that and dress a certain way and move your hands in a certain way."

Instead, he makes the point that the gifts are manifested in many different ways. I happen to have a gift for teaching. But I have met others who also have a gift of teaching who are completely different than me and who utilize a completely different style in teaching. The manifestation of that gift in their lives and ministries are completely different from the way that gift has been manifested in my life. Is that bad? No, that is good because God has made us to be different.

1. Variety is Given by the Spirit: *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit (12:7).*

Here is one definition of a spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Spirit. When you see a spiritual gift in action, you are seeing the Holy Spirit at work.

The Holy Spirit is invisible. You cannot see Him. You can only see where He is at work. Jesus likened the Holy Spirit to the wind. You can see the effects of the wind. You can see leaves and clouds and sand being blown along. You can see flags flapping and you can see tree branches bending, but you are not actually seeing the wind. You are only seeing the effects of the wind.

By the same token, when you see someone using a spiritual gift in a spiritual manner, you are seeing the physical effects of the working of the Holy Spirit.

2. Variety is Given for the Common Good: *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (12:7).*

The word "for" introduces a purpose clause. Here is the reason that spiritual gifts are given. This is the purpose for spiritual gifts. They are for the common good. They are for the good of those who are a part of the body of Christ.

This means that the way you use your spiritual gift is very important to me. Your spiritual gift has been given to you for my benefit and my spiritual gift has been given to me for your benefit.

To use a spiritual gift for your own benefit and for your own self-interest is contrary to the very purpose and nature of spiritual gifts. They are not designed to be pointed inward. They are designed to be directed outward. They are designed to benefit others.

I personally believe that a lot of the confusion that is evidenced in the modern Charismatic and Pentecostal community could be cleared up by an understanding of this basic purpose of spiritual gifts.

This brings us to a principle. It is that Christianity is a team effort. Have you ever watched a football team? I am not a sports fan, but I have watched a few games in my time and I have observed the various members of a football team are different. Not everyone is a quarterback. If everyone tried to be exactly like the quarterback, the entire team would lose. Neither are they all tackles. You can't win a football game if everyone on the team is a tackle.

Everyone on the team has his own position and each position is important. If the left guard suddenly decides that he is going to take a nap, how is the rest of the team going to function? They will all lose because of the lack of one of the members.

The same is true within the church. When one of the members is letting a spiritual gift lie dormant, the entire body is going to suffer.

3. Variety is Given in the ways in which the Gifts are Described: *For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues (12:8-10).*

There are nine gifts mentioned here. They are all different. Some of these are dramatic and some are quiet. I believe that some of them may have been present only in the days of the early church and some are still with us today.

What is interesting is that there are several other places in the New Testament where spiritual gifts are listed and those lists are different from the list that is found here. To be sure, there are some overlaps, but there is no passage to which we can turn that gives an exhaustive list of all of the spiritual gifts.

From that observation, I believe that we can deduce that all such lists in the New Testament are merely representative. Each is only a partial listing of the spiritual gifts and even if we took all of the lists and combined them, we would still have only a partial listing of the different ways in which God has gifted His church.

4. Variety is Given according to God's Will: *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills*

The spiritual gifts are given according to the will of God, not according to your will or my will. That means you cannot choose which spiritual gift you will have. You cannot say, "I'll have one of those and one of these and a little bit of that one over there." You don't get to decide which spiritual gift you have. That is God's decision and He distributes them as He wills.

God has made each of us differently. No two believers are totally alike. That does not mean we cannot have unity. Even though God has given many different types of gifts, we are the same because our gifts have come from the same source and for the same purpose. Even though we are different, we are one.

Message #41 I Corinthians 12:1-3

It has been called a monster; it has been called a curse of God; it has been called the greatest of all infirmities; it has been called the chief of all follies; it has been called a great darkness; it has been called the key to prejudice and error; it has been called fallen man's best friend; it is ignorance. There is nothing Satan uses more to accomplish his purposes than to keep people ignorant of God's Word.

One particular area that Paul was really intent upon this church gaining God's knowledge was in the area of the work of the Spirit of God.

Paul did not want the believers to be "unaware" of truth pertaining to God's Spirit; but Satan does and he has kept most churches in ignorance. If ever there is a subject that has caused controversy and theological war, it is the subject of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.

GOD WANTS HIS CHURCH TO CLEARLY UNDERSTAND THINGS THAT PERTAIN TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD CONCERNING SALVATION AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

You will note that in these first three verses we find the word "unaware" (**v. 1**), "know" (**v. 2**) and "make known" (**v. 3**). Collectively these words inform us that God wants us to have a deep, perceptive knowledge and understanding of things that pertain to His Spirit. God DOES NOT want us ignorant of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, especially as it relates to our salvation and spiritual gifts.

There are still many believers who don't even know how they got saved.

There are still many believers who don't know which spiritual gifts are for today and which aren't.

There are still many who don't know their own spiritual gifts.

There are still many who are in total ignorance, contrary to the Word and will of God.

INTRODUCTORY MATTER #1 – God DOES NOT want the believer to be ignorant of spiritual things. **12:1**

The word “unaware” is a word that means to be ignorant of something in the sense of being without knowledge and understanding. The tense of the infinitive “aware” is present, indicating it is possible to be in a continual state of ignorance when it comes to things that pertain to the Spirit of God.

Many translations supply the word “gift” because a great deal of the following context will deal with the subject of spiritual gifts.

The specific spiritual things that God does not want His people ignorant of are things that pertain to the Spirit of God, which of course will include spiritual gifts.

- 1) It is clear that God desires His church to have a true Biblical understanding of the things that pertain to God's Spirit.
- 2) It is clear that many churches do not have a true Biblical understanding of the things that pertain to the Spirit of God, because they have NEVER studied them.
- 3) If we are content with being ignorant of God's Word and doctrines, we are not in accordance with the Word or will of God.

INTRODUCTORY MATTER #2 – God DOES want the believer to know his previous spiritual status. **12:2**

The word “pagan” refers to one without Christ, particularly a non-Jew without Christ. The word “dumb” does not refer to something stupid, but to something speechless and lifeless.

The word “led astray” is a word that pictures one being carried away to prison or death. The word “led” pictures being guided or impelled to do something.

Both of these words are passive, meaning prior to salvation, some outside agency was carrying or leading these people away from the truth of God. This was not a self-induced leading; this was a leading of some other force, carrying people toward death. Paul would later inform these Corinthians that the outside force that was leading people to death was none other than Satan (i.e. II Cor. 4:3-4; 11:13-15).

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Prior to salvation we were blinded by Satan and hopelessly lost. Satan loves to lead God's people away from an intense devotion to God.

INTRODUCTORY MATTER #3 – God DOES want the believer to know how a person is spiritually saved. **12:3**

Notice very carefully that twice in the verse Paul emphasizes “no one.” This eliminates every- one. When it comes to having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, man is taken completely out of the picture and the Spirit of God is given complete credit. God wants His church to realize that the ONLY way ANY person gets saved is by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Fact #1 - No one can have an improper perspective of Jesus Christ by means of the Spirit of God. **12:3a**

Any person who has a distorted perspective of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished on the cross is one who is not in touch with the Spirit of God.

Fact #2 - No one can have a proper perspective of Jesus Christ except by means of the Holy Spirit. **12:3b**

No person, man, woman or child can ever come to terms with Jesus Christ on their own. An awareness of the fact that Jesus Christ is God and He alone can save one from sin and that He is Lord is a work completely accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

It is no wonder that people are so confused on the subject of spiritual gifts; they are confused on the subject of their own salvation. Many actually think they brought themselves to Jesus Christ.

We were ALL blinded and lost and it was God's Holy Spirit who worked in our lives and brought us to faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus Christ Himself taught exactly the same thing about the Spirit of God that Paul taught (John 16:7-13).

The Corinthians loved to applaud themselves. Paul loved to give the glory to God.

A powerful, God-honoring, God-glorifying existence comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and an intense pursuit of the Word of God.

When that is happening, God's Spirit is working!