

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 The Holy Spirit Gives Gifts 2

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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We've come to the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians and learned that God does not want us to be ignorant about spiritual gifts, so we've put our verse-by-verse study on hold for a moment in order to learn more about the gifts and about the Holy Spirit who gives them.

In our last study, we noted that the Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We also said that He is a person, not a force – we refer to the Holy Spirit as He, not “It.” And we saw that He has been active in the lives of men and women throughout time, so we looked at some of the ways He was present in the Old Testament, and then we saw how He also played a role in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Now this morning we're going to take a look at the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church. But we're going to start with you, because you're here, in the church.

How did you get here? Now, I don't mean what route did you take, I mean, how did you start attending any church, much less this one?

I'm sure we all have different stories, but actually, underneath all the other details there lies a common thread: if you are a Christian today, it's because the Holy Spirit called you to Christ and you responded.

He might have used your wife, or some preacher on the radio. He might have used a roommate in college, or a Bible you were given in boot camp. He uses just about everything you can imagine, but behind the scenes, it's always really God that is doing the work – calling you to Himself.

Maybe you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, or not sure if you're *really* a Christian. Well, first of all, welcome – we're glad you're here, and if there's anything you need to know or any question you have, we would love to help you find answers.

But someone else is helping you too. If you've been sensing something in your life convicting you and leading you toward God, the Bible, Church, Jesus – something stirring up this curiosity - that's the Holy Spirit speaking to you, getting your attention. You're just starting to learn His voice, but long before you come to God or to church, He comes to you. The Holy Spirit shows up in your life and says, “come.”

Turn with me to the very last chapter of your Bible and look at what we see. Jesus is speaking here in Revelation 22:12 – you can tell because the verses are red. ☺ And He's talking about the coming end of time – the final judgment. He says:

Revelation 22: 12 “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last.”

14 Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

God wants you to know, there is an inside and outside of Heaven – you don’t automatically get in. But,

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

The Bible teaches that we all start off lost, outside of God’s plan. But the Bible also teaches that God doesn’t want you to stay outside – He wants you to come to Him, and so He calls, He reaches out to you and says, “come!”

“Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” If there is something thirsty in your soul this morning – here is where you need to find satisfaction – in the God who made you and saves you. The Holy Spirit is calling you to come to Jesus and you need to respond. Stop trying to find satisfaction anywhere else, and just come! You do that by simply praying a prayer like this:

God please forgive me of my sins, forgive me for everything I’ve done that upsets You, that goes against Your commands, and receive me because of Jesus and the sacrifice He offered in my place on the cross. Thank you for calling out to me, and please help me to hear Your voice more often. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

And if you pray a prayer like that, God will hear you and forgive you; He’ll adopt you as a child and welcome you into His Kingdom.

And then He’ll also welcome you into His Church – and you say, well, I’m already at church. And I say, yes. You’re right. You’re already at the church, but are you IN the church? There is a difference and it all has to do with the Holy Spirit.

Turn with me to Ephesians Chapter Two. Here we see what happens when we become a Christian – we learn that we become a part of something much larger than ourselves.

Eph 2:18 For through Him (Christ) we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The Bible uses several metaphors to describe what happens when we receive new life in Christ, and here we see two of them – it says we become members of God’s household and stones that are used to build a temple. The key idea behind both illustrations is that you become a part of something – you’re not just you. Your relationship with God may be very personal, but it’s not private – we’re supposed to be in this together.

The passage here talks about stones, but we don’t really build that way anymore, so I want you to think about yourself as something we can understand: you are a Christian Lego.

But one Lego, all by itself, isn’t really all that cool. When you were a kid, how would you respond if someone gave you one Lego to play with? “Um...gee...thanks?” Legos aren’t much fun by themselves, in fact, they’re almost useless. But, when you get a pile of them and you start to put them all together, then you can create some pretty amazing stuff.

Consider this – there are really only two times that people get excited about a single Lego piece. The first is when they see a piece they’ve never seen before – but they don’t want it so they can put it on the shelf all by itself and say, “Wow, look at the glory of that single piece of plastic!” No, if you discover a new shape or size or color of Lego, your mind starts thinking, “How can I use that? What can I build with it!?!?”

The other reason people get excited about a single Lego is very similar – it’s when you find a missing piece – the one you were looking for to finish what you were working on.

Christian, we are very much like Legos – we’re not that remarkable on our own because we’re made to go together. Our passage back in First Corinthians says every Christian is given *Spiritual Gifts for the profit of all*. God wants us to know that we’re supposed to be stuck together, and when we are, it’s good for the individual brick and it’s good for the whole creation. The brick belongs in the creation and the creation needs the brick. Everybody wins.

And notice, that our passage here in Ephesians says, “you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit dwells inside of you as an individual believer, but He also dwells within us corporately in a unique way as the church. When you come together with other Christians, even when you’re new and you don’t know anybody, God does amazing things because His Spirit is dwelling here, in the church.

Jesus died in order to establish the Church. God loves the church, and He directs and protects it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Let me give you some examples.

In the very first years of the Church, right after Christ’s death on the cross, a controversy arose and different groups began to argue about how you actually became a Christian – did

you have to become a Jew first, or could you just immediately become a Christian? Specifically the question was: since God had commanded all Jewish males to be circumcised, did men who were not circumcised need to become circumcised in order to become a Christian?

Well, the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem got together and they agreed, no, you did not – anyone could become a Christian and you didn't have to do anything physical, like being circumcised, in order for it to be real. But the men who made that decision didn't believe they made it on their own. When they wrote a letter about the final verdict, they said in **Acts 15**:

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

And later Paul would write to Timothy about the need to be on guard against further attempts to make Christianity more difficult.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons

We see this from another angle back in the book of Revelation. In Chapters Two and Three we find Jesus evaluating seven different churches. He has a few good things to say and a few bad things to say, and John is writing it all down, but each church's assessment ends with these words – "let anyone who has ears hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The words and warnings are attributed to both Christ and the Holy Spirit simultaneously because of the triune nature of God. But the real point is, that God is interested, involved, and present in His Church – He wants to lead us, direct us, and protect us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit even appoints leaders for the church. In the book of Acts we see where He called Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries:

Acts 13:1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

And so Paul and Barnabas went out on the first-ever missionary trip. Along the way they started churches all over modern Turkey and Greece including a place called Ephesus.

Many years later, Paul was traveling back through that city on his way to Jerusalem and he gathered all the church leaders from Ephesus and talked to them about ministry. He told them he that he had declared to them the whole council of God – he had taught them everything they needed to know, and knowing that he might never see them again, he said,

Acts 20:28 “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

So here’s the point: God, through the Holy Spirit, calls people to start churches and lead churches. But this same Holy Spirit calls all of us into some form of ministry – remember, He gives us spiritual gifts “for the profit of all” and He gives to every single Christian as He sees fit. You just can’t say, “Well, that all sounds good if you’re really into being religious, but it’s not for me.” If you’re a Christian, it is for you, we’re all called to serve God and we’re all given gifts to be able to serve with.

Did you know that the Holy Spirit even plays a part in our worship – that part of the service that some people think is just the opening act for the sermon, or that’s optional? It’s not! The Holy Spirit is functioning as we sing.

Turn with me to Philippians Chapter Three

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

We worship God in the Spirit. So let’s talk about that for a minute.

If you have a hard time with worship at church, I understand. In our culture about the only time a group of adults sing in public is when it’s somebody’s birthday, and even then we feel a little awkward, right? So why not ask God to help you worship?

Why not let Him be the only One in the world that you will sing for, out loud, in public? Sure, you might sing to your spouse, or to your children, or to yourself in the car or the shower, but will you sing for God, will you sing to God, in the congregation, as you worship God in the Spirit? I mean hey, He’s not asking you to be circumcised – singing can’t be that bad, huh?

Why not tell Him: “God, you know I don’t sing. You know this isn’t my thing, but would you help me to do it for You?”

And then you know what? As you keep humbling yourself - because that's what it is, isn't it? It's humiliating, especially if you're sitting next to someone you don't know, or a new friend - but if you will humble yourself in the sight of God, you get used to it, and He does teach you to sing and more important, He teaches you to think - to think about the words you're singing and turn them into a prayer to Him. You identify with the words and pray, "Yes, God, do this in my life, or help me see You this way, help me remember this truth!" And you go from just waiting awkwardly for them to turn the lights back on, to actively participating in worship, in the Spirit.

And then finally, as you do that, you open the door to ministering to other people:

Ephesians 5:17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. **18** And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **20** giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another in the fear of God.

As you allow the Holy Spirit to have more and more of you - as you submit more and more of your life to Him - now He fills you and uses you to be a blessing to other people.

Some people drink beer or wine or cocktails to relax and get the conversation going. We even have 'cocktail parties.' And think of your typical image of a bar - there's always a long flat bar with bar stools and some tables where people are doing what? Drinking and talking, maybe even talking to the bartender. Why? The alcohol decreases inhibitions and people start to open up.

But the Bible says you don't need that. God says, be filled with the Holy Spirit instead and minister to one another.

Are you noticing a trend here? God really does want to use you to affect others, both in and out of the church. I hate to call it ministry because then you think well, that's just for people who are better than me - it's for deacons, or pastors, or missionaries, or whatever. No. It's for you, every single one of you. God wants to give each of us gifts SO THAT we can be used in the lives of other people and He gives us those gifts through the Holy Spirit.

So, how does He want to use you? Where does He want to lead you? What does He want to help you do? I hope you'll keep chewing on those questions as we go through this study, and I pray that you'll respond with a resounding yes, to whatever it is...for sake of all of us.

The Holy Spirit called, or is calling, you to come to Christ for salvation and He's also calling you to go - to get involved in the lives of others - maybe even your own brother or sister or your son or daughter - children can even minister to their parents, through the power of the Holy Spirit. So, what do you say? Will you let Him have His way in you?

Let's pray.