

## 1 Corinthians 12:10-31 Ministering To Each Other

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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Have you ever heard someone talk about the idea of maybe going for some counseling? Let's say marriage counseling. Do you have any idea what that costs? Well, the going rate for a professional counselor right now is between \$100-\$150 an hour on average, with \$200 not being uncommon. And, according to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the average couple needs 12 sessions which means a total bill ranging anywhere from \$1200-\$2400.

Now, there could be a time when a licensed counselor is the best route for you to take, but did you know that God gives the Holy Spirit to people in the church for free? And, He knows everything.

You're sitting next to people who are called into different ministries with different gifts for the benefit of other Christians. You're in the middle of a spiritual hospital that we call 'the church,' surrounded by therapists, counselors, orderlies, doctors, nurses, janitors, cafeteria workers, technicians and it's all available to you for FREE!

If you have your Bible in front of you, read with me today:

**1 Cor 12:4** There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. **5** There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. **6** And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. **7** But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: **8** for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, **10** to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. **11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Look - you get all of that and you don't even need insurance - there's not a single form to fill out or consult to request!

Now again, that's not to say that there is no place for a professional counselor, but I do want to point out that, as a Christian, you've got an awful lot of resources available to you *in the church*. And that's the way God wants it to be. He wants us to help each other in the battles of life and encourage each other in the Lord.

But, in order for that to happen you have to be here. You have to be in fellowship with other Christians. You need to have people in your life who are filled by the Holy Spirit -

people who love God and love you. The more time you spend around them, the greater your chances of receiving their ministry.

But also, secondly, they have to be receiving that ministry. We've pointed out many times that these gifts are given to every Christian. But sometimes Christians don't know that or don't think about that – they've invited God into their lives for salvation but they haven't invited Him out of their lives through worship and acts of service. And if we will do that, if we will invite Him to flow out of our lives, we will begin to experience supernatural moments when the Holy Spirit makes Himself manifest through us as He gives spiritual gifts for the profit of all.

Last week we looked at some of those gifts - the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the gift of faith, and gifts of healing, that brings us to verse ten, the working of miracles. So let's take a look at that.

In a sense all of these gifts are miraculous, but the gift of miracles refers to events that are most often associated with the preaching of God's message – they give supernatural endorsement to the message being delivered or capture the attention of people so that they will listen.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Acts and we'll see a time when a miracle was worked in order to get the attention of someone so they would consider the message of the gospel. In Acts 13 we jump right into the story of Paul and Barnabas going out on the first missions trip.

**Acts 13: 4** So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit,

Notice, they were being led by the Holy Spirit – just as He wants to lead you and me today.

they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as *their* assistant.

They were preaching the Gospel

6 Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul (the senior official of the Roman government on the island), Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

He was interested in the message they were proclaiming. Brothers and sisters, there are people outside the church who are interested in the message you have. Some are not. Some are hard-hearted and closed. But there are *some* people around you who don't understand what Christianity is all about, and maybe God wants to use you to invite them to church or to share what you know with them. Are you willing to be led by the Holy Spirit to talk with

them? If so, you may also be opposed by someone else in their life, but don't worry, God has His own ways of taking care of that...

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

That's pretty amazing, huh? And you say, well, why don't we see more of this kind of thing today? And I'd respond, you're just not in the right places. You see, here in the West we're just not as concerned with all the different spiritual powers in the world, but go to India or travel to Africa or other less developed places and you will hear of and perhaps even witness very dramatic and very obviously spiritual forces at work. These kinds of miraculous events are still reported by the church all over the world – they're even reported here among those working with drug addicts.

The important thing to remember here though is that the gift of working a miracle is given by the Holy Spirit when He sees fit, to whom He sees fit. And in that sense, it's no different than any other spiritual gift. So, don't fall into the trap of making too much about someone working a miracle and but then not making enough about God giving you a word of knowledge. It's all something supernatural happening in your life as a result of the grace of God. So, whatever gift He gives you, whenever He gives it, we need to receive it as a little piece of eternity breaking into our ordinary lives and we need to worship God for it.

Now, the next gift mentioned in our list is the gift of prophecy, but we're going to save that one and the gifts associated with speaking in tongues for chapter fourteen when we get there. So, that leaves us with just the discerning of spirits.

Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the whole armor of God. If you've taught in Children's ministry or been taught in children's ministry, or if you have a child in children's ministry, you've probably drawn or cut out little swords and breastplates and helmets to help you understand the armor of God. But why are we told to put on this armor anyway? It's because, according to

**Ephesians 6:12** ...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

There's a spiritual war going on around us. Discernment makes it possible to recognize the enemy since the Bible also says (2 Cor 11:14), "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told us to beware of false prophets who He likened to wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15). We have to remember – evil doesn't always look evil, so sometimes we need discernment.

Turn over a few pages in Acts to Acts 16 and we'll see an example of discernment playing out. When we pick things up it's now Paul's second missionary trip and he's out with a man named Silas:

**Acts 16: 16** Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

So these guys owned a slave who was demon possessed – she was owned by demons and owned by men. Pretty terrible situation.

17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days.

Now, if you think about what she's saying, that's true. They were servants of the Most High God proclaiming the way of salvation. But there was something else going on there too so,

(18 cont.)... Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace to the authorities.

Paul discerned that there was another force at work through the gift of discernment and then did something about it through the gift of miracles which enabled him to cast the demon out.

So that's one example. And while demon possession and exorcism still happen today, I think the gift of discernment often plays out in more subtle forms for most us, typically in decision-making. You just get this strong sense that you should, or should not, take a particular course of action.

**Philippians 1:9** And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ

It plays out in marriages on a regular basis – there are times Mady will get a real strong sense of discernment about an issue and she'll come to me, and when that happens, I listen – I take what she's saying and sensing and carefully consider it, because I believe God wants to love me, lead me, and protect me, and that one of the best ways He has to do that

is by speaking to me through my spouse. Trust your husbands and wives, listen to them, they may be receiving discernment for you. Remember verse 7, each one of us receives a spiritual gift, “for the profit of all.”

Well, we’ve taken a good look at several of these gifts over the past two weeks, and we’ll dig back into them again when we hit Chapter 14. But for now, let’s head back over to 1 Corinthians 12 and pick things up in verse 12 where we see a push made for unity in the church in light of all these gifts.

You’ve got to keep in mind the big picture here, remember that the church in Corinth had a lot of problems – a lot of people who thought too much of themselves and their opinions and one of the main points of the letter is to try and bring them back around to focusing on others. So Paul is going to warn them not to compete with or envy one another when it comes to spiritual gifts and the ministry God wants to involve us in.

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?

This relates to the concept we mentioned a few weeks ago about gift envy – thinking you’re not as important or valuable as someone else because they have a ‘better’ or ‘bigger’ ministry than you do. Or vice versa, thinking you are better than others because of the ministry that God has given to you. Thinking you’re better than so and so because you teach Sunday School or because you do the really ‘important ministry.’ But whatever ministry you do, it’s just one part of the body of Christ, and look at what the Bible says:

17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

20 But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.

So here we are back at this idea that everything should be done with a concern for one another.

26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

As Christians, the Bible says we are members or body parts of the body of Christ and God wants us to be together, in fellowship, in worship, in daily life so that He can use us to minister to each other and to minister to the world.

We could sum up all of God's instructions to the Christians at Corinth with three little words: focus on others.

And that's the point of all this instruction on the spiritual gifts – as we've noted several times: these gifts are given to us, for others. God wants to manifest Himself, or to show Himself, to others through you! But He knows you've got some downfalls, He knows you're struggling to keep it all together at times, so He doesn't expect you all of the sudden to become Mother Theresa or Billy Graham, He gives you gifts – He pours out His Spirit through your life into the life of someone else in order to meet a present need.

And that might mean that at times you're a mouth for the body of Christ, saying things others need to hear. That might mean you're an eye at times helping people see what they need to see, or just seeing it yourself so you can pray for the situation. Or it might mean sometimes you're a hand that reaches out to help or a foot that goes out to do something. We're all different parts, filling different roles but the common thread is the fact that we're doing it for others *in the strength and power of God*.

But look, that also means something else – it means, as we said earlier, that this is one big spiritual hospital full of people with all kinds of specializations. And if you're hurting today, or in need, you're in the right place. Open up a little bit – let others see and know your hurts and hangups, and let them minister to you. Before you go and spend a few thousand dollars on counseling, or before you go and buy another book, or try another vacation, or another bottle of wine, or however it is that you self-medicate, why not try connecting a little more with the body of Christ which God has resourced for your profit?

Finish out the chapter with me

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

The more excellent way he's going to discuss is love and we'll see that next week. But for now what I want you to know is that God has put all these gifts into the church to serve Him and serve you, and they're all just manifestations of His love.

So, are you experiencing that? Do you know God's love in your life? Is it compelling you to ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit and to give you gifts so you can serve Him and love others? Or is it compelling you to come to Him and lay yourself down at His feet – broken, hurt, confused, disappointed, asking for hope and healing.

God is in the business of giving Himself away – just open your hands and receive what He has for you today.

- Might be forgiveness, of all your sins or of specific sins
- Might be to receive a spiritual gift for use
- Might be to be on the receiving end of a spiritual gift

Whatever the case, just come to God this morning with open hands and not clenched fists and receive all that He has for you.