NOVEMBER 8, 2026

SERIES 3: JOY IN THANKSGIVING

LESSON 3.2: GRATEFUL FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God gives spiritual gifts to benefit the church.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will pursue spiritual gifts.

LESSON TEXT I CORINTHIANS 12

KEY PASSAGE I CORINTHIANS 12:31

But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

TEACHING OUTLINE

ICEBREAKER: What is your favorite gift you have received? What is your favorite gift you have given?

TEACHER TIP: Connect the group's answers to prepare to teach about gifts of the Spirit that God gives His church.

CONNECT: Share the Connect segment.

I. THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS
   - A. The Revelation Gifts
   - B. The Power Gifts
   - C. The Vocal Gifts **(V)**

     DISCUSS: *If God gave you the choice, what gift would you like most?*
   - D. I will pursue spiritual gifts.

     DISCUSS: *If you have ever been used in one of the above spiritual gifts, what was that experience like?*

II. THE GIFTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BODY
   - A. The Holy Spirit as the Source
   - B. Every Member's Role

     DISCUSS: *What is your role in our local church? Are you faithfully fulfilling your role?*
   - C. The Need for Unity
   - D. I will be unified with the body of Christ and seek the work of the Spirit.

APPLY: Share the Apply segment. **(I)**

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer for God to empower spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body.

CONNECT

ONE SUNDAY NIGHT in April 2006, the world-famous illusionist, David Copperfield, was walking to his tour bus after he performed at a show in Palm Beach, Florida. Suddenly four teenagers, including two with guns, jumped out of their vehicle and demanded Copperfield and his two female assistants give them all their money. His assistants handed over their passports, money, and even their plane tickets. But Copperfield called on his trade craft, and using sleight of hand, showed his would-be robbers his empty pockets.

He was concealing his passport, wallet, and phone. He called it "reverse pickpocketing." As the teens drove away, Copperfield recorded their license plate in his memory, called the police with the phone he still had, and reported them. The authorities arrested all four and charged them with armed robbery, thanks to Copperfield's gifted maneuvering. What a convenient gift to have!

Later that same year, David Copperfield made national news yet again. But this time, he was giving himself a gift: He bought a private island in the Bahamas. Perhaps he just wanted a $50 million getaway far from the crowds or the violence. He later bought eleven surrounding islands to create the "most magical vacation spot" in the world and built a private resort for up to twelve guests. Whether two or twelve stay there, the price is at least $57,000 per night. Copperfield's trained staff are paid to entertain, inspire, and awe their high-paying guests—a great gift if you can afford it.

People appreciate a thoughtful gift. Not everyone can afford a five-night stay on Musha Cay in the Bahamas, but everyone who is filled with the Spirit of God can expect God to use them for His glory through spiritual gifts which He freely gives to His church. For the good of the church, God has promised to distribute gifts to His people as best serves His kingdom's purpose. Those gifts are divinely crafted to equip the church's members in our service toward our mission. They are perfectly chosen and perfectly distributed.

These spiritual gifts do more than entertain or inspire; they testify to the creation of a new, transformed people in Christ Jesus. These gifts are freely given, but God is calling on us to allow Him to use these gifts through us to glorify Him and disciple others. Unlike Copperfield's illusions, there are no smoke and mirrors here, only the supernatural, miraculous power of Almighty God; and He is inviting you and me to be part of it. Will you?

LEARN

I. THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We find a passage about spiritual gifts in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, intending them to be wise rather than "ignorant" concerning being used in these gifts (I Corinthians 12:1). Formerly, the Gentiles served voiceless idols that could not respond. They were "carried away," led by their traditions and culture rather than by faith in God. So, Paul reinforced that anyone speaking by the Holy Spirit would affirm Jesus and His message. They could not curse Jesus or attribute the supernatural to false gods (verse 3). This introduction provides a basis for understanding all spiritual gifts: All are subject to God's Spirit, and all serve to glorify the Lord Jesus.

A. The Revelation Gifts

People receive various spiritual gifts for the collective benefit of the church. Some gifts involve revelation or a glimpse into God's perspective. A *word of knowledge* discloses information that an individual would not naturally know. A word of knowledge can be cautionary, revealing hidden sin, or it can be constructive, revealing the ways God is at work behind the scenes. For example, in Acts 5, the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter that Ananias and Sapphira were lying about their charitable giving to the church, incurring the judgment of God. A *word of wisdom* is a message to give right action or judgment in a situation where we may not know what to do.

The *discerning of spirits* is identifying spirits at work in someone's life. Discernment helps the church distinguish whether God, the devil, or a human spirit is at work. Not only can discernment specify what spirit is motivating someone, but it can also reveal what to do about it. This insight enables the correct spiritual response to what would otherwise be perceived as human action, allowing specific, effective prayer. The gifts of revelation give us access to God's unlimited knowledge at key moments so we act according to His will.

Years ago an unfamiliar man came to the altar during a service in Mississippi, writhing and kicking. The men in the church thought he was demon possessed. They loaded up their spiritual six-shooters, gathered around him, and rebuked every devil they could think of, but nothing changed. Then the pastor spoke something in the man's ear, and the supposedly possessed stranger walked out. Everyone wanted to know what the pastor said. Maybe they weren't pronouncing Jesus quite right. Did they not have faith? It wasn't that at all. The pastor just whispered, "If you don't stop acting like this, I'm calling the police." God gave him the gift of discerning of spirits.

B. The Power Gifts

The gifts of power go beyond words. Notably, the *gift of faith* is mentioned before miraculous activity. We might think of faith as something only we can generate, but Romans 12:3 presents faith as something God gives to every person in a measure. Like a seed grows into a great tree through careful cultivation, the fruit of faith grows through us witnessing God's faithfulness. The gift of faith enables someone to believe beyond past experiences in order to pray and act with exceptional boldness. The gift of faith enables miraculous works, but it also enables individuals to endure trials that might otherwise cause a loss of faith, like great suffering or persecution.

The *gift of healing* extends one of the most prominent features of Jesus' ministry to His church. This gift supersedes the natural healing processes of the body, so a person experiences a recovery not possible through the mere passage of time or medical attention alone. Healing can be instantaneous or a progressive work of the Spirit as a testimony to the body of Christ. The *working of miracles* broadly involves operation of divine power for acts we could not accomplish by our own effort. People have prayed for cars that would not start, only to see them run again. People have prayed during violent, severe weather, only to see it calm. An oncoming car has turned aside for no natural reason, and an accident was avoided. These and a host of other situations can be the operation of the gift of working of miracles. Just as before, we are not working the miracle; God is, and only God gets the glory.

C. The Vocal Gifts

Through the vocal gifts, God communicates a message through a human speaker. The *gift of prophecy* is a direct

message from God, which can involve foretelling future events or calling us to godly living now. Either way, the message originates from God for a specific community or individual. In other words, prophecy is personal. *Diverse kinds of tongues* refers to a message in a language not known to the speaker but empowered by the Spirit. This gift is joined with the *interpretation of tongues*, in which someone gives the meaning of the message in a language the hearers understand.

While believers speak in tongues as we receive the Spirit (Acts 2; 10; 19) or in personal prayer (I Corinthians 14:4), the gift of tongues is specifically for communicating a prophetic message to the church and requires an interpreter to understand its meaning. The gift of tongues uniquely commands the attention of the church and reminds us of God's global work in our day. Like the Corinthian church, comprised of Jews and Gentiles, we discover that God can speak through any person and any language.

(V) PLAY VIDEO NOW

DISCUSS: *If God gave you the choice, what gift would you like most?*

D. I will pursue spiritual gifts.

Paul repeatedly urged the church to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, specifically prophecy, and the edification of the church (I Corinthians 12:31; 14:1, 12, 39). In a church where there was some disorder and confusion regarding gifts, one may expect Paul would hold up the apostolic stop sign. Instead, he encouraged right practice with the right focus.

We may feel reservations about operating in the gifts of the Spirit: fear of what others will think, fear of missing the mark, or fear of public attention. Our hesitations can cause the church to miss out on the miraculous. Considering one another's needs, we should earnestly desire to fulfill our unique role. Listen for God and follow peace as He leads you to minister to His people through spiritual gifts.

DISCUSS: *If you have ever been used in one of the above spiritual gifts, what was that experience like?*

II. THE GIFTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BODY

Once we are filled with the Spirit, we can expect God to use us in at least one of the spiritual gifts mentioned in I Corinthians 12. There is no biblical record that one person possesses all gifts, but the gifts are distributed throughout the body according to the will of God (verse 11). While this does not mean we are eternally tied to one particular gift, it does mean God reveals, speaks, and works through the whole church by diverse giftings. While leaders are particularly appointed to lead and feed God's church, all who are baptized with the Spirit carry the potential of being used by God in supernatural ways. As we seek to operate in spiritual gifts, our goal is not to draw attention to us; it is to lift up Jesus and minister to His people.

A. The Holy Spirit as the Source

The people in Corinth were used to worshiping a pantheon of deities. Passing by shrines to the gods of love, war, wisdom, and more, the Corinthian believers could have easily thought the "spirit of wisdom," the "spirit of miracles," or the "spirit of prophecy" were gods at work in their city. Paul made it clear that was not how spiritual

gifts work. God's Spirit enables all those various gifts, administrations, and operations; it is all from the one and only Lord God (verses 4–6). God's power is rightly understood in His oneness. Because the Spirit is the source, spiritual gifts consistently exceed our ability to know (revelation gifts), speak (vocal gifts), and act (power gifts). Because one Spirit is at work, the diversity of gifts in diverse people works like a symphony, making a beautiful melody to glorify God.

This new kind of unity—people from different backgrounds and even languages—is only possible through the gospel. The new birth through baptism into one body and receiving the Spirit invites us into His family. No matter our cultural, religious, and socio-economic background, we now belong to God and to each other, to minister to each other. Those who have been baptized in water and Spirit are transformed by the same experience and bonded to one another.

B. Every Member's Role

Paul used the illustration of a physical body to represent the differences within the church. The human body has many "members"—limbs, organs, and extremities. Likewise, the church is filled with various kinds of people who serve in different roles. Talents, personalities, and our own stories distinguish us from one another.

Just as some parts of the body might seem more useful than others, we may be tempted to imagine an ideal church, where every individual imitates the "best" member. However, a gathering of Christian clones would not be a church. If you looked down and saw noses where you should see feet, you might want to lie down. A bunch of noses would be a disturbing sight—not to mention, the nose needs the lungs.

Even members which seem weak or are hidden are necessary. We may never see our heart, but we would not live without it pumping blood throughout our body. Some members require special care and protection. All serve a purpose; the body cannot function at its full capacity without them. This is also true in the use of spiritual gifts. A church with great revelation and no healing is still wounded. A church with power but no prophetic word is aimless. A vocal church without understanding is disruptive. We rely on the Spirit, trust one another, and acknowledge each other's gifts.

DISCUSS: *What is your role in our local church? Are you faithfully fulfilling your role?*

C. The Need for Unity

We do not simply choose our church like choosing a team in gym class. We do not assemble our ideal people together. God joined the body together so there would be no division and we would care for one another (verses 24–25). Jesus' natural body was broken so His representative body, the church, could be whole. What grace! The foot of the cross is a leveling ground; when we hold His sacrifice in perspective, we find the message of the Cross is sufficient to address our divisions. Every member was worth dying for.

A unified church will suffer with those who suffer and rejoice with those who are honored. The disconnected avoid bearing the griefs of others; the connected share suffering and show compassion. The disconnected are threatened when others are elevated; the connected bring honor to one, bringing honor to all. While we acknowledge our

differences, we work together as one, extending the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world.

D. I will be unified with the body of Christ and seek the work of the Spirit.

At the forefront of every conversation about giftedness is an unavoidable truth: We cannot be members of Christ without being members of His body (verse 27). Thus, I Corinthians 12 concludes with another reference to roles of administration and spiritual gifts. Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, those with the gift of tongues, and interpreters are representative of the varied callings God has bestowed. Everyone cannot occupy the same role, but it is essential for everyone to fulfill his or her duty. We are exhorted to earnestly desire the best gifts—that is, the gifts that will be of the greatest benefit to God's great church.

TEACHER OPTION: *Share the story below or one of your own to illustrate the power of unity and togetherness.*

APPLY

MUSIC IS A source of entertainment and inspiration, a beautiful way to learn culture and even theology. Historically, music has also been an important military tactic. As early as 400 BC, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* detailed rhythmic drumming to guide drills. Obeying the rhythm could be a matter of life and death, even in practice. Another early Chinese military strategist, Wei Liao Tzu wrote, "If the drummer misses a beat, he is executed. Those that set up a clamor are executed. Those that do not obey the gongs, drums, bells, and flags, but move by themselves, are executed." Once trained, although severely, armies thirty-thousand strong could unite to execute large-scale combat.

The ancient historian, Plutarch, described the armies of Sparta marching to the tune of the flutists as a "magnificent and terrible sight . . . without any disorder in their ranks . . . calmly and cheerfully moving with music to the deadly fight." Drum, fife, and bugle echoed across many battlefields, coordinating the movement of large groups, communicating clear orders in a sea of noise, and refocusing the minds of soldiers on their training.

(I) DISPLAY IMAGE NOW

Prince Maurice of Orange was a seventeen-year-old university student when his father died. Maurice assumed leadership as chief executive of the States of Holland. Dutch rebels were engaged in the Eighty Years' War with Spain. Local protection was primarily a heavily armed knight protecting a fortress. Most peasants possessed little skill with weapons, particularly in group conflict, and battles were often swift and chaotic. Maurice strengthened militias and guarded against mutiny by instituting fair and prompt pay, better weapons, and improved training—particularly drills.

As a student, Maurice had read 1,500-year-old Roman military manuals, which employed marching in step and close-order drills. Listening to ancient and contemporary voices, Maurice blended the best of past and present for his armies. The Spanish armies stood in still square formations, loading and reloading between shots. But the Dutch were trained to fire and move to the rear of the formation to reload, resulting in a continuous fire against the enemy. Synchronized, repetitive training turned a ragtag army into a successful force against Spain and marked Maurice as a

pioneer in the Renaissance of siege warfare (Haycock, “Prince Maurice”).

In our world, many march to the beat of their own drum. However, the sound of victory is a thousand feet falling in one motion. When we forsake independence and embrace interdependence, we can face the greatest odds with absolute resolution. Our strength is not in our individual giftedness, but in our unified march forward. Unity in the church does not mean we all occupy the same role, yet we are all attuned to the same sound, the voice of the Spirit. Today we are called to move at His pace and respond to His call.