

A Biblical View of Spiritual Gifts
For The Common Good
Chapter 2
The Body of Christ

Diversity of Spiritual Gifts

Unity Yet Diversity in the Body

For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Indeed, the body is not one part but many. If the foot should say, “Because I’m not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,” it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I’m not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,” it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” Or again, the head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. And those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect, which our respectable parts do not need.

Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

The Apostle Paul wanted the divisive and self-serving Corinthians to understand two very important truths. First, they could do nothing apart from Christ, and second, they could do nothing apart from each other. There is no such thing as a solitary Christian. God has designed His people to be in communion. Just as God designed a man and woman to be joined together in the union of marriage, the church was designed to fit together in Christ in order to function according to His will. For example, why is homosexuality offensive to God? Answer: Because it goes against His specific design and function as a union that was intended to produce both offspring and fulfillment. This type of union is only possible between a man and a woman. Period. It doesn't matter what our modern day culture of immorality and perversion says, because God is the only one who has a say in this matter. Why? Because it was God who created all humanity. This, then, gives God the right to say how humanity is to function.

In a similar way, the Christian who does not take his/her rightful place within the church to serve their intended function, is also in rebellion against God's design. We do not have the option of deciding what is "right" for ourselves and, at the same time, claim to be a part of God's kingdom. It simply doesn't work that way. I once heard an old preacher say, "Jesus will either be LORD of All, or He will not be LORD at all." That statement is absolutely true! If we desire to follow Christ, then we must surrender our will to His and follow Him in all things. We are commanded to function according to His will.

Paul brilliantly uses the analogy of the human body to help the Corinthians understand how Christ intends for His church to operate, with Him being in complete control. Paul describes the church as the "Body of Christ" with each part working together as one, in order to do the will of Christ. Just as our brain function enables each of us to control every part of our own bodies, Christ intends for us to join together in complete submission to His will in order to carry out His mission to rescue a lost and dying world. Every body part not only is necessary, but also has a separate function within the body. No part can survive apart from the body, nor can the body function properly if a part is removed (**1 Corinthians 12:14-22**).

Everyone therefore, has been given purpose within the "Body of Christ". Paul goes on to explain that the decisive attitudes that were so prevalent within the Corinthian church were as if the parts of the body were fighting against one another. **"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you'" (verse 21)** was a very good illustrative analogy for just how ridiculous we appear to God, when we, as a church, are unwilling to work together for the common good. No sane person, would ever considered removing a part of his body, unless it was diseased, and therefore, a threat to the rest of the body, (which would be a good analogy of why church discipline is sometimes necessary, but that is a topic for another day). As long as each part of the Body of Christ is healthy (spiritually speaking), then it is vital to all the other parts. This is God's intended design for the Church.

Paul informs the Corinthian believers that they became a part of the body of Christ upon their salvation. He tells them, **"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." (vs. 13)**. There are two different Greek words that were commonly used for "baptize" in Paul's day. The one used here (and everywhere in the New Testament) is "Baptizo", not to be confused with its counterpart "Bapto". The best way to compare and contrast these two words is found in a 2nd Century Greek recipe for making pickles. The cucumbers are to be first dipped (*Bapto*) into the boiling water, and then, placed into (*Baptizo*) the vinegar and brine solution to remain. The first word describes a temporary "dip" into a liquid, whereas the second implies something more permanent. What a great illustration of what happens to us when we are led by the Holy Spirit to become one with Christ. It isn't a temporary arrangement. **Instead, we, through the power of the Spirit, are permanently "submersed" into Jesus, never to come out again.** We have been baptized (*Baptizo*) into Jesus.

What does this tell us about some well meaning, but nonetheless misguided, people who try and teach that we can somehow lose our salvation? We have been permanently placed *in* Christ, by The Holy Spirit, and therefore, nothing can ever remove a true believer from Jesus! In short, if a person has been truly led of The Holy Spirit to surrender his/her life to Christ, their position in Him, is by definition, permanent. No one, who has ever had salvation, has ever been capable of losing it. We are saved as an act of grace by God Himself. The Spirit endowed us with enough faith to believe, and that same Spirit forever secures our position in the Body of Christ.

"In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. And you also were included with Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having been marked IN HIM with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit GUARANTEEING OUR INHERITANCE until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of His glory."

(Ephesians 1:11-14, emphasis added)

It is therefore, God who found you. Saved you. And then, permanently placed you into the Body of Christ when you became a believer. It is then a natural progression within this line of reasoning to say that it is also God who determines the role you in which you are to function within the body. Paul in fact goes on to inform the Corinthians that this is indeed a fact. **Verse 18** states, **"But in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be."** Since then, it is God who decides our respective roles within the body of Christ, it stands to reason that it would be nothing short of blasphemy for us to try and second guess the faultless wisdom of God by questioning His

assigning of the Spiritual Gifts. Instead, we must, as believers, embrace both our "gift set" and our function as we employ our gifts within the body.

This means then, that none of us has the right to refuse to serve, because we are covetous of someone else's gift. Paul addresses this by saying, "**If the foot should say, 'because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body.'**" (vs. 15-16). It is God, who determines our standing. It is us, who must respond with gratitude.

I have long admired Pastor Chuck Swindoll. In fact, if I were offered the ability to teach like anyone on earth, I would want to be able to teach exactly like him. When I surrendered my life to the ministry, it wasn't long before I realized that I was, (for an absolute certainty), nowhere near as good as this as He. Not even close. And its becoming evident as the years go by that I never will be! But as I endeavored to follow Christ and to faithfully serve wherever, and whenever, He commanded me, I began to understand something. I was not created to be Chuck Swindoll. There is only one of those. I have been called to be the best Scott Childs that there will ever be (and thank God there is only one of *those*).

Jesus had a plan or my life, before I was ever conceived. He gave me talents and natural abilities, and when He sent me the message of the gospel, He gave me enough faith to believe it. He then bestowed upon me my own set of spiritual gifts. And, as I combine all these ingredients together for His honor, I become His own uniquely special creation. I have no competition, because there is no one who does what only I can do! This is why my life matters. This is why *your* life matters. Like the old saying goes, "just bloom where you're planted". That is all that God requires of any of us. Don't get depressed over what you are not. Just bring glory to God with all that you are! One valuable lesson that I have learned over the years is this; not everyone wants, nor needs, my help. But some do, and it is with those people that I belong, that I make a difference. When you find out where you belong, prayerfully serve with all your might might, and watch what God does with it.

So then, every child of God must examine themselves in order to discover who they are in Christ. I believe that it is a good idea, to actually write down the things that you are best at, the talents and abilities that you were born with. Try then, to use these abilities in areas of service within the church. If you are musical, then perhaps help with the children's choir or play in the praise band. As you serve with your talents, you will begin to discover the spiritual aspects of service that really fire you up.

For example, let's say that you are helping to lead the children's choir, and you notice that the practices are very unorganized. The music is never sorted or the children just kind of show up at random intervals, and it seems that no one is really "in charge". This lack of leadership really weighs upon you, until it gets to the point that, if you don't step up and bring some order to the chaos, you truly believe that you might lose your mind! If this is the case, then you most likely have the gift of Administration. This will be verified as you serve in a leadership capacity, and it, in turn, brings you joy and fulfillment like you've never known. If instead, it makes you miserable, then this is definitely NOT your spiritual gift.

Maybe instead, you discover true joy, simply by handing out the music, or ironing and repairing the children's choir robes, or doing all the unnoticed and menial tasks that you see all around you. If that is the case then you most likely have the gift of service (heaven knows that we can never have enough of these people in the church). The point that I am trying to make is simple, you will never find your spiritual gift until you try to serve in some way. God doesn't send us a card in the mail informing us of our gifts, upon our conversion. Rather, He expects us to discover our gifts as we serve alongside our fellow Christians. Think of it as an adventure...to discover your true meaning! A quest to find purpose in life.

Christianity is not a one-time life-changing event followed by nothing. It is rather an exciting spiritual journey. A long walk with a holy, omnipotent God, who wants you to discover Him, as well as yourself. Is it any wonder that Jesus called this "**Abundant Life**" in **John 10:10**? We must never try to avoid our spiritual journey by taking shortcuts. The joy is found **IN THE JOURNEY!** We should never forget this truth as we endeavor to discover our spiritual gifts. No one ever enjoyed an Easter Egg hunt when the eggs were all in plain view. The fun is in the finding! So get busy hunting. Go on safari with Jesus and find the meaning of life along the way!

Paul went on to explain to the Corinthians that while some gifts are intended to be more prominent than others, all are to be treated with honor (**vs. 22-27**). For we are all in this together, and

when one of us is hurting, it should indeed affect us all (**vs. 26**). Conversely, if one of us is rejoicing, we all rejoice. We are, in fact, to be so interconnected that we esteem others better than ourselves (**Philippians 2:3**).

Those of us who have the "*speaking gifts*" are usually much more noticeable than those with "*serving gifts*", but the former cannot succeed without the latter. God intended it to be that way. We are expected not only to love and care for one another, but to hold each other accountable as well. If one of us should fall into sin, it is the responsibility of the rest of us to restore that person to forgiveness and healing (**Galatians 6:1**). Why? Because we are not whole without them. No one has ever cut off one of their fingers and not, subsequently, missed it for the rest of their life. The body can only function properly by remaining intact.

Now that we have thoroughly discussed how the spiritual gifts are obtained, and how they are to function together to bear the church's great commission, the time has come to explore each of the spiritual gifts separately. We will begin to discover, not only the function of each individual gift, but the effect that gift has upon the personality of the one who has it. It is my hope, that by the conclusion of our study together, you will not only be able to recognize your own spiritual gifts, but also gain insight into the gifting(s) of your fellow believers. This will, in turn, enable us all to better understand one another and help us to be better unified. We will begin first by studying the predominant "Speaking Gifts", then the supporting "Serving Gifts", and the finally the confirming "Sign Gifts". Let the journey begin!

Truth!