

A Biblical View of Spiritual Gifts
For The Common Good
Chapter 1
Different Gifts, But One Spirit

Diversity of Spiritual Gifts

Now concerning spiritual gifts: brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you used to be enticed and led astray by mute idols. Therefore I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good: **1 Corinthians 12:1-7 CSB**

Since the Corinthian Church had no real understanding of the proper use of their spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul felt it necessary to describe in detail to this dysfunctional body of believers, not only the diversity of the "Grace Gifts" given to believers upon their salvation, but the proper order of their use, in conjunction with their order of importance. All gifts are not equal in function within the church, however, this does not mean that any gift is unnecessary. As we have previously discussed, all of the gifts are intended to be used together to enable the church to carry out its mission. Some gifts, however, are more vital to the success of the mission than others.

Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to be able, not only to readily identify each individual gift, but to fully distinguish which gifts were the most valuable in carrying out the mission of the Church. Though all gifts were valuable, some were indeed considered "lesser" gifts that were intended to function in a supporting role of what Paul calls the "greater gifts" (**1 Corinthians 12:30**). The Corinthians had become overly enamored with some of these lesser gifts, while leaving the most important gifts aside, and as a result, the church was suffering.

When considering the function of spiritual gifts, it is imperative that we examine the function of the church. The reason the church exists is found in **Matthew 28:19-20**, and is commonly known as "The Great Commission":

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the earth."

Jesus has made it abundantly clear what our mission is as believers, therefore it is required of us to use the gifts that He has given, in order to carry out that mission. We are called to make disciples. The church is not in the entertainment business. Neither was it intended to be a place where people could gather and display their "spirituality" in a grotesque and self promoting "talent show". We are to combine our respective gifts to enable us to introduce Jesus to a lost world. It has never been about us.... It's about HIM!

This wretched world desperately needs a Savior, and instead of trying to outdo each other, we need to work together to raise the banner of His cross for all to see. People's very lives are hanging in the balance. The Corinthian church had completely forgotten this truth, and instead of straining to reach the lost, they were struggling with one another to establish a "pecking order" of the *who's who* of the faith. As a result, the Devil was having a field day in the city of Corinth.

Paul desperately wanted the Corinthians back on track. He began his discourse concerning spiritual gifts by saying, **"No one who is speaking by The Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord', except by The Holy Spirit."** (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Corinthians needed to understand that even the very faith that enabled them to become Christians in the first place was a gift from God. The Bible teaches that apart from the working of God within us, no one would ever come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ (John 6:44). We, as Christians, have all been given a measure of faith in order to be saved (Ephesians 2:8). This faith, necessary to become a believer is in essence the first of the spiritual gifts. **Without faith, it is impossible to please God** (Hebrews 11:6).

We can't do anything until God enables us, by giving us the grace gift of faith. I've often heard people say, "I was such a wreck until I found The Lord". The truth of the matter is, no one has ever "found" The Lord. *He found them!* No one can say "Jesus is Lord", except by the faith given them by the Holy Spirit. Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to grasp this concept, because once it was fully understood, no one would be able to boast about their spirituality. They would be humbled to know that no one is "special" apart from Jesus (John 15:5). It was only after Paul was certain that the Corinthians were aware of this fact, that he began to expound upon the diversity of the spiritual gifts.

He went on to explain that there are **"many gifts, but the same Spirit"** (vs. 4). If the Corinthians had any misgivings about whether some of them were more spiritually significant than others, this should have stopped them in their tracks! If all the gifts were endowed by the Holy Spirit, then it would have been utter blasphemy to look down upon *any* of them as insignificant. God had, in His infinite wisdom, dispensed the grace gifts to each believer as He saw fit, therefore, it would be sheer foolishness to second guess the will of God. If God had deemed a gift to be necessary, then it was incumbent upon the church to see that it was properly utilized. To leave any believers "out in the cold" would be improper. Everyone had been given something to bring to the table. Everyone mattered. It was and still is God's intention for each and every one of His children to feel both needed, and appreciated. God is love (1 John 4:8), and He wants His children to feel loved by one another (1 John 4:7). No one who feels unnecessary will ever feel loved. It is in our very nature that we need to serve a purpose.

As I am writing this, I cannot help but think of the untold numbers of people who are flocking to the cause of radical Islam. At one time, only impoverished and uneducated young men were drawn to the violent terrorism of this perverse ideology, which was easier to understand due to the nature of their environmental circumstance. But now many affluent and well educated young men are leaving everything to join in the "holy wars" of this consummate evil. Why? Could it be because our public schools and liberal college campuses have mocked those of us who believe in a loving God Who created men with a purpose, and replaced His truths with the notion that humanity is merely the by-product of a cosmic accident? The secular-humanistic "doctrine" of evolution tells us that we have no purpose, we have no significance, and we have no value. Why then, are we surprised to see that people crave so much more than this? People need to be needed. They need to have purpose.

The Bible says it plainly: **"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"** (Psalms 14:1). To teach them otherwise is folly. People are hardwired for a higher purpose. God put it there! So how did these disenfranchised young people go from the learned halls of Academia to the Jihad of Islam? Simple, the Devil got to them before the church. They became indoctrinated with a lie, promising them purpose, before the church could reach them with life's true meaning. They are lost, more than likely forever, as a result. We need to wake up. We need to make disciples. We cannot afford to lose the youth of this world to the forces of the demonic. It is past time for the Body of Christ to combine the spiritual gifts of which they have been entrusted and use them to rescue those who are dying all around us. We need to find a church where we can serve, rather than look for the one that best serves us!

Thanks to the misguided handling of their spiritual gifts by the Corinthian church, we are fortunate that the Apostle Paul gives us a complete listing of every gift, and also gives us insight into their order of importance. As stated earlier, the gifts are given to us to fulfill the church's mission, so when used in their proper context, their order of importance becomes abundantly clear. The spiritual gifts can be assigned into three separate categories. The primary gifts are called "speaking gifts". The secondary gifts are the "serving gifts", and finally, the tertiary and least important gifts are designated as "sign gifts". We will go to great lengths to explain the roles of each of these gifts further in this text, but for now, allow me to list the gifts that the Apostle Paul describes for us, not only in **1 Corinthians 12**, but in **Romans 12**, and **Ephesians 4**.

1. **The Speaking Gifts**

- Apostolic (**1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11**)
- Prophecy (**1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:11**)
- Pastor/Shepherd (**Ephesians 4:11**)
- Teaching (**1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:7; Ephesians 4:11**)
- Evangelism (**Ephesians 4:11**)

2. **The Serving Gifts**

- Faith (**1 Corinthians 12:9**)
- Mercy (**Romans 12:8**)
- Service (**Romans 12:7**)
- Administration (**1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:8**)
- Wisdom (**1 Corinthians 12:8**)
- Knowledge (**1 Corinthians 12:8**)
- Giving (**Romans 12:8**)
- Discernment (**1 Corinthians 12:10**)
- Exhortation/Encouragement (**Romans 12:8**)

3. **The Sign Gifts**

- Healing (**1 Corinthians 12:9**)
- Miraculous Power (**1 Corinthians 12:10**)
- Speaking in Tongues (**1 Corinthians 12:10**)
- Interpretation of Tongues (**1 Corinthians 12:10**)

As we go further along in our study of the spiritual gifts, we will be closely examining not only each individual gift and its function, but we will describe the personality type of the individual who has this spiritual gift. This hopefully will enable us not only to determine our own gifting, but also will allow us to recognize and understand the spiritual makeup of others, which in turn will give us insight into how to serve alongside of one another for "the common good".

When examining the list of gifts, it is worth noting some of the things that are ***not*** on the list. For example prayer. I have heard many preachers speak of the spiritual gift of prayer. They will readily point to a dear saint in the congregation whose prayer life outshines all others. These precious believers are often called "*prayer warriors*", a term that has a desirable ring to it, however, the term "prayer warrior" is never mentioned in all of scripture. Do I believe that there are those within the faith whose prayer lives oft times put the rest of us to shame? Absolutely, and in that sense, these people are truly prayer warriors who intercede on behalf of the rest of us.

I can think of people in my life that I would call on to pray for me first, before any others, because I know that they can reach the throne of heaven when they pray, better than most. What I do not believe, is that God has supernaturally gifted some to pray more than others. Think about that for a moment. The Bible teaches us that **in Christ there is neither male, nor female, Jew or Greek, Slave nor Free (Galatians 3:28)**. In other words, God loves all His children equally, he doesn't play favorites. With this truth in mind, what is prayer, really? Prayer is the supernatural ability given to every believer through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, to access our Father in Heaven.

The Bible tells ALL OF US that as Christians we must **"boldly come before the throne of grace that we can attain mercy..." (Hebrews 4:16)**. The fact is, that God expects to hear from *all* of His children. He doesn't have a few favorites that He desires to be closer to than the rest of us. He doesn't have favorites at all, therefore, it makes absolutely no sense that God would supernaturally gift some to be able to pray better than others! So why do some seem to have the ability? Because they *desire* a closer communion with God, that's why. If your prayer life isn't what it should be, maybe it's because your prayer life isn't your top priority. This much I know is true, God longs to be just as close to each of us as He is with any other believer, the question is, do we want to be close to Him? We have our invitation in **Hebrews 4**, maybe it's time to R.S.V.P. ?!

I think it a wise practice to never add to the truths of scripture. It is for this reason that I accept the list of spiritual gifts given in **1 Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians** to be exhaustive. If there were other spiritual gifts out there to be had, God would have told us about them. So, the next time you hear someone teaching about spiritual gifts that have not been designated as such by the clear teachings of scripture, my suggestion is to pay them no heed. Lots of people have thoughts and opinions, and they may be very sincere, but they can be sincerely wrong! I heard a story once about a gold miner who came in from his prospecting and mistakenly drank a glass of acid, thinking it was water. He sincerely believed it was water...but he died anyway! Stick to what you know to be truth, the everlasting Word of God, and you will never be sorry. Don't try to add or take away from it, for it was true before you came along and will remain so long after you have gone.

One thing that I would like for you to be focused on as we continue along in our study, is to be diligent in your search to discover your own spiritual gift(s). I can't help but recall the slogan used by the U.S. Army to recruit new soldiers; "Be all you can be, join the Army." I love that slogan! All of us have a desire to find our true purpose and fulfill our destiny. We must therefore, as Christians, both discover and properly use our spiritual gifts to lift up our Savior, for it is these very gifts that are the key to us becoming all we can be in the "Army of God". It is my sincere prayer that as we take this journey together to find our place in the Body of Christ, that we reach our full potential, and that we grow together wrapped tightly in the unfailing love of our Heavenly Father and serve our Lord and each other, "For The Common Good."

Truth!