

# Gifts of the Spirit

1 Cor 12:1-11

SS Lesson for 05/10/2015

**Devotional Scripture:** Rom 12:3-8

## OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

*Key Verse: 1 Cor 12:7*

*Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

NEED FOR THE GIFTS (1 COR 12:1-3)

*To bring knowledge (1)*

Knowledge from the enrichment of God (1 Cor 1:5)

Knowledge from the light of God in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6)

Knowledge of insight to discern what is best and pure (Phil 1:9-11)

Knowledge of the mystery of God (Col 2:2-3)

Knowledge that is renewed by God (Col 3:9-10)

*To confess Jesus as Lord (2-3)*

Proclaiming Jesus is Lord (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Confession that is revealed by God (Matt 16:15-17)

Confession prompted by the truth from the Holy Spirit (John 15:26)

Confession that acknowledges Jesus is God (1 John 4:2)

Confession to the glory of God (Phil 2:10-11)

SOURCE OF THE GIFTS (1 COR 12:4-6)

*The Same Thing, Only Different (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

*From God the Holy Spirit (4)*

The gifts are of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 2:4)

The gifts are part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:8)

The gifts of the Holy Spirit always build up the Church (1 Cor 14:12)

*From God the Son (5)*

Jesus apportions the gift of grace (Eph 4:7-8)

Jesus gives different gifts but from a single source (Rom 12:5-6)

Jesus superior ministry gives superior gifts (Heb 8:4-6)

*From God the Father (6)*

God gives perfect gifts (James 1:17)

God gives the gift of eternal life (Rom 6:23)

God gives the gift of grace (Eph 2:8)

God's gifts are irrevocable (Rom 11:29)

God testifies by the giving of gifts (Heb 2:4)

DIVERSITY AND UNITY OF GIFTS (1 COR 12:7-10)

*Diversity for the profit of all (7)*

Profit by building up the Church (1 Cor 14:12)

Profit by strengthening the Church (1 Cor 14:26)

Profit by serving others (1 Peter 4:10)

Profit by preparing others for works of service (Eph 4:11-12)

Gifts for the common good (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

*Diversity for the different needs required (8-10)*

Needs that are met by utilizing whatever gifts God has provided as best as possible (Rom 12:7-8)

Needs that are met by service and sharing (2 Cor 9:12-13)

Needs that are met by profitable speech (Eph 4:29)

Needs that are met by meeting physical needs (James 2:15-17)

Needs that are met by loving others (1 John 3:16-18)

*Gifts Defined (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

*Definitions of the listed Gifts (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)*

*Unity through the Holy Spirit distribution (11)*

Distribution provided by God (John 3:27)

Distribution as God pleases and no one has a right to question it (Daniel 4:35)

Distribution according to God's purpose (Ephesians 1:11)

Distribution where all are pulled together by ONE God (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

## **CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS**

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

*Overall Observations Concerning Spiritual Gifts*

*Common Characteristics of the Spiritual Gifts*

*What Was the Problem in Corinth Regarding Spiritual Gifts?*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

# Introduction

## Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson teaches us about and how to use the **Gifts of the Spirit**. The **study's aim** is to know that God bestows on each Christian spiritual gifts to benefit the Church's ministry. The **study's application** is to show how each Christian should identify and employ his spiritual gift or gifts in church ministry. (*Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

### Key Verse: 1 Cor 12:7

*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:*

### Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Related to the subject of irregularities in the worship of the Corinthian church, was a question on the nature of spiritual gifts and their exercise in the public assembly. This subject should also be considered under the broader rubric of Christian freedom which Paul had been qualifying and regulating by the principle of love (starting with 8:1). The need for such regulation was certainly evident. A self-indulgent spirit, which debauched the principle of freedom in other areas, found similar expression in the area of spiritual gifts, and produced selfishness and disunity (12:7, 25; 14:4) and apparent chaos in the assembly (14:23, 33, 40). Paul dealt with the problem by describing the nature and purpose of gifts (12:1-30), the superiority of love (12:31-13:13), and the regulating of the exercise of gifts by love (chap. 14). As in other areas, so in using gifts in the church, believers should promote the glory of God and the good of others instead of self-satisfaction.

Before Paul began his discussion of **spiritual gifts** he thought it necessary to confront, at the outset, any in the Corinthian assembly who might contradict his message (cf. 14:37). It is probably in this regard that 12:3 is to be understood. Many explanations of the verse have been offered (though most commentators "handle" the problem by ignoring it). Paul apparently believed that some of the Corinthians' problems were due not entirely to their worldly attitudes (3:3) but also to the presence of false teachers who preyed on their spiritual immaturity and exacerbated the problems. The pagan background out of which many had come (and some were still coming; cf. 8:10; 10:14, 20-21) did not help them ascertain the presence of false prophets. When they **were pagans**, they had been **influenced and led astray to dumb idols** (12:2). Certainly lifeless idols are totally helpless in such matters! (In the Corinthians' vaunted wisdom they showed themselves to be unusually gullible [cf. 2 Cor. 11:1-21, esp. 19-20].) Paul therefore laid down a simple test related to the person of Christ. The false teachers obviously claimed that their visions, revelations, and messages (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1) were from God, but they apparently denied the humanity of Christ, as expressed by the words **Jesus be cursed**. This may have been a factor in the Corinthians' aversion to Paul's "message of the Cross" (1 Cor. 1:10-4:13). It may be surprising today to realize that the earliest Christological heresy (Docetism) denied Jesus' humanity, not His deity. John had to deal with the same problem years later (1 John 4:1-3). Also Jesus who had suffered was now the Jesus who reigns as Lord, whom Paul represented (1 Cor. 1:1) and who was to be obeyed. Only believers, speaking **by the Holy Spirit**, acknowledge that **Jesus is Lord**. Nonbelievers—including false teachers—deny His sovereign lordship. Thus anyone who tries to controvert Jesus' authority and His Word will suffer the consequences (14:38; 16:22). Paul had referred to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in verse 3. Now in reverse order he stressed the unity of the Godhead in relation to the different spiritual gifts. The **Holy Spirit** gives a diversity of gifts (cf. "Spirit" in vv. 7-9, 11) so that individuals can serve the Lord and His body, the church, in various ways (cf. vv. 7, 27), all empowered by God and exercised under His aegis (cf. vv. 18, 24). Though there are **different kinds (diakrisis) of gifts... service, and working, the same Spirit... the same Lord** (Christ), and **the same God** are involved in **all of them**. The gifts had a unity in source (vv. 4-6), and they also had a unity in purpose. They were given, not for personal enrichment (cf.

14:4; 1 Peter 4:10), but **for the common good** of the body of Christ, the building up of others (1 Cor. 10:24; 14:12). Paul listed some of the gifts here. Others, along with some of these, are given in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11. The list here includes nine gifts. (1) **Wisdom** refers to insight into doctrinal truth. Paul exercised and expressed this gift in this letter (e.g., 2:6). (2) **Knowledge** refers to the ability to apply doctrinal truth to life. Paul also exercised and expressed this gift in this letter (e.g., 12:1-3; 11:3). (Cf. the recurrence of the phrase “Do you not know” in 3:16; 5:6; 6:2-3, 9, 15-16, 19; 9:13, 24; also cf. 8:1-3, 10-11). (3) **Faith** as a spiritual gift is probably an unusual measure of trust in God beyond that exercised by most Christians (e.g., 13:2). (4) **Healing** is the ability to restore health (e.g., Acts 3:7; 19:12) and also to hold off death itself temporarily (Acts 9:40; 20:9-10). (5) **Miraculous powers** may refer to exorcising demons (Acts 19:12) or inducing physical disability (Acts 13:11) or even death (Acts 5:5, 9). (6) **Prophecy** is the ability, like that of the Old Testament prophets, to declare a message of God for His people (1 Cor. 14:3). (7) **Ability to distinguish between spirits** is the gift to differentiate the Word of God proclaimed by a true prophet from that of a satanic deceiver (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14-15; 1 John 4:1). If the Corinthians possessed this gift (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7), it was not being put to good use (cf. 12:1-3). (8) **Tongues** refers to the ability to speak an unlearned, living language (e.g., Acts 2:11). (9) **Interpretation** was the ability to translate an unlearned, known language expressed in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:27). With the possible exception of faith, all these gifts seem to have been confirmatory and foundational gifts for the establishment of the church (cf. Heb. 2:4; Eph. 2:20) and were therefore temporary. The gifts were not meant to be selected by individuals or personally solicited by them, but were instead given by **the... Spirit... as He** determined. “The Spirit” is referred to six times in verses 7-11.

## ***Lesson Introduction and Background***

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Corinth was a major city in ancient Greece. Paul spent eighteen months in the city on his second missionary journey, despite much opposition there (Acts 18:1-11). Writing 1 Corinthians from Ephesus in about AD 56 while on his third missionary journey, Paul addressed a variety of issues and problems that had arisen in the Corinthian church in his absence. That church’s many problems seemed to have been rooted in pride, which went hand in hand with airs of spiritual superiority. Some thought themselves to be superior because they identified with a particular leader (1 Corinthians 1-4). Some thought themselves to be exempt from moral expectations (chap. 5-7). Some thought themselves to be superior because of the foods they ate or refused to eat (chap. 8-10). Some thought that they were so superior to other Christians that they could neglect the needs of others (chap. 11). The issue of spiritual gifts was no less a problem at Corinth in this context

### **From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

Christ's earthly ministry probably lasted a little over three years. During that time He accomplished more than any other person in history. Yet He knew that a time was coming when He would return to heaven. After that His disciples would carry on His work. Knowing that the disciples would need divine help to accomplish this mission, Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would empower them for this task (Acts 1:8). Even before His ascension, the Lord endowed them with miraculous powers (Matt. 10:8) and promised additional signs to verify their message (Mark 16:15-20). It is clear that in the earliest days of the church, the apostles of Christ had extraordinary powers (Acts 2:4, 43; 3:6; 5:15-16). As they laid their hands on others (Acts 6:6-8; 8:18; 19:6; 2 Tim 1:6), the Spirit distributed various gifts to other members of the body of Christ. While there is debate concerning whether this was the only way these gifts were imparted, it is clear that individuals other than the apostles possessed spiritual gifts.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Need for the Gifts (1 Cor 12:1-3)**

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

### **To bring knowledge (1)**

*Knowledge from the enrichment of God (1 Cor 1:5)*

5 For in him you have been enriched in every way — in all your speaking and in all your knowledge —

*Knowledge from the light of God in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6)*

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

*Knowledge of insight to discern what is best and pure (Phil 1:9-11)*

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

*Knowledge of the mystery of God (Col 2:2-3)*

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

*Knowledge that is renewed by God (Col 3:9-10)*

9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

### **To confess Jesus as Lord (2-3)**

*Proclaiming Jesus is Lord (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

Of course Paul's test no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit would apply only to those professing to be Christians. A nonbeliever obviously can utter the three words "Jesus is Lord" without conviction; this certainly would not prove that such a person possesses the Spirit. Paul means that those Corinthian believers who are prophesying, teaching, or speaking in a tongue under the Spirit's influence will always say what is true. Correct doctrine is therefore the first and most basic test of the Spirit's presence.

*Confession that is revealed by God (Matt 16:15-17)*

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

*Confession prompted by the truth from the Holy Spirit (John 15:26)*

26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

*Confession that acknowledges Jesus is God (1 John 4:2)*

2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

*Confession to the glory of God (Phil 2:10-11)*

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### **Source of the Gifts (1 Cor 12:4-6)**

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.

### **The Same Thing, Only Different (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)**

Remarking on the statement, "It's the same thing, only different," one observer said, "It's commonly used by people who really have no idea what they're talking about. As a phrase, it represents either total ambivalence or total ignorance. Take your pick." "It's the same thing, only different" does sound like a contradiction in terms, doesn't it? But in the realm of the work of the Holy Spirit, the statement has some validity. The same Holy Spirit works in the lives of all the people of God; yet the Spirit works in different ways. The purpose of the Spirit's work is to accomplish another thing that seems at first glance to be an impossibility: he is seeking to make many into one. Yet the coach of a basketball team has a similar task. So does the army drill sergeant. Instead of being jealous of the gifts of another person or resentful of the accomplishments of another church, we are to rejoice. We will rejoice when we realize that what they are doing is what we are doing, as we are all one in Christ. We may do it in different ways, we may have different gifts, but in the end it is all the same thing, only different.

### **From God the Holy Spirit (4)**

*The gifts are of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 2:4)*

4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

*The gifts are part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:8)*

8 will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?

*The gifts of the Holy Spirit always build up the Church (1 Cor 14:12)*

12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

### **From God the Son (5)**

*Jesus apportions the gift of grace (Eph 4:7-8)*

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

*Jesus gives different gifts but from a single source (Rom 12:5-6)*

5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

*Jesus superior ministry gives superior gifts (Heb 8:4-6)*

4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." 6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

### **From God the Father (6)**

*God gives perfect gifts (James 1:17)*

17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

*God gives the gift of eternal life (Rom 6:23)*

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*God gives the gift of grace (Eph 2:8)*

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

*God's gifts are irrevocable (Rom 11:29)*

29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

*God testifies by the giving of gifts (Heb 2:4)*

4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

### **Diversity and Unity of Gifts (1 Cor 12:7-10)**

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.

### **Diversity for the profit of all (7)**

*Profit by building up the Church (1 Cor 14:12)*

12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

*Profit by strengthening the Church (1 Cor 14:26)*

26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

*Profit by serving others (1 Peter 4:10)*

10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

*Profit by preparing others for works of service (Eph 4:11-12)*

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

*Gifts for the common good (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

First Corinthians 12:7 tells us that every spiritual gift is given "for the common good." Every believer should be excited to realize that he or she has something to contribute to the good of the church. We often hear the lament, "I don't feel like a part of the church!" But when we ponder how a certain talent we possess is important to the congregation's evangelistic outreach or worship or teaching programs, we will be assured that we are an important part. How does thinking of our gifts or talents as existing "for the common good" help you to appreciate the value of your gifts and the gifts of others?

**Diversity for the different needs required (8-10)**

*Needs that are met by utilizing whatever gifts God has provided as best as possible (Rom 12:7-8)*

7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

*Needs that are met by service and sharing (2 Cor 9:12-13)*

12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else

*Needs that are met by profitable speech (Eph 4:29)*

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

*Needs that are met by meeting physical needs (James 2:15-17)*

15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

*Needs that are met by loving others (1 John 3:16-18)*

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 1

**Gifts Defined (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)**

The first listed is **message of wisdom**. This is the ability to apply godly principles to problems of everyday life. The person with this gift is able to interpret situations from the perspective of the gospel of Christ. Such an ability is especially needed in the church in pagan Corinth, for the congregation is only about five years old at the time this letter is written. The leaders of this church, as newer Christians, need the Spirit's help to add maturity to their outlook. The fact that Paul lists wisdom first may indicate that he thinks this is the most



important item in this list. Some think that **message of knowledge** relates to information about spiritual and doctrinal issues and the ability to communicate these to others. Others, however, think message of knowledge means pretty much the same thing as message of wisdom. Next **Faith**, in this context, does not mean “saving faith.” Rather, it refers to a supernatural gift of especially effective faith, perhaps relating to prayer. Some students propose that the term should be translated faithfulness. This would mean that the person receives a special gift of patience and perseverance to endure hardship and perhaps even martyrdom as a witness to Christ. The **gifts of healing** refer to the ability to cure people of illness miraculously but only as a testimony to God’s power for purposes of evangelism. Paul had to leave his friend Trophimus behind sick on one occasion (2 Timothy 4:20), and Timothy was plagued by a persistent stomach problem (1 Timothy 5:23). Thus Paul did not always seem to have the gift of healing as he did in Acts 14:8–10; 28:7–9. Paul ends his list with four types of gifts that seem to be connected with the most trouble in Corinth. These gifts involve claims about God revealing something through the individual. At the outset we should note that miraculous powers is a general term that includes other items on the list. **Prophecy** is the first of the four. It refers to the ability to speak on behalf of God, perhaps including predictions of what will happen in the future (see Acts 11:27, 28; 21:10, 11). **Distinguishing between spirits** is the ability to determine whether someone’s words and actions are motivated by genuine desire to please God or by selfish interests or perhaps even by demonic influences. First John 4:1 indicates that all Christians should be able to do this to at least some extent. But Paul seems to be using distinguishing between spirits in a narrower, deeper sense. **Tongues** is the ability to speak in languages that one has not studied. The key example is what happened on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–11; compare 10:46; 11:15; 19:6). This gift apparently is intended to emphasize the universal nature of the gospel by illustrating God’s rule over all people groups. Paul’s remarks in 1 Corinthians 14 suggest that the content of such utterances is parallel to prophecy in some respects. Just as in any situation where someone is speaking a language that we do not understand, interpretation is needed. The Spirit therefore enables some of the Corinthians to **interpret and translate these tongues** so that others can benefit from the message (see 1 Corinthians 14:27, 28).

#### **Definitions of the listed Gifts (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)**

“The word of **wisdom**” heads this gift list. This is the ability to skillfully communicate spiritual truth. The second gift in the list is “the **word of knowledge**.” In some ways this is difficult to distinguish from the preceding “word of wisdom.” The “word of knowledge” seems to focus on the ability to perceive and understand the truths of God’s Word; it could thus be understood as Spirit-led insight into the meaning of Scripture. In a specialized sense the writers of Scripture exercised this gift in setting down the inspired words of God’s revelation. The third gift listed is the special endowment of **faith**. This faith is distinct from saving faith and the faith that we exercise in daily living. This gift of faith is the ability to trust God when facing overwhelming obstacles. It “is a special faith to attempt great tasks for God” (Gromacki. *Called to Be Saints: An Exposition of I Corinthians*, Baker). Paul referred to this gift of faith later in I Corinthians when he wrote about faith that could remove mountains (13:2). The fourth gift on the list is “**the gifts of healing**” (I Cor. 12:9). These gifts are distinct from the medical abilities that physicians possess. These spiritual gifts were sign gifts that authenticated the apostles as preachers of God’s Word (cf. II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). As such, many believe gifts of healing ceased with the close of the apostolic age at the end of the first century. The fifth on this list of gifts is “**the working of miracles**” The apostles performed miracles along with preaching God’s Word (cf. Acts 5:12). These miraculous works were also sign gifts (cf. Heb. 2:4). The gift of “**prophecy**” is listed sixth (I Cor. 12:10). The prophets were God’s spokesmen. They were sometimes the means through whom special revelation was given (cf. II Pet. 1:21). At other times the prophets only reiterated revealed truth. Since the Scriptures have been completed, prophecy is no longer the channel for new revelation from God. The gift of “**discerning of spirits**” is the seventh gift on Paul’s list. This is the special ability to identify genuine prophecy. The basic meaning of the word “discerning” connotes the ability to distinguish truth from error. The Apostle John exhorted us to examine carefully the teaching of those who call themselves prophets (I John 4:1). The eighth gift is the gift of “**tongues**.” This gift was the Holy Spirit endowed ability “to speak in known, foreign languages (unknown and unlearned by the speaker)” (Gromacki). The apostles exercised this gift on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4-8). The gift of “**the interpretation of tongues**” was the ability to translate a message given in a foreign language into the language of those who heard it. The interpreter did not know the language of the tongues speaker. In order for the message to be understood, this gift was

necessary (cf. I Cor. 14:27-28). The ability to speak in tongues and the ability to interpret tongues were both sign gifts that authenticated the apostles and their message (cf. vs. 22).

### **Unity through the Holy Spirit distribution (11)**

*Distribution provided by God (John 3:27)*

27 To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.

*Distribution as God pleases and no one has a right to question it (Daniel 4:35)*

35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

*Distribution according to God's purpose (Ephesians 1:11)*

11 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,

*Distribution where all are pulled together by ONE God (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

While the human body's diversity in function is quite evident to nearly everyone, that same diversity in the church is often not as appreciated as it should be. Paul reminds the fragmented Corinthians that the source of that diversity is *God*.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### **Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **Overall Observations Concerning Spiritual Gifts**

Our brief survey of the New Testament teaching on spiritual gifts thus far allows us to make some observations regarding spiritual gifts. No list of the spiritual gifts includes all the gifts mentioned in the New Testament. Each list of gifts includes some of the gifts mentioned elsewhere but has its own unique elements. There are significant differences in the way gifts are viewed, even by the same writer (i.e., Paul). In every listing of the spiritual gifts where tongues is included, it is listed last. If this does not prove that tongues are the least important gift (a conclusion a number would embrace), it at least sends an important signal to those who think tongues is the most important gift. Finally, it seems the spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament are not a complete list but only a partial listing.

#### **Common Characteristics of the Spiritual Gifts**

If there may be other spiritual gifts than those specifically identified in Scripture, how would we know them? What sets a spiritual gift apart?

(1) *Spiritual gifts are spiritual gifts in that they are given by the Holy Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12). These abilities are not native within us; they are transmitted to us. I know some speak of a close relationship between natural abilities and spiritual gifts, but I am unconvinced by their arguments. Spiritual gifts are given to us to enable us to do what we cannot do in and of ourselves. How frequently we speak of those who could do so much for the Lord if they were saved. They seem to think the natural abilities of men are simply baptized into one's spiritual ministry. I see the human "strengths" of spiritual men like Peter and Paul who were set aside (perhaps even crucified) so that they ministered out of their weaknesses rather than out of their strengths (see 2 Corinthians 12:1-13).

(2) *Spiritual gifts are divine enablement for service to and through the body of Christ*. Spiritual gifts are not given primarily for our own edification but for the edification of the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts are divinely bestowed strengths through which we may minister to the weaknesses (and needs) of others.

(3) *Spiritual gifts are spiritual in that they produce spiritual results.* Spiritual gifts may be exercised through rather normal and mundane activities, but they differ from natural abilities in that they produce spiritual fruit. Spiritual gifts build up the body of Christ. A family may be facing a time of crisis or sorrow, and spiritual gifts may be exercised in ministering to them in their time of need. Someone may go to their home and clean; another may visit in the hospital; another may mow the grass. *But the difference with ministry inspired and enabled by spiritual gifts is that a spiritual result occurs.* Granted, the family could call a commercial lawn service to tend the yard, but the spiritually-inspired ministry of a Christian mowing the grass may produce encouragement for a Christian family or may result in evangelism if someone is unsaved. Spiritual ministry may look much the same as mere human service, but the result of spiritual service is spiritual.

(4) *A spiritual gift is also a divine enablement which goes beyond the enablement the Holy Spirit gives other saints not gifted in the same way.* Jesus said, “**apart from Me, you can do nothing**” (John 15:5). Apart from the miraculous working of God’s Spirit in us, we can do nothing. In this sense, nothing any Christian does will have a spiritual impact apart from the Spirit’s enablement. So when any Christian shares the gospel, the only way the unsaved person will be saved is by the working of God’s Spirit. Every Christian then has a certain measure of enablement in every area of his or her Christian duty (i.e., keeping our Lord’s commands). Those spiritually gifted in an area show a greater measure of enablement than those who are ungifted in that area. And some seem even to be more gifted than others. It may well be through the prayers of a Christian who does not have any particular gift in this area that one dying of an illness may be cured. In the ungifted person’s life and experience, a healing would be an unusual event. We should expect the one who has the gift of healing to see healings more often. It may be that this is why we find “healings” in the plural in 1 Corinthians 12:30.

(5) *A spiritual gift is the divinely provided enablement to carry out a task which God has given us.* I suspect that most of us have been taught that the first order of priority is to discover our spiritual gift(s), then to develop them, and finally to find a place of ministry where these gifts can be put to use. It may be the opposite in some, if not many, cases. In the Old Testament, men were divinely gifted to carry out the task God had given them to perform. Bezalel and others whom God designated to be craftsmen for the construction of the tabernacle and its fixtures were gifted by God to carry out this task (Exodus 31:1-11). The 70 elders, who were to help Moses judge the people of God, were given a portion of his (Moses’) spirit to enable and equip them for their ministry (Numbers 11:25). Elisha was given a double portion of Elijah’s spirit (2 Kings 2:9-15). Saul was chosen by God and designated as the king, and then he was endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 9:15–10:13). The same could be said of our Lord on whom the Spirit of God descended and remained at His baptism, equipping Him for His messianic ministry (Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-22; 4:1, 14; John 1:29-34).

### **What Was the Problem in Corinth Regarding Spiritual Gifts?**

We will be greatly helped in understanding Paul’s teaching on spiritual gifts if we pause to reflect on the Corinthians’ problems in this area. We know the Corinthians are proud and arrogant (1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 4:7-13, 18-21; 5:2; 8:1; 2 Corinthians 10). From what Paul has to say in chapters 12-14 (see 12:21), we can be quite certain some of the Corinthians’ pride lay in the possession of certain gifts or the following of some with those esteemed gifts. We do know the Corinthians prize certain gifts and disdain others. This resulted in many seeking to obtain gifts God had not given them and those possessing certain “lowly” gifts feeling they had no contribution to make at all. Those possessing the visible, verbal gifts seem intent upon showing these gifts off in the church meeting (see 14:26ff.). Those with the “best” gifts feel independently self-sufficient and do not sense their dependence on less visible members of the body (12:21). Paul has some well-chosen words for these carnal Corinthians about the relationship between spirituality and spiritual gifts, words which knock the props out from under their pride and self-sufficiency.

In chapter 12, Paul stresses the nature of spiritual gifts and the necessity of each and every gift for the proper functioning of the church, the body of Christ. Diversity of gifts must not become the cause of disunity but must promote the unity and interdependence of Christians. Paul shows that the Corinthians’ assessment of the gifts is incorrect and that a wide diversity of spiritual gifts is God’s plan and purpose. Those who promote certain gifts above others fail to understand that all are not meant to possess any one of the gifts.

In chapter 13, Paul moves from the gifts themselves to our attitude as we exercise them. Chapter 13 is all about love. Without love, even the greatest gifts are of diminished value. Love is most lacking in Corinth and causes the great wealth of giftedness in the church to be nullified or at least greatly hindered. The Corinthians valued the gifts more than love, but Paul shows that while the gifts (all of them!) are temporary, love is permanent.

In chapter 14, Paul focuses on two gifts in particular: tongues and prophecy. Here he introduces a guiding principle for the exercise of any and all gifts—the principle of edification. Gifts exercised in love are those gifts exercised with a view to edifying or building up others. Tongues which are not interpreted are not edifying, for no one knows what was said. Prophecy, on the other hand, does not require an interpreter, and thus it is the more profitable gift, unless tongues are interpreted. The principle of edification Paul sets out in the earlier verses of chapter 14 should be applied in the context of the church meeting (14:26-40). In these closing verses of chapter 14, Paul lays down specific guidelines for public participation in the church meeting to be sure that the edification of others is achieved.

Chapter 15 is not unrelated to Paul's teaching in chapters 12-14 (or earlier, for that matter). In chapter 15, Paul sets out to correct some false teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead. Spirituality is closely related to the Christian's view of the future. Many of the errors in the church, then and now, are related to a misconception regarding the relationship of "then" to "now." The false prophets deny that there will be a "then," urging their followers to indulge themselves in fleshly lusts "now" (see 2 Peter). Other sincere but erring brethren believe the blessings of "then" are for us "now." They minimize or deny that we live in a fallen world where sin will not be completely overcome until the coming of Jesus Christ, and who refuse to accept that the world in which we live is characterized by "**suffering and groaning**," until the coming of that which is perfect (see Romans 8:18-25; 1 Corinthians 13:9-13).

*(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/25-spirituality-and-spiritual-gifts-part-2-1-cor-124-11>)*

### **Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

All Christians possess gifts from God. We all have the Holy Spirit living in us. He empowers us to live the Christian life and to have fellowship with God. We all have other gifts and talents as well, and these too are given to us by God. Some people naturally pick up musical instruments or singing. They are good without much practice and can be great with practice. This is a gift. Others who do not have this natural musical gift might be able to become good, but it will take a lot of effort. Every Christian also has a spiritual gift, a special ability for service that is given by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the nature of our gift, we should be ready to use it for the building up of the body of Christ. Whether or not we are engaged in ministry for which we are paid is not important. The important thing is that we use our gift for the common good. The common good certainly relates to the church but might also apply to the world at large. Scripture is clear that we are to use our gifts. It is not necessary to wait for some mystical experience or a "calling" experience. We have a God-given ability, and we should use that ability for the building up of God's kingdom. It might take some time to learn what your spiritual gift is. For some people it is very obvious, but for others it is not so obvious. We can take tests and surveys that people have created, and they might give us some idea. The best indicator of our spiritual gift, however, is whatever it is we are good at and enjoy doing. Natural talents and abilities are different from spiritual gifts. They too come from God, however. It is good to use all one's resources, natural, spiritual, and physical, for the betterment of the world and the building up of the kingdom of God. First we need to discover what our spiritual gift is, and then we need to find out where God wants to plug us in. It may not be in the institutional church. There are many things that need to be done inside the church, but there are just as many that need to be done outside the church. We might not even use our spiritual gift primarily in a religious activity as such. The gift of encouragement could be employed at work for the common good. This is an effective witnessing tool, and it could lead to further opportunities to share the gospel. As salt and light in the world, we should do whatever we can for the betterment of society as a whole (cf. Matt. 5:13-16). Whatever we do for God, whether it is a religious activity or not, brings glory to God; and that is

a good thing. Paul wrote, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Another important point to realize is that all gifts and talents are important. Often the more visible ones get attention, but other abilities are just as necessary. As Paul wrote, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12).

***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

1. We must understand about spiritual gifts to use them properly (1 Cor. 12:1)
2. The Holy Spirit witnesses the truth about Jesus to the human heart (vss. 2-3)
3. Believers have different abilities and areas of service, but there is only one source: God (vss. 4-6)
4. Spiritual gifts are given for the good of the church as a whole (vs. 7)
5. All believers possess gifts that empower them to accomplish the work that God has assigned them in His church (vss. 8-11)
6. Spiritual gifts are given by God and are not to be a source of division or pride within the church