

### More Spiritual Gifts

#### 1 Corinthians 12:7–30

The members of the Corinthian church were abusing and misusing their liberty in Christ by using their freedom for individual gain instead of thinking about the other believers. This was evident as they celebrated what they were calling the “Lord’s Supper” when some were overindulging on food and drink leaving others in need. This me-first attitude demonstrated their lack of spiritual maturity, and led to the natural consequences of people becoming weak, sick, and even dying (1 Corinthians 11:30). This did not come from a judgment from God, rather it was showing how the lack of caring for one another would naturally lead to those in need becoming sick and even dying. These physical problems could also have been the result of continual overindulgence.

This lack of concern for each other spilled over into other areas of their lives, including the use of spiritual gifts. These gifts of the Spirit were to be used to build up each other, not for the benefit of any one individual. Some of the gifts of the Spirit were also called sign gifts designed to show Israel that God was now working with the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 14:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

#### **Types of gifts**

There are different types of gifts given to the Church, the Body of Christ. From this section in 1 Corinthians we see supernatural gifts that were distributed just as the Holy Spirit deemed best (1 Corinthians 12:11). They could not be performed humanly, although some of them were imitations of a true spiritual gift. For instance, the gifts of tongues is one of the most imitated gifts because it is easy to come up with nonsensical gibberish and call it a gift of the Spirit. The easiest way to determine if a spiritual gift is being imitated today is if someone claims they are using a spiritual gift. These gifts were no longer necessary after the completion of Scripture.

Other gifts were given to the church, including the ministry gifts of Romans 12 and the gifts of people serving the church in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11. The ministry gifts were not supernatural in nature, but were enabled by the Holy Spirit to be used to build up the Body of Christ. The people given to the church; apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers, were given by God before the completion of the Bible. Apostles were sent to minister to the various church assemblies (examples: Paul and Timothy) (Although not called an apostle outright, Paul addressed Timothy and others with him as apostles 1 Thessalonians 2:6–7). Prophets were men chosen by God to receive His word and disseminate it to others. Evangelists were special men who were able to preach the good news to unbelievers, perhaps along with the spiritual gift of tongues to reach those who were speaking a different language (Probably like the 144,000 who will be specially sealed to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom during the Tribulation (Matthew 25:14; Revelation 7:1–8; 14:1–6). Pastors/teachers were also raised up by God to lead and nourish believers within assemblies. Today, with the completion of Scripture, these functions are working differently. Apostles and prophets passed away when Scripture was completed. Instead only certain men given the gift of evangelism, all believers today are responsible for sharing the gospel as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:18–20). The gift of pastor/teacher was once given to specific men by God, but now any believing man who has that desire (and the right character) may be able to fill that role without God specifically giving someone that ability (1 Timothy 3:1). These gifts were all given by God to believers according to need. All gifts were to be used for the edification of others. The ultimate focus of the gifts was to bring glory to God. They were given to unite believers and spur them on to spiritual maturity, something that wasn’t happening within the Corinthian church. If the gifts given to them were being used properly, the congregation would not have found itself in a carnal state.

## **Unity**

The very first criticism that Paul had against the Corinthians was that they were not of one spirit. As soon as he finishes greeting them and assuring them of their position in Christ, he exhorts them not to be divided (1 Corinthians 1:10). This lack of unity manifested itself in every area of their church life. Chapters 3–4 show that they were following personalities and man’s wisdom instead of Paul’s doctrine. Chapter 5 shows them fighting among each other in a court of law instead of settling church matters within the church. Chapter 8 show how they misused their liberty, which led to more infighting and disagreement. Chapter 11 shows how factious they were by the manner in which they were celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Chapter 12 shows how this same divisiveness caused the misuse of spiritual gifts.

Paul continually brings them back to his doctrine and the proper application of it to show them what it means to be of the same mind. If they were properly united under the same doctrine then they would understand how to use their liberty, the right way to celebrating the Lord’s Supper, and the purpose of the spiritual gifts.

## **The body analogy**

Paul continues to emphasize to the Corinthian church that they should be acting in unison, using the metaphor of body parts working together as one unit in the body. Although the body is composed of many different parts, these parts all work together as a single unit with each part doing its job to accomplish something that a single body part could not do. Within the church are many people who have been given many different abilities and gifts. Together these individuals are to act as a single entity that accomplishes the will of the Lord. This unity should be evident between all members of the Body of Christ. The biggest reason for a lack of unity between believers, I believe, is that they are following doctrine that has not been written for the Church, the Body of Christ.

Believers are all commonly identified with each other and with Christ because we are all baptized by one Spirit. The Bible speaks of baptism in terms of identification. Believers are identified with Christ and with the Body composed of all other believers because we have all been baptized into Christ. Unfortunately, many groups can’t even see the uniqueness of this spiritual baptism because they confuse it with water baptism or the baptism of the Spirit. Although we are all united in one Body, we are all given different abilities to make the Body function correctly. Just like the physical body, we are not all the same part, and no part is unnecessary. If one part hurts, we should all hurt. If one part is rejoicing, we should all rejoice.

There is no such thing as a worthless member in the Body of Christ because we are all to be focused on serving the Lord, whether we have a special gift or not. God has placed each person in the Body as He pleased, therefore if a person thinks another is worthless, he is disregarding God’s placement and usage of that “worthless” person. It’s interesting that the whole Godhead is involved in the giving of the gifts to the church according to 1 Corinthians 12:4–6. The Spirit enables the use of spiritual gifts by individuals. The Son administers the various ministries or offices. The Father takes care of the operations or workings of the gifts. The Spirit gives people the ability to do what needs to be done. The Son works with the believers in how they will use the gifts, whether spiritual or ministry gifts. The Father is the manager of the whole plan. They all work together seamlessly like members of the Body should work if they are walking in the Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit is expanded upon in verses 7–11. The work of Jesus Christ in the administration of the gifts is spoken of in verses 12–27. The Father’s work of providing gifts to the church is found in verses 28–30.

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