

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 – “Spiritual Gifts: Differences of Gifts”

We're in this fun section of Scripture as we're talking about the Holy Spirit and the role of the Holy Spirit in the church. Paul's main emphasis through all this is the unity that's to prevail through the moving of the Spirit and the gifts that He gives. Remember, this church has been functioning in disfunction in a number of ways. They've been more selfish than they have been serving. Too self centered than centered on Jesus! So, Paul has been bringing correction and guidance in these areas. And the topic of gifts that he's dealing with was a big issue in the church at Corinth, and it's an important topic for us to get clarity on as well. So today we discuss differences of gifts, what they are, and what they're for.

Let's pick it up in verse 4 to get the flow of what Paul is saying:

“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. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”

Paul's point is to show the blessedness of diversity. Diversity does not need to exclude unity. In fact Paul shows through the Trinity how there are differences of gifts, ministries, and activities but the source is all the same. This work all comes from the Godhead – the Trinity. Even within the Trinity we see amazing unity in diversity. The Father sends the Son into the world to bring forgiveness of sin. The Son comes and does the will of the Father, surrendering His life on the cross. The Holy Spirit is sent into the world by the Father and Son to testify of Jesus and lead us into truth. Differing roles, but unified in purpose

In like manner, each person in the church at Corinth, each person in Riverside, does not all need to do the same thing or possess the same gifts. The Spirit gives to each one for the profit of all.

So let's remember, gifts are not given **for** the individual, they're given **to** the individual for the edification of the church.

And here's how we do that...

12:8 - for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

1. Word of Wisdom

This is the ability to have an understanding of the wisdom of God for a particular situation. It's been said it's "God's solution to a seemingly impossible problem." Solomon, so it would seem, exercised a word of wisdom when two women came to him claiming they were the rightful mother of a certain baby. How do you come to a right conclusion when it's one person's word over another? Solomon drops a wisdom bomb on them. Saw the baby in half and give each of them a half! Wow! Who would think of saying that unless you're led of the Spirit?

Another example of this is seen in Acts 6 where a complaint was made against the Hebrews by the Hellenists over the neglect of their widows.

The Apostles came up with a wonderful solution – appoint 7 deacons to serve in this area of food distribution. And they were most likely Hellenists. So this group with the complaint now had people to help them. It was a brilliant plan that showed care, grace, and the wisdom of God.

This is a gift that has great value in ministering to one another. When someone is going through a problem where they need help deciding what to do, we pray that God gives a member of the body this gift of a word of wisdom to impart help and guidance in navigating through it.

As we look at these gifts, it's important to see that these gifts aren't given as possessions:

"The tense of the verb *is given* (*didotai*) indicates that this is not necessarily a gift which is given for permanent possession and for regular manifestation by one particular Christian. It *could* mean that, but its far more likely meaning is to focus on God meeting the need of a particular situation by equipping one member of the body with this gift. The next time he might well use somebody else in a similar way. This is of pastoral importance, because there is often a strong tendency to speak, in a rather possessive and clinging way, of '*my gift*'; whereas Scripture teaches us here as elsewhere that they are *God's* gifts to the *body* for the purpose of establishing Jesus as Lord." ¹

So *to one is given the word of wisdom*, but ***to another the word of knowledge***. Again, one person may be used in one way, and another person gifted in another way.

¹ Prior, D. (1985). *The message of 1 Corinthians: life in the local church* (p. 200). InterVarsity Press.

2. Word of Knowledge

A word of knowledge is receiving insight into a particular situation that you would not otherwise have any understanding of. It's supernaturally imparted to you.

- In Acts 5 when Ananias came to the apostles and dishonestly said that he was giving all the proceeds from the sale of a possession, Peter knew that he was lying. Peter had no way of knowing that apart from the Holy Spirit. It was a word of knowledge.

A word of wisdom and a word of knowledge can seem very similar if not synonymous with each other. A word of wisdom actually works closely with a word of knowledge. Because we can be knowledgeable about something but have no idea what to do with that. So, wisdom comes and brings the application for that word of knowledge.

- It's been fittingly said knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.

12:9 - *to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,*

3. Faith

Now everyone can have an element of faith, just like everyone can have an element of wisdom and knowledge (for the most part). We're saved by grace through faith! We've all exercised faith. But this is faith of a different kind. This gift of faith is a special faith that allows us to trust God beyond all circumstances.

- Peter demonstrated that when he got out of the boat and walked on water.
- George Mueller was a man that often exercised great faith. He cared for many orphans in the 19th century and did so when he didn't always have the means to provide. He would sometimes sit down for dinner, with no food on the table, and pray, thanking the Lord and asking for Him to provide. And often times somebody would show up at that moment with food at the door.

4. Healings

This is the Holy Spirit providing the healing from sickness, disease or injury to a person. It's a body that has been made whole.

We see numerous cases through the Word of people being healed.

Acts 3:6–7, *"Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'"*⁷ And he

took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."

Can God do this today? Yes! In fact, we're called to do this:

- **James 5:14–15**, *"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."*
- Sometimes it's a gift of healing that someone operates in to bring healing to you, and perhaps it's a gift of healing that is in operation in you to bring the healing to yourself. But I believe the Lord certainly still performs healing and uses his human agents to carry this out.

Now let me give a little disclaimer here, I don't believe that people can walk around and claim to have the gift of healing. We've all seen at times church signs advertising a healing service, or a visiting "Healer" holding a crusade. I don't think we can schedule these things. If someone thinks they possess the gift of healing, then don't hold a service in a church – get to the hospital. Start raising people out of their beds.

We've seen the abuses of this where some Word of Faith teachers believe that the gift of healing is always flowing and that it's God's will for you to be healed. Not everybody in the Bible was healed. God may choose not to heal you. But we know that God is working out His purposes through it. And one day we will be fully healed once and for all when we enter into eternity.

But I do believe that the Holy Spirit is active today, and will gift people as He wills for specific times and purposes for that gift of healing to be used.

There's nothing in the Bible to tell us otherwise.

12:10 - *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.*

5. Miracles

This is where God works according to laws that are higher than the laws of nature. We've seen many examples of that in the Word of God (the parting of the Red Sea, turning water to wine, raising the dead, feeding the 5,000).

This was continuing on after Jesus' ascension and not just with the main apostles.

- **Acts 8:6**, *“And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.”*

Do miracles happen today? Two of my sons got married last year, so yea, I'd say miracles do happen. But why don't we see miracles taking place as much today?

- The working of the Spirit is to point people to Jesus, whereas I think this gift would point many to ourselves. I know I probably would have a tough time handling this in humility. Is it still in operation today? For sure. Is it not seen as much in our time because of human tendency to exalt the one performing it? I think that's a fair conclusion.
- But again, because we don't see a volume of these gifts around us (ie. healing, miracles, etc.) does not mean we need to dismiss or cancel them. Often places around the world that are in greater need and live with a greater dependency on the Lord experience things happening on a greater supernatural level. I believe as the days get closer to the Lord's return we will see an increase in these things too.
- Let's be open to these things rather than dismissive of these things.

6. Prophecy

This is the speaking out of God's Word, declaring the purposes of God. In O.T. times it was the prophet who would come and often through foretelling of future events, would reveal the purpose of God and word of God. This can certainly happen today and does. But prophecy can also manifest itself through the forth-telling of God's Word (**1 Corinthians 14:3**, *“But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.”*).

- “True prophecy is not to satisfy our curiosity about the future, but to stir up our hearts to do the will of God!” – Brian Bell

Remember, prophecy will always be in agreement with God's Word. We've seen a real move to the prophetic over the last while in some Christian circles, and in so doing they often are looking for, and relying on, a fresh or new word from God. And that often supersedes God's Word. We have all we need in the Bible, we don't need a new word, we need the reliable Word. This is where the next gift is important.

7. Discerning of Spirits

If the enemy can masquerade himself as an angel of light, how we need this gift. It helps us differentiate between what is of God and what isn't.

- **1 John 4:1**, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

We really need this gift with how much unbiblical doctrine and teaching there is going around today.

8. Differing kinds of Tongues

Now we’re going to really get into the gift of tongues in Chapter 14. We’re going to unpack that then, and it seems this was the main issue that was causing problems when it came to gifts in the church at Corinth. In all the references Paul made to gifts in Chapters 12-14, the one gift he includes in each list is the gift of tongues. We’ll see in Chapter 14 why Paul emphasized this.

But regarding tongues, I will say it is the Greek word *glossa*, which spoke of languages. This gift was speaking a known language, but unknown to the speaker. It was important at the onset of the Church and on the day of Pentecost because many people were gathered from different geographic areas with differing languages. The Holy Spirit moved in the lives of those gathered in the upper room and they began to speak in these known languages, yet unknown to them, so that people visiting Jerusalem could see and hear what God was doing. This was a major event in the program of God. And it allowed people to come together in unity over the work that God was doing. It was a reversal of what took place at the tower of Babel.

Tongues is not the evidence that the Holy Spirit is filling you, nor is it something that all Christians will do (1 Cor 12:30).

9. Interpretation of Tongues

This is simply interpreting and communicating a gift of tongues so that all can understand and be edified through it.

12:11 - *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*

These are not gifts that we choose, nor are they gifts that need to be taught or trained in. They’re not crafts than need to be honed. They’re gifts! Meaning they are given to you by the Holy Spirit. And He does this as He wills not as you will!

Now keep in mind, this is not an exhaustive list of gifts. In fact, it's not the only list of gifts that we have in the Bible. We see other gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; Romans 12:6-8; and Ephesians 4:11.

In each of these lists, the gifts that are mentioned differ a little from each other. And none of these lists would seem to show an exhaustive list of gifts, not even if you combined them all.

Why is there different lists? Because Paul was seeking to deal with a specific point and the gifts mentioned helped develop the larger point in a specific context. In other words, there may very well be many more spiritual gifts that are at work in the church that are not named specifically in the Bible.

Can there be a gift of worship? Why not? How about a gift of hospitality? Sure!

What's important is that we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and use us in the way He has gifted us. We don't have to try and fit in to a certain gift we think would be nice, we just remain open to how the Spirit is leading us. But fulfill your role in the body by using this gift to glorify God. We'll talk more about that next week.

Are the gifts for today? Some agree, some disagree. Some believe that the miraculous gifts died out with the apostles, while other gifts are still in operation today. But nowhere do we see any kind of classification of the gifts between miraculous, administrative, or communicative. There are gifts of each category but they are not categorized in the Bible.

Acts 2:33, 39 says, *"Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."*

I believe the gifts are certainly for today, but need to be used and followed in a Biblical way. When we are being used in them correctly, there won't be room for weirdness, abuse, and chaos. Rather they will glorify Jesus and strengthen the church.

David Guzik said, "We should never assume that giftedness equals maturity. God can and does, for His own glory and purpose, distribute spiritual gifts to those who are not especially spiritually mature or close to Him. This is why spiritual giftedness is never the criteria for positions of leadership among Christians, but Christian maturity and character is (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

God can grant anyone remarkable spiritual gifts in a moment, but character and maturity take time to build.”