

Spiritual Gifts: Their Purpose

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

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I just want to read 1 Corinthians 12:1 to get us started in the subject. Paul says, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” It’s interesting that it’s one of those things that Paul says, “Now, I don’t want you to be ignorant,” but we’re ignorant of. Paul didn’t want us to be ignorant about those that have died and the rapture of the Church, but we’re ignorant about that. Paul didn’t want us to be ignorant about the things of the gifts of the Spirit. In this chapter Paul is going to be speaking about spiritual matters, and I’m going to come back to it, but notice in verse 1, “Now concerning spiritual”—my King James Bible, I don’t know what translation you are using, has the word ‘gifts’ in italics. Whenever you see that in italics, it’s an indication that it’s not in the original manuscripts or is not in the oldest manuscripts or is not in the original when it was written, that it was added to create a continuity of thought. You say, “Well then, why are we talking about gifts of the Spirit if it doesn’t say ‘gifts’?” Because it is about the gifts of the Spirit, but the word “gift” there, we’re going to talk about what that means, at this point in time in the text it does not appear, he just says, “Now concerning . . .”

The public worship in Corinth was plagued with problems. Let me give you the three problems that caused this section. First, women were worshiping without their heads covered, thus displaying a lack of submission to authority. If you weren’t here last Wednesday night, you can get that on the website, you can listen to it. What a challenging section that was, but we talked about the idea of head coverings in the public worship service. Secondly, there was disorder in the Lord’s Supper. Remember we talked about the Lord’s Supper, how they were coming together not for the good but for the worst—they were having the agape feast and had a potluck and were actually eating their own food, not sharing with the poor, drinking and getting intoxicated, and they were not properly honoring the Lord’s Supper. They were doing it in a manner that was unworthy.

Tonight, we also see that they were abusing spiritual gifts, and they were confused about the gifts and their operation, especially the gift of tongues; and the same thing is true today. The gifts of the Spirit is one of the issues that divides the church. Someone said, “It’s not the tongues movement that’s dividing the church, it’s the movement of the tongue that’s dividing the church.”

We have different groups. We have groups that are what’s called cessationists, and I’ll maybe address this as we get into chapter 14 more. These are believers, and I do believe they’re brothers and sisters in Christ, they’re not unorthodox, that believe, especially the “sign” gifts or the miraculous gifts, and I don’t know why they would differentiate those from the other gifts, but they say, “These gifts have ceased or stopped with the full canon of Scripture. We have the Word of God.” Now, certainly I believe that what we believe and how we behave must be grounded and founded on the Bible, not tradition, not our emotions, not our feelings. I’m hoping and praying that as we go through this series that you’ll see and hear clearly what the Bible

teaches about these gifts. I will say right now, I don't see any basis in Scripture to say that all the gifts have ceased with the full canon of Scripture and that they're no longer available for today. I'm not personally a cessationist, I believe that all the gifts...there can be differing ideas about what they are and how they work and how they operate, and I'll talk about that; but I'm not by any means a cessationist, to believe that the gifts aren't for today.

In 1 Corinthians 12 we see the relationship of the gifts to each other within the body of Christ, and we're just going to get our feet wet tonight, I want to lay some important foundational principles before we get into their operation. In chapter 13 we're going to see the relationship to love. We hear a lot of times 1 Corinthians 13 quoted about love, or the King James translates that "charity," but very rarely do we have it set in its proper context of spiritual gifts. He's going to actually emphasize love and that the gifts of the Spirit should be used in love for the good of others and the glory of God.

In chapter 14, I'm just kind of surveying all three of these chapters, Paul contrasts tongues and prophecies. One of my favorite chapters in all the Bible because the emphasis there is that when you corporately gather you shouldn't be speaking in tongues unless there's an interpreter—only two or three—and that what you should be doing is prophesying, which I believe is closely related to teaching or preaching the Word so that there's mutual instruction and edification, and he actually says that it's preferable over you speaking in an unknown tongue that someone can't understand or by no means is going to be edified by.

Tonight in our text are three sections, and I believe the outline will appear on the screen and some of the subpoints as well. In verses 1-3 we see the problem with the gifts, we see the issues that were some of the problems that precipitated Paul's words to the believers there in Corinth. Let's read it again down to verse 3. Paul says, "Now concerning spiritual, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. 2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. 3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed"—that's a very strong word, it's the word anáthema, which means cursed to the lowest hell—"and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost"—in my King James Bible where the word is 'Spirit.' It's a reference to the Holy Spirit.

In verse 1 we have the problem of spiritual ignorance. He uses that phrase in verse 1, "Now concerning," he didn't get maybe a letter about it, maybe he got some questions about it, but it's an indication of a change of subject. So, he moves from head coverings in church and the lack of submission to authority and the improper use of liberty, now he's changing the subject to the issues of spiritual matters. Notice also that people are sadly today ignorant about not only the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit. In my King James Bible again, it says Holy Ghost.

I met a guy once that thought the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit were two different things. They're one in the same. He actually said to me, "I like the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Ghost scares me," kind of like Casper the Friendly Ghost or something. It's just old English. It's the old King James which means "Spirit."

Now, what or who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead. The Bible teaches there's one God, and that one God is three Persons. In other words, you describe it like this: one God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three Persons, They're one in essence, divine; They're three in Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You say, "Well, I don't understand that." Welcome to the club, neither do I. It's because God is infinite and I am finite. It's because I have a little pea brain, and God is so great, God is so awesome that I can't fully understand or comprehend Him. But you need to understand that there's a Father who is God; there is a Son who is God; and there's a Spirit who is God, but there's only one God. Again, we can't comprehend that or wrap our minds around that, but that's what the Bible teaches. So, the Holy Spirit is God just as much as the Father and the Son. He's a divine Person, and He is a Person. Sometimes in the Bible because the word "Spirit" is neuter, there's references in Roman 8 where it uses the reference to the Spirit and says "it," that when it, " . . . the Spirit of truth, is come,"—and then he uses a personal pronoun ekeînos, " . . . he shall testify of me."

The Holy Spirit is not an "it." The Holy Spirit's not God's active force. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person. He can be grieved. He can be lied to. He can be resisted. He can be blasphemed. He is a Person, and He needs to be recognized and understood as that. You don't need to be afraid of the Holy Spirit.

I also want to make it clear that every Christian has indwelling in them the Holy Spirit. You cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. You're not a Christian because you go to church. You're not a Christian just because of what you believe in. You're not a Christian because you've been baptized. You're not a Christian because you take Communion. You are a Christian because you have been born of the Spirit—it's called regeneration—through faith in Jesus Christ, trusting Him as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit regenerates you and indwells you and seals you I believe unto the day of redemption. So, don't ever let anyone intimidate you saying that you don't have the Holy Spirit, if you don't speak in tongues or you don't have certain gifts. That's not so. You are a child of God, indwelt with the Spirit; and to be filled with the Spirit simply means controlled by. It doesn't mean you get more of the Holy Spirit.

I don't believe, and I'll get into this when I get to verse 32 of chapter 12, when you're a Christian, you don't get more of the Spirit. When you're filled, the Spirit gets more of you. So, it's not having more of the Holy Spirit in your life, it's giving your life completely and yielding to the Holy Spirit. Don't be intimidated by someone that says, "You need this," or "You need that," or "You need this," or "You need that." If you're born again, guess what you have? Everything you need to live the Christian life. This is why Paul said in Colossians, "And ye are complete in him,"—that is, Christ. You are shipshape ready to sail. So, you have the Spirit, but the question is, does the Spirit have you? Does He empower you and lead you and guide you.

People also think that to have spiritual gifts is a mark of being spiritual. Listen to me very carefully. You can have spiritual gifts and not be spiritual. There's a difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit—the character, the Christlikeness. The church at Corinth, the very epistle that we're reading that the epistle was written to were carnal, 1 Corinthians 3:1. Paul says, "You are carnal. You are also babes in Christ." But they had all the

gifts of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 1:7, he said, “. . . ye come behind in no gift . . .” I’m absolutely convinced that you can speak in tongues and not be a spiritual Christian—a Christian, but not Spirit-filled. But you cannot have the fruit of the Spirit and be carnal. You can have gifts and be carnal, but you cannot be carnal and have fruit. They are mutually exclusive—His love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, self-control. The greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled life is fruit, not gifts. Does that mean gifts aren’t important? No, not at all, but the focus needs to be on character. This is why 1 Corinthians 13 is in the Bible. If you have the ability to “. . . speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not”—love—“I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” What does it profit you?

When I discovered that years ago it was life transforming for me. I used to think you were spiritual if you spoke in tongues. I used to think you were spiritual if you had gifts of the Spirit, if you manifested supernatural miracles, but you can be carnal and have gifts. It’s no sign or evidence of spirituality. We must get grounded in the Word and surrendered to God’s Word and “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

This church at Corinth had gifts but they were not spiritual, they were carnal. Also, the problem of their pagan past plagued them. Look at verse 2. It says, “Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away”—that word ‘carried away’ is a phrase in the Greek that was used of taking people prisoner and carrying them away and incarcerating them in jail—“unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.” A lot of the Corinthian believers were Gentiles, and they were involved in idol worship, which we read about earlier in 1 Corinthians, that an idol is nothing, but they’re actually giving honor unto demons, they’re interacting or connecting with demonic spiritual powers, so they were carrying this kind of paganism into their Christianity. They were carrying pagan concepts and thoughts into their Christianity.

Thirdly, there was a problem of those who were in their church who were professing to be Christians and to be professing to have the Holy Spirit and to profess to be speaking by the Spirit of God, but evidently they were calling “. . . Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” Let me give you another foundational point from Scripture: The Holy Spirit’s number one job is to honor and glorify Jesus Christ. If somebody is doing or saying anything that dishonors Christ or turns focus away from Christ, it is not the Holy Spirit.

Are they pointing people to Jesus or are they directing them to trust in the Lord. Is Jesus glorified? Is Jesus honored? If not, then they are not being led by or speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So, no one speaking by the Spirit would call Jesus accursed, they would actually be speaking against Christ, and they would not be in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit’s truth about Christ. Paul informed them that no person speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit can proclaim heretical doctrine about Jesus.

Inasmuch as I am not anti-Pentecostal, there are those that are called Oneness Pentecostals. They are many times known as Apostolic Pentecostals and they deny the Trinity, the essential doctrine of the Godhead. So, be careful, beware. They actually teach that you’re not saved

unless you speak in tongues. We're going to learn from our study that not all Christians will speak in tongues. Not everyone has that gift. But to deny the Trinity is heretical, so we need to know our Bibles, we need to be discerning, and many times they teach what is called Modalism. Modalism teaches that the Father became the Son and the Son became the Spirit and that they actually took on different modes, Modalism—the Father became the Son, the Son became the Spirit. They weren't Father, Son, Holy Spirit; they weren't triune, so they deny the doctrine of the Trinity and emphasize the gift of speaking in tongues saying, "If you don't speak in tongues, you're not saved," and "You're baptized only in the name of Jesus, not in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." That's just a little footnote that I wanted to bring out.

Paul is actually saying in verses 1-3 that you Corinthians are all tweaked. You're all messed up. You're acting like a bunch of pagans. You're basing things on experience. You're bringing paganism into your Christianity, so in light of that, again, I want to come back before I leave this first point to say, always, always, always, always, - am I being emphatic enough? - base what you believe on the B-I-B-L-E. Amen? Not your intellect, not your emotions, not your traditions, not what you feel, and be careful not even what you experience. The subjective experience is no bases for truth. "Well, I know it's real." Have you ever talked to a Mormon and you say, "How do you know what you believe is true?" "I got a burning in my bosom," they say. It's a famous Mormon saying, "I got a burning in my bosom." Well, I eat a burrito I get a burning in my bosom, and the older I get everything I eat gives me a burning in my bosom. What's that got to do with the biblical truth? So, objective biblical truth is the foundation for what you believe. That's the rock on solid ground that when the winds blow and the storm comes you won't be blown aside.

I love it in Ephesians where Paul says that God, ". . . gave some . . . pastors and teachers," which, by the way, are gifted individuals to the church, and they have the gift of teaching, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men . . . whereby they lie in wait to deceive"—people—"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him" So, don't be tumbleweeds, be oak trees, grounded and growing in the clear teaching of God's Word. Amen?

The second section, verses 4-7, we see the source and purpose of spiritual gifts. Let's read them, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit"—I love verse 7—"is given to every man"—which means every person, in the context here, every believer, every Christian—"to profit withal." All Christians are given this gift of the Spirit to benefit and to profit with all. In this passage Paul explains that the Spirit gives a variety of gifts to be used in a variety of ministries that have a variety of effects. They all have a common purpose, and a common source, and it is the triune God. We're going to see the Trinity in this passage. There's a common purpose even though there's variety in the gifts of the Spirit.

Let's break this down. In verse 4, you have varieties of gifts. Go back to verse 4. It says, "Now there are diversities of gifts,"—there's multiple different gifts—"but"—it all comes from—"the

same”—and one—“Spirit,”—the Holy Spirit of God. There isn't just one gift.

Have you ever gone to the zoo and marveled at all the animals, how diverse they are—the sizes, the shapes. Wouldn't it be boring if you went to the zoo and it was just one cage with a bunch of animals that all looked the same? Just one cage full of brown monkeys or something. “Where's the birds? Where's the snakes? Where's the giraffe? Where's the zebras?” all the variety. You know, it's amazing the God of variety. Think of the variety put into humans, how different people look. Think of all the different flowers. Think of all the different animals and all the beauty and splendor of God's creation. Think of the world that God created. So, when it comes to the gifts of the Spirit, there's such great diversity and variety within those gifts.

How many gifts are there, verse 4. Well, you can count at least nineteen in the New Testament, but I believe that it's possible that there are more than that in the Scriptures. In this text we're going to see nine gifts specifically named from verses 8-10, but I believe there are many different gifts of the Spirit, and we don't know for sure how many there are. I want to give you these verses. I'm not sure if they'll appear on the screen, I think they may. I want you to write them down. These are the four places in the New Testament where you can read about and study the gifts of the Spirit. The first is Romans 12, Romans 12 has gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned there and talked about; 1 Corinthians 12, our text tonight; then, third is Ephesians 4, write down Ephesians 4 where Paul mentions gifts of the Spirit or gifted individuals given to the church; then, 1 Peter 4. I'm not giving you the verses, I want to keep it simple. So, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4.

Also, there are four different categories. These categories are not given in the Scriptures but I think they help to kind of package the idea of the diversity or variety of gifts. Let me give them to you. Again, I'm not sure, but I think they may appear on the screen. There are four different categories of gifts, and they're all important. First, there are special gifts, and here they are: Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. This is where Paul, in Ephesians 4, mentions them. The unique thing about these “special” gifts is that they actually are tied into the individuals that have them. They're not just gifts to individuals, they're gifted individuals who are actually gifts to the church.

The older I get, and the less time I know I'm going to have here on earth, and the longer I've been around, the more I value and appreciate great men of God who have taught the Bible, ministered to my life, built up the church, and been a blessed gift to the church. We've lost a lot of great preachers in the last few years in America and in the world. These were gifted men given to the church as gifts, and usually we don't value them as we should until they're dead and gone, but thank God for this. I'll talk more about apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. By the way, the pastor-teacher is hyphenated. It's one person. A pastor must be a teacher.

The second category is speaking gifts, and we're going to get them tonight, prophecy, we won't get this one, the gift of teaching. You can have the gift of teaching and not be a pastor, but you can't be a pastor without the gift of teaching. Then, exhortation. That's a gift of the Spirit, the

gift of exhorting others. Then, the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. Those are all related to at least the second category which are teaching or speaking gifts.

The third category gifts of the Spirit are serving gifts. These are the poor gifts that get neglected, but they are so wonderful and so important. There's the gift of serving. Did you know that? God just gives you a heart to serve and the gift to be a servant. There's the gift of helps, you want to help other people, help the church. There's the gift of leadership. There's the gift of administration. There's the gift of giving. There's the gift of showing mercy. There's the gift of discerning of spirits. There's the gift of faith, and the gift of hospitality. Now, hospitality literally means loving strangers. It's not just inviting friends over to your house, it's loving strangers. That's what the word literally means, to love strangers.

The fourth category, sign gifts, which are tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, and healings—sign gifts. Again, those are categories of gifts. But note all these variety of gifts, yet they all come from the same source, the Holy Spirit, verse 4. Notice, secondly, our fifth verse, and we see a variety of ministries. In verse 4, we see, “. . . diversities”—or variety of the gifts themselves. In verse 5 we see the variety in the way they're administrated or used, so “There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.”

That word “administrations” means, we get our word deacon from it. It's tied in with the Greek word *diákonos*. There are different ways to use it to serve others. Paul is saying that the same gift can work in different ways in different people. Again, the same gift can work in different people in different ways. I may have the gift of teaching and you have the gift of teaching, that doesn't mean that I have to teach the way you do or you teach the way I do, we use our gift the way God equips us and leads us to use that gift. The gift of teaching won't work the same in everyone's life. There's different ways to administer the different gifts that God has given you, “. . . but the same Lord,” verse 5. Paul's saying that the same gift can work different ways in different people, but it all comes from the same Lord.

Thirdly, notice in verse 6, there are varieties of effects. I love this. He said, “And there are diversities of operations.” Notice the repetition: “. . . diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit . . . differences of administrations, but the same Lord . . . diversities of operations, but . . . the same God which worketh all in all.” In verse 6, that phrase “operations” literally means what is worked out or energized. We get the word “effects” from it. It's worked out or empowered by the same God. It's a different operation, so God uses us uniquely in the gifts that He gives us. The gifts are energized by God.

I want you to notice in verse 4, we have “. . . same Spirit,” that's the Holy Spirit; in verse 5, we have “. . . same Lord,” that's the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son; and in verse 6, we have “. . . same God,” which is the Father. So, again we have the Trinity alluded to there. We have the Spirit, the Son, and God the Father, diversities of effects.

Now, notice also, verse 7, this is a great verse. Here we have the one source and purpose of the gifts, “But the manifestation of the Spirit”—the gifts given to you by the Spirit—is given to

every”—Christian, every believer—“man to profit withal.” “Profit withal” means to benefit or to profit or to help or be a blessing to others. That word “given” there in verse 7 is where we get our word “gift” from, and it’s actually tied into the word “grace.” It’s the Greek word *cháris*, and we get our word charismatic or charisma from it. The very word “grace” is the word charisma and charismatic, and the gifts are known as God’s grace endowments.

This is super important and foundational. Spiritual gifts are unmerited grace gifts from the Lord. You don’t get a gift from the Holy Spirit because you’re super smart, “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.” You don’t get a special gift of the Holy Spirit because you have a charismatic, outgoing, dynamic personality. God can use your natural abilities, but that’s different than a gift given to you by the Holy Spirit. You don’t earn it, you don’t merit it, you don’t deserve it, it’s a grace gift. It’s a charisma gift. It’s a grace endowment. It’s not a matter of if I just prayed more, if I was more diligent; it’s a matter of God’s grace.

If God has given you a gift for the good of others, for the glory of God, you have to humbly and gratefully give Him all the praise, all the glory, and all the thanks. Amen? Because you don’t deserve it. You don’t earn it. You don’t merit it. It is a grace gift or a grace endowment.

I want to give you four points, and they’re not on the screen, and I just wrote this down this afternoon because I didn’t want to forget it. Every time you find a list of gifts in the New Testament, you find these four elements, and I love this. You find diversity and unity mentioned in the context. Every place in the New Testament where gifts of the Spirit are referred to, you find diversity and unity just as you do have in the Godhead, so you have that in the text because it’s in the context of the church.

The second thing you find in every one of these sections that deal with the gifts of the Spirit is the reference to the church as the body of Christ. “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee,” so you have a reference somewhere near that reference to the gifts of the church, the body of Christ.

Here’s the third thing you find in every list of the gifts of the Spirit, you have a mention of love. Isn’t that interesting, love is mentioned. Fourthly, you have in every one of those places the gifts are mentioned a reference to the glory of God. If you took note of where all those places in the New Testament gifts are mentioned and you wrote down these four points, it’s a great thing to do to go back to those lists and discover these areas of diversity and unity of the body of Christ of love and of the glory of God, which indicates that your gift cannot be separated or removed from the church.

You can’t stay at home sitting on your couch refusing to go to church, refusing to gather with other believers, and use your gift of the Spirit. What good would it do for you to stay home by yourself sitting on your couch saying, “I’m such a gifted individual. I’m just flowing and moving in the gifts of the Spirit. I never see anybody. I never talk to anybody, but man the gifts are just running forth from my life.” That’s just completely nonsense. What good is a gift of the Spirit if

you have no one to bless with it or to use it with? All of it is all in the context of the church, the body of Christ—the hand, the body. There are no vestigial organs in the body. The hand needs the foot, the foot needs the mouth, the eyes need the ears. The whole body is one, and we all have diversity but need unity, and we need to build each other up in love for the glory of God. It's so very, very important.

I want you to note also in verse 7 that every believer has at least one gift. Every Christian has at least one gift. I know it's sometimes confusing for people to discover what that gift is, and I'm going to wrap up this study in just a minute and give you some practical tips on how to discover your gifts, but everyone is given by the Holy Spirit one gift, and that's in verse 7, “. . . is given to every man . . .”

Thirdly, the gifts, verse 7, are given for common good of all, “. . . to profit withal.” Again, say God gives you the gift of teaching. What good is your gift of teaching if you don't teach anybody? And I like the idea that gifts are not candy for your joy and satisfaction. Gifts are not jewelry for you to show off. Gifts are not toys for you to fight over. Gifts are tools to build up the church, the body of Christ. That's why you must get connected with a local church, get connected to use your gifts for the good of all. That's what Paul's saying there in verse 7.

The last section, and we won't tarry on it, but in verses 8-11 we have the specific spiritual gifts mentioned by name by Paul, “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts”—plural—“of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers”—different—“kinds of tongues”—again, the word 'divers' is actually italicized—“to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” So, “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom . . .”

What I want to say here before I make a few comments about these gifts is that I find it interesting that the gifts here in Corinthians are named but not defined. They are named, but they're not defined. When the Bible speaks, we can speak; when the Bible doesn't speak, we can't speak. I personally believe, and this is after many, many years of wrestling with this text and with this subject, that we cannot always be clear on what these gifts listed by Paul are referring to. We can do word studies, we can cross-reference them in Acts and other places, but again, it's kind of like we're left trying to figure out what is the word of knowledge? What is the word of wisdom? What is the discerning of spirits? What exactly...we do have a whole chapter on speaking in tongues, and that's instruction on how it should be used in the corporate meeting, but there's not a lot of explaining or defining—the fact they're mentioned, but they're not explained.

I'm of the opinion that they could be defined a lot differently than sometimes we think. Sometimes we define them based on experience and tradition handed down, “Well, this is this,” “That is that,” or go to the book of Acts, and in years past I have actually taken nine weeks—one gift a week—from this text and taught on it; but I basically don't really do that anymore

because I'm not sure that I understand what they refer to. I'm going to go back over them for you, but again, I can't be dogmatic as to what these gifts are, and sometimes I think that when their "so called" gifts are being exercised in the church, I'm not convinced that we are seeing in the church happen what is talked about in Scripture, and we need to be careful.

Let's go over them just briefly, " . . . the word of wisdom." I believe that this could be tied in to preaching or teaching that when you're talking and teaching, the Word of God can give you wisdom to apply it to someone's life, or it could be one-on-one in counseling or with an individual that God gives you a wise word for an individual, to speak a word of wisdom to them. Again, I think if we're sharing the Scripture, we're sharing the wisdom of God.

Then, " . . . to another the word of knowledge"—it's interesting, word of wisdom, word of knowledge. It could be referring to something that God gives you understanding into and you impart that to others. Again, it could be in preaching, it could be in counseling, it could be one-on-one. It could be used in other ways in fellowship. Again, it's mentioned but not defined.

In verse 9, "To another faith by the same Spirit . . ." It's interesting that God actually gives the gift of faith. You are saved by grace " . . . through faith,"—and the faith is—"not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." But that faith is also a gift God can give you after you're saved, after you believed in Jesus, after you've trusted Christ, to trust God, to believe God for some situation or some thing.

Have you ever had a sign when you're facing some obstacle or some difficulty and you just felt this peace and this confidence and God just gave you the faith, the trust, and the rest that you're trusting in the Lord and it's supernatural and you can't explain it? It's a peace that passes understanding. That could be what he's talking about, but it's interesting as well, again, we often go to the book of Acts and try to find these gifts demonstrated in Acts.

In Acts 3, when Peter and John were going to the temple to pray at the hour of prayer, and they came to the Gate Beautiful and the man that was lame was there, and looking on Peter and John he asked for alms. "And Peter . . . said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name Jesus Christ . . . rise up and walk." It could be that Peter was given the gift of faith to see this man healed, and at that moment given also the gift of healings that that man was able to be healed. Again, sorry I can't help you more because I don't personally believe that we have clear explanation in the Scriptures as to exactly how these gifts operate or function, what they are, but I'll explain how we start moving in these areas of giftedness to be used by God.

Then there's the gift of healings, verse 9, which is plural. It seems that sometimes you pray for people and they're healed; sometimes you pray for people and they're not healed. Whether or not God gives an individual that gift, the question is, does that mean every time he or she prays for someone they're going to be healed? I don't personally think so because we're not omniscient. We don't know if God wants to heal somebody, but I think we should all pray for people that are sick. We should all pray for people that need to be healed. We should lay

hands on anyone who wants to be prayed for, and pray God will heal them, and I believe that God does heal, and I've seen God heal.

But sometimes they don't get healed. I have people come to me for prayer when they're sick, and I pray for them and they get sicker. It's the last time they ask me to pray for them. Then, sometimes I'll pray for them, and they come back a few weeks later and say, "Pastor, remember you prayed for me?" "Uhhhh, I think I remember. I'm not sure." They say, "Remember you..." "Okay, yeah, I remember." "You prayed for me and God healed me." I'm like, "Wow! That's amazing!" I'm blown away and shocked that God healed. Why should I be, right? Is not God omniscient? Can't God do all things? There's nothing too hard for God. God can heal a headache just as He can heal cancer. God can do anything. God is omnipotent. All things are possible with God. But it does seem that God gives some people the faith to pray for healing, and they see people healed.

Even people in church history or in the modern charismatic Pentecostal movement that said they had the gift of healing, not everyone they prayed for was always healed; and the sad and tragic truth is, and I think that if we're honest, we'd admit it, that a lot of shysters and gimmickry and falsity has taken place in the area of healing and some of these supernatural gifts. It hasn't been genuine or authentic, and that's really sad and tragic.

So, there's the gift of faith, there's the gift of healings, then, verse 10, there's the working of miracles. It involves power over nature and the ability to perform miracles. There's the gift of prophecy that, again, I think could be used in the area of preaching. Sometimes I think these supernatural gifts can be used in a natural way and go unnoticed, go unrecognized, because we have kind of an idea in our mind of how the gifts should work and what they are, and if we don't see that, we don't think we're seeing the gifts of the Spirit. Again, in verse 10, there's the gift of discerning of spirits, the ability to discern a true from the false. Then, there's the gift of tongues, which I believe is a gift that God does give and is still available today, and we'll be talking about that in chapter 14 in depth. Then, there's the gift of interpretation of tongues, be able to interpret the language that is spoken in tongues and supernaturally be able to interpret that. That gift is necessary to have, if tongues are spoken in the public assembly.

Now, look at verse 11, as we wrap this up. The Holy Spirit decides which gift to give to each person. Verse 11, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he"—that is, the Holy Spirit—"will." The choice is the sovereign choice or will of the Spirit, so don't complain if God doesn't give you the gift that you want or don't be jealous because God's given this person that gift but not you that gift. We're not to covet those other people's gifts. The Spirit of God sovereignly chooses who gets what gifts.

Okay, now how do you receive your gift? Let me give you three simple, easy steps. These are simply basic 101 Christianity. First, make sure you're born again. It would be foolish to say, "I want a gift of the Spirit," and you haven't been born again. You need the gift of salvation. You need to have the Holy Spirit living inside of you. You're not going to discover a gift of the Spirit to be a blessing to others unless you first have been born again of the Spirit and have the Holy

Spirit in you. So, you need to be saved by grace, through faith in Christ.

Secondly, surrender to the Holy Spirit. Romans 12 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" I actually believe that once you're saved you should say, "Lord, have Thine way. Have Your way in me. I'm the clay, You're the potter, and use me for Your glory." I believe every Christian should have a desire to say, "God, take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee." You say, "I don't want to be a missionary. I hate bugs. I don't want to go to Africa." Are you afraid of what God's will may be for your life? "I don't want to be a crazy Christian." How can you not give Christ your all. How can you not surrender as your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?

You hear me say occasionally some words from a hymn that I learned as a boy growing up in church, "I'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord / I'll do what You want me to do, dear Lord / I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord / I'll be what You want me to be." Even if you've been a Christian for years, have you ever got alone with God and got on your knees and said those words to God? "I'll go where You want me to go, I'll do what You want me to do, I'll be what You want me to be, I'll say what you want me to say." How can you live for yourself when Jesus died to save you from sin. Do you want to find out what gifts you have? Surrender yourself completely to Christ.

Here's the third step: Start serving in the body of Christ, the church. People ask me sometimes, "How did you become a pastor?" I got saved, I surrendered to the Holy Spirit, and then I said, "Lord, take my life and use me," and whatever opportunities were given to me to serve—not preach, not teach, just serve—I just jumped in with all I had and faithfully did it as unto the Lord.

You know, it's awful hard to steer a parked car, have you ever noticed that? The car's got to be moving for you to be able to steer it. Too many times Christians are just sitting around doing nothing, waiting for Billy Graham to call them, "Maybe Greg Laurie will call me this year and ask me to preach at the Harvest Crusade." I don't think so. If you've been sitting in church for years and you haven't done anything, what makes you think that you're going to discover your gift unless you get going, get moving, get serving. "Well, I'm called to bigger things. I'm called to greater things." "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Amen? Let's pray.