

THE POTENTIAL DANGERS SURROUNDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 CORINTHIANS 12:01–03

DIVISION OVERVIEW (1 Cor. 12:01–14:40): Spiritual Gifts

The Corinthian church was facing several problems that were about to rip the church apart. One of the most serious problems was the issue of spiritual gifts. No gift, no ability, no endowment from God should ever be abused or cause a controversy. But the gifts of God's Spirit were being so abused by the Corinthian believers that the church was about to be torn apart. Note how critical the issue was: Paul devotes three whole chapters to the question of spiritual gifts.

A quick look at the history of spiritual gifts will help in understanding this passage.

1. The Old Testament had foretold that God would send His Spirit to earth and gift His people in a special way.

Joel 2:28-29 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.' (cp. Acts 2:17-18)

2. Jesus Christ had promised and discussed the Holy Spirit with His followers in great detail:

=> the Person of the Holy Spirit or who the Holy Spirit is (see Jn. 14:15-26).

=> the work of the Holy Spirit (see Jn. 16:7-15).

=> the very special signs and protection that the Holy Spirit would provide for them.

Mark 16:17-18 "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

=> the promise of the Spirit's *permanent baptism* and endowment of power.

Acts 1:5, 8 "For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

3. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was such a phenomenal experience that it actually launched the greatest movement the world has ever known – Christianity itself. All the promises made by God in the Old Testament and by Jesus Christ concerning the Holy Spirit and His special gifts of ministry were witnessed for the very first time on the day of Pentecost.
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4. Before Christ, when God called a person for a particular work, God always provided the gifts and abilities needed to do the work. God has always equipped His people to do the work of the ministry. However, since Christ and the day of Pentecost, there is one great and remarkable difference: *every believer is called and gifted by God to minister*. That is what Pentecost was all about. God expects every believer to be a witness to the salvation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a witness is one of the primary reasons God gives the Holy Spirit to every believer, and it is certainly the reason He provides spiritual gifts. The gifts and abilities are given to be used — used in sharing Christ and in ministering to the desperate needs of the poor and suffering masses of this lost and dying world.
5. Paul discusses the Holy Spirit and His special gifts for ministry in great detail:
 - => the power and work of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 8:1-17).
 - => the struggle of the Holy Spirit against the flesh (sinful nature) (see Gal. 5:16-21).
 - => the fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-26).
 - => the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:7-16).
 - => the questions or problems surrounding spiritual gifts (see 1 Cor. 12:1-14:40).

In conclusion Scripture says unmistakably that there are spiritual gifts — special gifts and abilities given by the Holy Spirit to be used in the church and in the ministry to reach the world for Christ. However, as in the secular world, when a man receives a gift, he does not always use his gift wisely nor in the way it should be used; so it is in the church. Christian believers do not always use their spiritual gifts wisely nor as God wants them used. This happened to the believers in the Corinthian church, and unfortunately, it happens to multitudes of believers and churches around the world in every generation. The misuse and abuse of God's gifts are the very reasons the world has never been reached for Jesus Christ. This fact alone stresses the desperate need for a study of these chapters.

Introduction (1 Cor. 12:01–03) Spiritual Gifts

The Corinthian church was about to be torn apart because of the controversy over spiritual gifts, and unfortunately, churches down through the centuries have allowed themselves to become embroiled in the same controversy. It is unfortunate because God's power or special endowment and gifts must rest upon believers if they are going to reach the suffering masses of the world for Christ. There are four dangers surrounding spiritual gifts or the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- I. There is the danger of being ignorant about the gifts (v. 1).
- II. There is the danger of being carried away to false worship (v. 2).
- III. There is the danger of speaking false messages (v. 3).
- IV. There is the danger of speaking the truth apart from the Spirit (v. 3).

I. *1 Corinthians 12:01 Ignorance about Spiritual Gifts*

There is the danger of being ignorant about spiritual gifts. Note two significant points.

1. Note the words “spiritual gifts.” There are most definitely spiritual gifts, very special gifts and abilities from God that are given to a person when he first becomes a follower of Jesus Christ. Note they are *spiritual gifts*, not the natural abilities a person has developed from birth. They are special gifts given by the Holy Spirit that enable the believer to serve Jesus Christ in the church and in the world — spiritual gifts that enable the believer to help in ministering to people and in leading them to Christ.

Mat 25:15 “To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.”

Rom 12:6-8 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 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.

1 Cor 12:4-10 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

Eph 4:7, 11 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it...It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

2. Note the exact words of Paul: “About spiritual gifts...I do not want you to be ignorant.” There are three ways that a person can be ignorant about spiritual gifts.
 - a. A person can be ignorant that there is such a thing as spiritual gifts. He can fail to know that God endows the genuine believer with very special gifts that empower and enable him to serve and live for Christ.
 - b. A person may know that God gifts His people, but he may not know what special gifts God has given him. The believer may not know what it is God wants him to do for Christ and the church.
 - c. A person may know what his gifts are, but he may not know how to properly use them. It was at this point that the Corinthian church was having so much trouble. Many of

the believers knew their spiritual gifts, but they were misusing them, failing to use them as God willed them to be used.

Thought 1. There is only one solution to ignorance: study. Believers must study the Word of God and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit...

- to learn about spiritual gifts.
- to learn what their particular calling and gifts are.

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Rom 15:4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

1 Pet 2:2 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.*

II. **1 Corinthians 12:02 Spiritual Gifts and False Worship**

There is the danger of being carried away to false worship. Many of the believers in Corinth had been saved out of the heathen religions of that day. Note the emphasis of Paul:

- => They had been “pagans”; now they were Christians, followers of Christ, the Messiah Himself.
- => They had been worshippers of idols who were dumb or voiceless, unable to communicate and relate. But now they were worshippers of the only true and living God who could communicate and share with them.
- => They had been “influenced” and “led astray” by some force, energy or spiritual power to serve the dumb idols. But now they were under the power of God’s Spirit; therefore, they were to be led by Him.

The point is this. The religions of that day widely practiced special gifts that seemed to come from spiritual forces, gifts such as trances, tongues, ecstatic utterances and prophecies of the future. Such gifts were actually running rampant. Many of the

believers in Corinth were converts from paganism; therefore, they would have been familiar with the counterfeit gifts. Some of them would have practiced these gifts in their former religion before their conversion. Apparently some of them...

- had used a counterfeit gift to imitate the real gift.
- had misused the gift and ended up not really worshipping God, but worshipping in a meaningless way.
- had begun to feel and act super-spiritual, worshipping the gift and self rather than focusing attention upon God.

Thought 1. Think how often we see spiritual gifts counterfeited and misused, for example the gift of prophecy. How often do we see a person preaching or prophesying and it is clearly evident that he is only counterfeiting the gift and has not really been called by God? And the gift of tongues and miracles: how often do we see believers counterfeiting or using the ecstatic and miraculous gifts in a manner that does not lead to a true worship of God?

John 4:24 *“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

Rev 14:7 *He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”*

Psa 96:9 *Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.*

Psa 99:5 *Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.*

III. 1 Corinthians 12:03 Spiritual Gifts and False Messages

There is the danger of speaking false messages (v. 3). Some person in the Corinth church apparently spoke in tongues and distorted the great truth that “Jesus is Lord.” From all indications, the person took the truth that Paul had preached, that Christ became “a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). and he said something to the effect that “Jesus be cursed.” Paul proclaims the truth in no uncertain terms: this is not the Spirit of God.

The point is forceful: every believer must be careful not to speak or proclaim a false message. What the believer proclaims must be of God; it must be the truth of God. The world has enough false messages. It does not need any more misrepresentation and counterfeit messages, messages that leave men hopeless beyond the grave. The world needs the truth of God, the message of the glorious gospel: that He has sent His Son into the world to eternally save all men everywhere. It is time for false messages and untruths to cease flowing from lips of people who are counterfeiting the gifts of God’s Spirit.

Thought 1. The believer must guard against two deceptions when dealing with spiritual gifts and truth.

- (1) Making a statement or proclaiming a message that is not the truth of God and His Word.

John 8:32 *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

2 Cor 12:6 *Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.*

Eph 4:25 *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body.*

Prov 12:19 *Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.*

Zec 8:16 *These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts;*

Mal 2:6 *True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.*

- (2) Either becoming or sitting under a person who counterfeits the gifts of God’s Spirit, whether he be a self-proclaimed minister or lay leader in the church.

1 John 4:1-3 *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 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, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

2 Cor 4:13-15 *It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

1 Tim 4:1-2 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

2 Tim 3:1-2, 5 *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,... having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

2 John 1:7 *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

2 Pet 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves.

IV. 1 Corinthians 12:03 Spiritual Gifts and False Profession

There is the danger of speaking the truth apart from the Holy Spirit (v. 3). Note the word “Lord” (*kurios*). It refers to God Himself, that is, the Jehovah who is proclaimed throughout Scripture to be the Sovereign Lord of the Universe. To call Jesus “Lord” is to acknowledge His deity, that He is God Himself. The point is this: no man can please God by calling Jesus Lord apart from the Holy Spirit. Any person can speak the words that “Jesus is Lord,” but for a person to please God, he must *acknowledge* within his heart and life that Jesus is Lord. The word *acknowledge* is the key: it means to surrender one’s heart to Jesus *as the Lord of one’s life*. And no person is going to do this, not really, unless he is moved upon by the Spirit of God. However, when a person is moved upon by the Spirit to say that Jesus is Lord, the person does surrender all he is and has to serve Jesus. To summarize very simply, saying that Jesus is Lord does not mean to merely mouth the words; it means to be stirred within the heart by the Spirit of God to *confess* that one’s life belongs to Jesus *as Lord*. It means to give everything that a person is and has to Christ, acknowledging Him to be the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, the very Son of God Himself.

Apparently some in the Corinthian church were saying that Jesus is Lord, but were not truly converted. They were professing truth, but had not really committed their lives to the truth. Tragically, from the earliest days of church history churches have overflowed with counterfeit and hypocritical professions.

Thought 1. How many counterfeit the gifts of God’s Spirit and profess to know and proclaim the truth, yet they are not really led by the Spirit of God? How many preach, teach and speak in tongues; yet they are only mouthing truth, not proclaiming truth through the Spirit of God? No spiritual truth can ever be used effectively by God apart from the leadership of His Spirit.

John 14:26 *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

John 16:13 *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

1 Cor 2:12-13 *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak,*

not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

Thought 2. Too often envy and jealousy over the gifts of others causes a person...

- to counterfeit a gift.
- to proclaim a truth in the flesh (sinful nature) that is not led by the Spirit.

Thought 3. Tragically, from the earliest times of church history churches have overflowed with counterfeit and hypocritical professions.

Mat 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Mat 23:28 “In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”

Mark 7:6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’”

Titus 1:16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Psa 78:35-36 They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues.

Ezek 33:31-32 My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice. ■

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 CORINTHIANS 12:04–11

Introduction

A terrible controversy was raging in the Corinthian church over spiritual gifts. All kinds of questions were being bantered about:

- => Which gifts were essential?
- => Which gifts were the most valid and true?
- => Which gifts were the most important?
- => Which gifts were the most useful and needful?
- => Which gifts were to have precedence?
- => Which gifts were to be desired and coveted?
- => Which gifts were the most honourable?
- => Which gifts were more acceptable?

God had blessed the Corinthian believers with an abundance of spiritual gifts so they could effectively minister to the citizens of pagan Corinth. However, the believers never came close to launching the ministry God had intended for the church. Why? Because many of the believers had misunderstood and were misusing and abusing the spiritual gifts which God had given them.

- => Some began to feel their gifts were more important than the gifts of others, that they were more blessed than other believers. Therefore, all kinds of sins began to swell up in the hearts of these people: a sense of pride, arrogance, super-spirituality and of self-importance.
- => Others began to feel they had to have the same gifts as others, so they became envious, and began to seek their gifts. The result was a terrible abuse of the gifts. Some persons began to counterfeit some of the gifts, and their abuse brought disorder and disruption to the church.

There was argument and debate, strife and division over the spiritual gifts of God. God had given spiritual gifts to equip His people for ministry; but instead of using the gifts for ministry, they were arguing over what gifts were essential, valid, important, needful, honourable and desirable.

The present passage deals with these problems, and to the open and honest heart it answers many of the questions about spiritual gifts.

- I. The unity of the gifts (vv. 4-6).
 - II. The purpose of spiritual gifts (v. 7).
 - III. The list of the different gifts (vv. 8-10).
 - IV. The unity of the gifts re-stressed (v. 11).
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I. *1 Corinthians 12:04–06 Unity of the Spiritual Gifts*

The unity of the spiritual gifts. Pointedly, Paul says there should be absolutely no pride, controversy or division over spiritual gifts. Three simple, yet profound reasons show why.

1. There are different gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit. The Spirit determines what gift to give to a believer. The choice is entirely the Holy Spirit's; it is not the believer's choice. No man earns, merits or deserves a spiritual gift. The gift is given freely by the Spirit as He wills. He and He alone is the Source of the gift. Therefore, there is nothing about a gift for a man to feel prideful and important about. He did not earn it, and he certainly does not deserve it.

Note another fact as well, a matter that always needs to be remembered by genuine believers: there is nothing controversial about spiritual gifts. *They are all* — every one of them — gifts of the Spirit. He can give whatever spiritual gift and grace He wills to whomever He wills. Even if He needed and willed to give a new grace or gift to a person for meeting a special need in the church or in the world, what could anyone say against it? If He willed it, He could do it. He is the Spirit of God. What is there to argue about?

Thought 1. Believers need to do as Paul is soon to say, love — for love is the greatest gift — and get on about the task of reaching our desperate world for Christ.

2. There are different ministries or ways of serving, but they are all done by the authority of the same Lord. It is the Lord Jesus who gives the believer the right and authority to minister *in His name*. No believer earns, merits or deserves the right to be looked upon by the Lord, much less represent the Lord. Therefore, when the Lord gives the believer the right to minister in His name, it is an occasion for humble brokenness and thankful service, not for self-importance, super-spirituality and arrogant service.
3. There are different activities and operations in carrying out the various ministries, but it is the same God who works and gives the power to do it all. No man has a greater God or a greater claim to God than anyone else. It is the very same God who equips and empowers every believer to do the daily activities of his ministry.

No man, therefore, has a greater claim to boast or to feel super-spiritual over other believers. And there is nothing controversial about the matter. God can do whatever He wills, just as He pleases, for it is *God who works all things in all believers*.

Therefore, believers need to humbly thank God for His presence and power and be faithful to the daily activities demanded by their ministry. They certainly have no reason for feeling superior and self-important; neither do they have the right to stand against other believers because God is *working different things in them*.

Thought 1. Both the church and believers must always remember *there are differences* among believers. And it is God who has made the differences. Look at what Scripture has just said: there are...

- *Different* gifts ...*given* by the same Spirit (v. 4)
- *Different* ministries ...*given* by the same Lord (v. 5)
- *Different* activities ...*given* by the same God (v. 6)

The point to see is forceful: no matter the gifts, ministries and activities, they are all *given* — given by the Spirit, the Lord, and God. The gifts are not and could not be worked up by believers, not genuine gifts. Neither are they earned, merited or deserved. Therefore, all feelings of self-importance and all controversy needs to be stopped, and the face of God needs to be sought in repentance. For God is the One who has given and distributed as He willed. He alone knows best how to reach the people of this desperate and dying world. Therefore, He alone knows what gifts and graces are needed...

- in the generations and times
- by the races and countries of the world
- for the minds and emotions of all people
- for the conversion and growth of all people

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Rom 12:6 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

1 Cor 4:7 *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*

II. 1 Corinthians 12:07 Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

The purpose of spiritual gifts is to *enable* believers to do the ministry, the work to which God has called them. The phrase “common good” (sumpheron) means edification, advantage, benefit. Believers are equipped with spiritual gifts primarily for the *benefit and edification of others*, not for themselves. The gifts are not given to believers for their own gratification or for them to revel in a sense of self-importance and super-spirituality. The believer does, of course, profit and benefit from the gift given him, but he is gifted primarily to edify and help others. This is seen in the word “manifestation.” It means to be openly and publicly seen. The gifts of the Spirit are to be openly and publicly used; they are...

- to be manifested to the church, that is, used to edify the church.
- to be manifested to the world, that is, used to benefit the world (reaching the lost).

Note a crucial fact that is not always understood. The gifts of the Spirit are given to each person. They are not given only to the educated and outstanding. Every single believer is given some spiritual gift by the Spirit of God, and it is given because it is needed within the church and the world, needed to help in ministering to people and in reaching the lost for Christ.

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

Eph 4:11-12 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

III. **1 Corinthians 12:08–10** *The Different Spiritual Gifts*

The list of the different gifts is given to show just how diverse the gifts of the Spirit really are. He can gift a person as He wills, and His gifts are many and varied. This list is only partial; other gifts are mentioned in other passages (see Rom. 12:6-8; Eph.4:11).

1. There is the gift of the *message of wisdom* (sophia). Wisdom means the wisdom of God; this is made clear by 1 Cor. 2:7. The wisdom of God is the truth which God has now revealed to man; it is the whole system of truth revealed by God — the truth about God and man and the world. Therefore, the word of wisdom is the gift to share the wisdom and truth of God with men — to share the truth in simple and understandable language.

Rom 11:33 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*

Dan 2:20 *And said: “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.”*

2. There is the gift of the *message of knowledge* (gnosis). This is practical knowledge. It is knowing what to do in the day-to-day situations that arise. It is knowing how to apply the wisdom that one has to daily living. It is being able to make practical application of truth to life. It does no good to know truth unless a person knows how to use the truth.

The *message of knowledge* is the gift to share with others how they should live; the ability to apply truth to their lives in day-to-day living; the ability to make practical application of truth to life.

John 7:16-17 *Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”*

John 8:31-32 *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

Prov 2:3-5 *And if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

Prov 3:13 *Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding.*

3. There is the *gift of faith*. This is not the usual faith that we mean when we speak about saving faith. It is a very special gift of faith: a mustard seed faith, a strong faith, a powerful faith, a wonder-working faith, a special gift of faith that enables a believer to do great things for God and His people.

Mat 17:20 *He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”*

Mark 9:23 *“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”*

Luke 17:5 *The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”*

John 14:12 *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”*

4. There is the *gifts of healing*. This is a gift that has been minimized and deemphasized for generations because of the charlatans and the abuses that too often surrounded it. All kinds of theories and doctrinal positions were held saying that the gift was only for the early church. However, as William Barclay so openly points out, it is a gift that is being rediscovered by the church. It is a gift that is definitely experienced and demonstrated in the lives of multitudes all over the world today (*The Letters to the Corinthians*. p. 122f).

Mat 10:1 *He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.*

Mark 3:14-15 *He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.*

Mark 16:17-18 *“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”*

1 Cor 12:9 *To another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit.*

5. There is the gift of *miraculous powers*. This would refer to miracles other than that of healing which has just been discussed. There are times when circumstances and situations arise, and believers need a miraculous deliverance of some sort. Apparently, this is what the gift is. When it is in God's will for a storm to cease — for an enemy to be temporarily blinded, for a fire to be turned or put out, or for an innumerable number of threats against believers to be altered — God raises up some believer and gifts him to work the needed miracle. Examples of this gift would be Christ stilling the storm; Paul smiting Elymas with blindness (Acts 13:11); and Paul being delivered from a poisonous snakebite (Acts 28:5).
6. There is the *gift of prophecy*. This is the gift of speaking under the inspiration of God's Spirit. It includes both prediction and proclamation, and neither one should be minimized despite the abuse of the gift.

There is no question, the gift to predict events has been abused to the point of the ridiculous. However, the abuse of a gift does not eliminate the fact that the Spirit of God sometimes gives believers a glimpse into coming events in order to prepare and strengthen them to face the events.

However, the major function of prophecy is clearly stated by Scripture, and the fact should be learned by all believers:

1 Cor.14:3 But every one who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

7. There is the gift of *discerning or distinguishing of spirits*. This is a gift that is desperately needed by believers in every generation, for there are always false prophets and teachers in their midst. In reality, some measure of the gift is needed by every believer in order to keep from being led astray.

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 Cor 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

1 Th 5:20-21 Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good.

1 Tim 4:1-2 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

2 Tim 3:5 [Men] having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

8. There is the *gift of tongues*. This is the gift of an ecstatic or deeply emotional speech. It has always been greatly coveted by people familiar with the gift because it brings a person into a deep sense of God's presence. What is the language spoken?

=> Some say it is in no known language.

=> Others say it is in some foreign language unknown to the speaker.

=> Still others say it is a heavenly language.

This is an illustration of how the Holy Spirit gifts people differently in order to meet the needs of the person and local situation.

Again, this is a gift that has been abused so drastically and tragically that much of Christendom has shied away from the gift. However, the gift is dramatically sweeping the world just as the gift of healing is. It should be noted that it is the gift that was being so abused and causing so much havoc in the Corinthian church. (See 1 Cor. 14:1-40.)

9. There is the gift of the *interpretation of tongues*. This is simply what it says: the Spirit of God gifts some believers to interpret the tongue.

IV. 1 Corinthians 12:11 Unity of the Spiritual Gifts

The unity of the gifts is re-stressed. The point is critical for the church to learn and practice; therefore, it is repeated.

1. All the gifts just covered are given by one and the same Spirit. God's gifts do not come from any other source. True spiritual gifts cannot be earned, merited or worked up by men. No man deserves the gift of the grace of God. Therefore, there is no room for self-importance and super-spirituality nor for controversy. One believer has one gift and another believer has another gift, but both have come from the Spirit of God.
2. The Spirit of God endows the gifts to every man exactly as He wills. He knows what gifts are needed and where they are needed all over the world. He knows what gifts will edify the church most and what gifts can be most effective to reach the world and to minister to the desperate needs of all mankind. Therefore, he meets the needs of all believers in their respective calls and localities. ■