

“*Spiritual Gifts: Manifesting the Spirit for the Common Good*”

I Corinthians 12:1-11

October 13, 2013

This morning we are beginning a new, short series called “*Life in the Body.*” Our primary focus between now and the holidays will be to consider I Cor. 12-13 on the matter of *Spiritual Gifts and the supremacy of love in the ministry of the church.*

Intro: Broken; Gifted

- Broken: residue of sin; need to grow in sanctification/Christlikeness
- Gifted: unique ability to be used of God

So, all of us have a role to play as *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*—people in need of change, helping others in need of change.

We often pray/long for seasons in which the Holy Spirit is working/moving among us with greater intensity. Yet we often fail to realize that in large part what we are praying for is the full use of our gifts.

Every believer is uniquely gifted to manifest the Holy Spirit for the benefit of God’s people. (Key verse: 11:7)

We are going to discover 5 foundational truths as we consider spiritual gifts:

1. **Genuine believers are identified not by some particular manifestation of the Spirit, but by allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord** [vs. 1-3]

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians was written in response to a letter he received from the Corinthian church inquiring about a variety of matters. One of the topics they had questions about and needed clarification on was this issue of spiritual gifts. We don’t know exactly what questions they asked but we can speculate based on the answers Paul gives. Many have suggested they were asking about how to discern whether a spiritual manifestation was truly of the Holy Spirit or if it was a counterfeit work of Satan. For example, how were they to respond to someone who claimed to speak or act under the influence of the Holy Spirit but dishonored Jesus in the

process? Paul’s answer was that the work of the Spirit always confirms the lordship of Jesus Christ. Verse 2—“no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.

However, it’s more likely, given the entire context of I Cor. 12-14, that the question they were asking is the same question that is still asked by some today: *is there one particular manifestation of the Holy Spirit that must be present in a person’s life in order to verify that they indeed have the Spirit?*¹ For example, it was known that in the book of Acts as the Spirit took up residence among both Jewish and Gentile believers that the coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied with speaking in tongues. Perhaps the Corinthian church was asking the question: *What about those who say they are followers of Christ but don’t speak in tongues—don’t they have to have this particular manifestation of the Spirit to verify the Spirit’s presence in their life?*

This question would explain why the following verses have such emphasis on the diversity of spiritual gifts and the effects that come from the one Spirit. And it would explain why chapter 14 is consumed with a discussion of the proper understanding and practice of the gift of tongues. Paul’s answer is that there are a multitude of ways that the Spirit can bear evidence of His presence in the life of a believer, but the one litmus test of the Spirit’s presence in one’s life is the lordship of Jesus Christ. The only means by which a person could turn from pagan idolatry to acclaim Jesus as Lord is by the Holy Spirit—that’s the flow of vs. 2-3. You know that the Holy Spirit is in your life on the basis of one factor: gladly living under the authority of Jesus. “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (vs. 3).

The Holy Spirit is in you if Christ is indeed over you.

¹ D.A. Carson demonstrates the validity of this argument in “*Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14,*” pg. 24-31.

2. **The Holy Spirit produces a variety of gifts, working through a variety of ministries, to produce a variety of results** [vs. 4-6].

One of the wonderful realities of the church is the great diversity through which the Holy Spirit may work. There is only one Spirit, yet the way in which He manifests Himself in the lives of believers is quite diverse. In other words, the church should not sound like a *children's choir* in which all its members sing in unison. Rather, the church is like a *symphony orchestra* with diverse instruments, each serving a unique function, but together producing the beauty of melody and harmony. So a person with the gift of mercy next to a person with the gift of prophecy is as diverse as a violin is next to a bassoon. Their roles and contribution to the body are very unique, yet together with the rest of the orchestra they produce glorious symphonic sound.

Not only are there a variety of gifts (vs. 4), but there are also a variety of ministries (vs. 5) through which those gifts may be displayed. For example, two people with the gift of giving may have very different ways in which they put that gift into practice. It's important here that you think of ministry more broadly than just participating in a church program. Discovering your spiritual gift(s) is much more significant than just knowing what job or program to sign up for at church. It's about understanding the unique way that the Holy Spirit has wired you for a life of ministry. *Your giftedness is part of your personal identity.*

That means, for example, that if you have the gift of service, it should be evident in every arena of your life as you walk in the Spirit. So if you are responsive to the Holy Spirit in your life, His presence should be evident and manifested through your gifts at home (in family life), at work, and most certainly in serving other believers in the church. This is how spiritual gifts not only edify (build up) the church inwardly, but also edify by contributing to the overall mission of the church outwardly.

You should think of spiritual gifts not only as what you do but as a part of who you are. So if you have the gift of mercy you should not

just occasionally do merciful things; you should be a merciful person, which means that believers and unbelievers alike will be influenced by the Holy Spirit through you. So the most important thing about spiritual gifts is not the gifts, but walking in sweet fellowship with the Holy Spirit so He can minister through you at all times.

Finally, [vs. 6]. The idea here is that along with a variety of gifts and ministries, each believer is also given a unique capacity to bear fruit through those gifts. So we should not grow discouraged in comparing ourselves to others who have greater capacity than us nor should we look down on those who have lesser capacity. *We should just seek to use all of our capacity to serve Christ by manifesting the Spirit through our lives.*

Every farm needs a working combine. Just because other combines may be bigger, it doesn't take away the necessary function of the smaller combine. Just because others may have a greater capacity of teaching or leadership doesn't mean that the church doesn't need your gift of teaching or leadership.

3. **Every person has been given a unique ability to manifest the Spirit** (7a).

Vs. 7—*“But to each one is given a manifestation of the Spirit...”* Every believer is gifted—You are gifted. You have been given a unique ability to contribute to the body of Christ and advance the gospel. Every believer has been given a unique design and capacity to *“show the Spirit”* through his/her life. If Christ is Lord to you, and therefore the Spirit dwells in you, then you can manifest the influence of the Holy Spirit through your life.

This means that the way you function within the body of Christ should be not as a spectator but as a servant, regardless of your gift-mix. I Peter 4:10—*“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

4. **The purpose of each one's unique gifting is for the common good of the body of Christ** (7b).

Vs. 7—"But to each one is given a manifestation of the Spirit *for the common good.*"

The purpose of your spiritual gift is not to build your own reputation by serving your own interests but to glorify God (to build His reputation) by serving others. The use of your gifts should result in the glory of God and the good of the church, which is the body of Christ. So we glorify God, by manifesting the Spirit as we serve Christ in one another, by putting the interests of others ahead of our own—spiritual gifts don't work without *the mind of Christ* — Phil. 2:3-5. This means that the church should be radically other-centered. Being a part of the body of Christ means that we are not primarily concerned with our own needs but with serving others as good stewards God's grace.

Again, I Peter 4:10—"As each one has received a special gift, employ it—put it to work—in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."²

5. **The Holy Spirit sovereignly determines and empowers each one's gifting** (8-11).

In vs. 8-10, Paul is illustrating what he has been teaching all along that the one Spirit manifests Himself through a variety of gifts. And then he concludes in vs. 11 that these gifts are determined and distributed to each person individually by the Spirit's sovereign will. In other words, you have a unique place and ministry within the body of Christ, according to God's will, that no one else can fulfill. Your

responsibility before God is to be a good steward of His Spirit within you—to walk with the Spirit, living in such a way that His presence and influence in your life overflows to others.

Implications: (of vs. 7)

1. Every believer at TEFC has something to contribute to building up the body of Christ. We should all be engaged in "*ministry*"—*allowing the Holy Spirit to use us to strengthen fellow believers and witness to the unbelieving.*
2. "Of the Spirit" implies stewardship of a divine trust.
3. "For the common good" implies an attitude and lifestyle of servanthood regardless of your gift.

I Peter 4:10--"*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*"

Pastoral Exhortation: Mature Love Humbly Serving → I Cor. 13

What our church family and ministries need more than a particular set of gifts is mature believers who manifest the Holy Spirit by humbly loving and serving Christ in one another through their God-given gifts. Some people in the body of Christ are dangerous—they are loose cannons. They have the capacity of a cannon but without the maturity of being under the Spirit's control, they will hurt someone. **Spiritual maturity, which is most evident in mature love, is what determines the benefit of our spiritual gifts.**

Illus: Icing tube (relationship between life in the Spirit (substance) and spiritual gifts which simply give shape to *how* it comes out.)

- Tube: believer's life
- Hand: Holy Spirit
- Frosting: Mature love (manifesting the Spirit's life that fills us)
- Nozzle: spiritual gifts (giving unique shape to the Spirit's influence coming through our lives)
- People at the party: the body that benefits from the cake

² The word used for *gift* here is the same word use in I Cor 12:4 and it is the word *charisma*. The root of *charisma* is *charis* which means *grace*. So literally these are grace-gifts. Every spiritual gift is a charisma or a grace-gift. Our modern terminology has confused us. We often use the term charismatic to refer to those who emphasize the supernatural gifts of tongues, prophecy, and healing when in reality, biblically, every spiritual gift is a charismatic gift because it is an endowment of grace. So to mix up modern and biblical language, we could say we are a non-charismatic church (in the modern sense) in which every member is a charismatic (in the biblical sense), meaning that every believer has been endowed with a spiritual gift, a grace gift, to manifest the life and ministry of the Spirit.

Example: Lay Biblical Counseling Ministry / Youth Ministry

- Q: What spiritual gifts do we need?
- A: A variety of Gifts
- Key: Spiritual maturity is the indispensable quality

Spiritual gifts are not entities in themselves. They are not an end in themselves (as though they are to be the main focus). Rather they are a means, an instrument, a tool through which the Holy Spirit is to be manifested in mature love as we humbly serve one another.

Life Principle: *The fruitful use of our gifts will never exceed our maturity in Christ.* So give yourselves fully to the Lord.

Prayer: “Father, work in such a way that your people would be free to give themselves wholly to you.”

Benediction: **Rev. 1:5b-6**