

GIFTED FOR MINISTRY

I CORNITHIANS CHAPTER 12 - Synopsis

The gifts are found in scripture, mostly through the writings of St. Paul. In I Corinthians Chapter 12 Paul explains the gifts in terms of a metaphor, the Body of Christ. This passage is clearly the center piece for understanding the statements made in our Catechism, our Baptismal Covenant and our Confirmation. Let's take a closer look at what St. Paul teaches about these gifts.

The first thing we learn is that we are not to be "ignorant" regarding the gifts. That means we are to know what the gifts are and secondly, how God has gifted us. Paul makes it clear that there are a variety of gifts, but they all come from the same source – God Himself through the Holy Spirit gives the gifts.

The next thing we learn is that everybody receives a gifting. Nobody is left out. God has chosen to allow everybody to participate in the work of His kingdom and plays no favorites. Each one of us is uniquely designed by God for His purposes. Our job is to learn what the gifts are, discover our specific gift and finally, put them to use through the local church.

The third point St. Paul makes in this passage is that all the gifts are give for the common good. They are to benefit the whole in concert with the rest of the body of Christ. We do not stand alone independent of the body, but are integral to doing our part and making our unique contribution. The case is clearly made; just as our physical bodies need all the parts to function properly, the church needs all its members to contribute their gifts for the good of the whole.

The metaphor of the Body of Christ is so clear. Can the hand say to the eye, "I have no need of you?" What if the whole body was only an eye, then where would the hearing be? St. Paul's logic is so obvious. We are gifted by God for the common good and are interdependent and need each other. This is important to underscore because some of the gifts are unfamiliar and are supernatural. The "charismatic gifts" have a caused some concern because they tend to be "external" and "emotional". People who are gifted by the Holy Spirit with these gifts are very much needed by the church and are not to be shunned.

Paul goes on to explain that some gifts are more visible than others. They are easily recognized and often considered more significant or important. Healing, miracles, evangelism may seem greater because of there powerful nature, but the gifts of intercession, helps and mercy are just as valuable to the body and the kingdom of God.

No gift is more important than the other. Each has its God given function that is critical for the health and ministry of the church.

Something else we learn here is that we don't get to pick and choose the gifts we want. It is the Holy Spirit that gifts us as He chooses. Sometimes we might want to argue with the Holy Spirit. There are those who long for a certain gifting yet it is not manifest in their life. It is a danger to be jealous or

covetous for others giftings. We must all trust God and His sovereign wisdom is placing us in the Body of Christ as He chooses.

St. Paul offers a divine insight that we must all take to heart. Because we are interdependent and are needed by one another, if one suffers we all suffer. This statement and understanding communicated how strong a communal bond we are to have. That our lives and the work of the kingdom of God depends on all of us. We should only want the best for all our brothers and sisters in Christ. We should long for all the gifts to operate and be mature. Our ministry efforts and working together should be rooted and grounded in who we are and how God has gifted us.

Lets talk now about specific gifts and some definitions. I want to begin with the “Charismatic Gifts” because they are the most curious and not as familiar to the church as a whole. The word “charismatic” is really the greek word for gifts. So in a sense, all of us are to be “charismatic or gifted”. So what are they and what do they look like.

THE CHARISMATIC GIFTS

There are nine charismatic gifts and they can be broken down into three categories: Power Gifts, Verbal Gifts and Discernment Gifts. The power gifts are Faith, healing and miracles. These gifts are power and are the source of great joy in the body of Christ. To experience the gifts of faith, healing and miracles give much to rejoice about.

POWER GIFTS

The gift of **faith** is simply the supernatural confidence in God’s ability to change a situation. Jesus told the disciples in Mark 11:23 that if they had the faith of a mustard seed, they could speak to the mountain and it would be thrown into the sea. Faith looks at what God can do and not the limits of our ability. Mary had faith when the angel Gabriel came to announce she would be with child. David had faith when he went against Goliath. Peter could see faith and with John they healed a cripple. God has gifted members of the church to operate in great faith and they are a powerful gift to the body.

Healing is a gifting of the Holy Spirit for a unique and powerful ministry. Prayer for the sick and the laying on of hands comes natural for those anointed in this manner and they bear much fruit. One of the difficulties we face is the fact that not everybody gets healed when we pray for them. Yet, God has commanded us to minister in this way, but we must leave the results up to Him. We are to faithfully obey. He will bring about the results. This really is a mystery. We can not understand why God heals certain people and not others. Nevertheless, the gift of healing is given for the common good and we are to identify those who have this gift and offer this ministry for the church.

Miracles are wonderful. They demonstrate the power of God over the natural order of things and give tremendous testimony to the resurrection. It is the signs and wonders of the kingdom that cause the unbelieving world to take pause and consider the claims of Christianity. We serve a miracle working God and can expect Him to answer prayers and demonstrate His power in and through the church. In the early church we have the accounts from the Book of Acts that show the apostles ministering in this power. Remember Peter’s release from prison? What about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch? We have

the accounts of God's might power performing miracles through St. Paul, St. Peter, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and the like.

VERBAL GIFTS

Tongues is the giving of a spiritual language that is not learned nor is it understood with the mind. It is the ability to talk directly to God with your spirit in perfect prayer eliminating the need to consciously think about everything you need to say. It is especially useful when you really don't know how to pray about something so you just pray in the spirit. It is a private gift and used to build up the individual and not for the body when it is gathered for worship. Because it is an "unknown" tongue it will not benefit others if present so St. Paul instructs that it be used privately. If one is led by the Lord to pray in tongues in the worship service, then it must be interpreted so all can be edified. If it is not interpreted then you are to remain silent. It is a lesser gift according to St. Paul, however, he encourages us to ask God for it. Some traditions believe you must talk in tongues if you are "born again", however this is not the witness of scripture or the experience of the church.

Interpretation of Tongues is just that, the ability to interpret what another has said in the unknown tongue so all can understand what is being communicated by God to the community gathered. God has gifted some members of the church with this unique ability and if some one gives a word in tongues, those who can interpret are to do so. As mentioned above, tongues are not to be used unless there is an interpretation.

Prophecy is a very power gift for the church. Prophets are those who give correction to the body of Christ and call people back into covenant with God. In the Old Testament, the prophets were constantly raised up to correct Israel and call the people back from sinful behavior. Idolatry, immorality, occult practices, the shedding of innocent blood brought a curse on Israel. Prophets challenged the apostasy and spoke dire warnings encouraging repentance and avoiding the judgments of God against them. Today, prophet fulfill the same function. They bring warning and correction to the body of Christ that we might not wander astray. A second function for prophet is foretelling. That is declaring God's intentions for the future. Warnings about famine are recorded in the New Testaments as well as personal prophecies about St. Paul's imprisonment. We must be guarded about such prophecies that pander to the flesh or fallen nature. All such foretelling is to be judged by the elders or senior clergy before treated as "the word of the Lord."

DISCERNMENT GIFTS

The **Word of Knowledge** is the God given ability to know something that is useful for the moment in ministry. Words of Knowledge give specific information about something critical in a ministry. Usually they are brief and somewhat vague, but to some one present it has great meaning and is most helpful for understanding. This gift can be manifested in group ministry or in personal prayer time with the Lord. It is designed as a helping gift to give us information that is needed and timely.

Word of Wisdom gives one the ability to know the mind of the Spirit in such a way as to receive insight regarding a specific need or needs in a given situation. Often it is through revelation not so much intellectual understanding.

The **Discerning of Spirits** is the God given ability to identify demonic activity and expose it. In our western culture, the church has lost its acute awareness of the spirit world. The New Testament is filled with revelation regarding the activity of demons and Satan. This gift is critical in unveiling the activity of evil and allowing the strongholds to be pulled down and the church to succeed. Without this gift, we are often blind or unaware that obstacles in the spirit are present and need to be dealt with.

Leadership Gifts: Ephesians 4:11-13

Apostles
Prophets
Pastors
Evangelists
Teachers

These are given for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry.

Servant Gifts

Mercy	Romans 12:6-8
Serving	Romans 12:6-8
Encouraging	Romans 12:6-8
Giving	Romans 12:6-8
Hospitality	I Peter 4:9-10
Administration	I Corinthians 12:28
Helps	I Corinthians 12:28
Craftsmanship	Exodus 31:3
Intercession	I Timothy 2:1-2
Creative Communication	Psalm 150:3-5

CONGREGATION APPLICATION

- Do Spiritual Gifts Assessment
- Adapt a motto of “every member a Minister”
- Teach the catechism, confirmation, Baptismal Covenant
- Preach and teach on lay ministry
- Elevate the ministry of the Laity
 - Host appreciation Sunday
 - Pray over and anoint
 - Acknowledge successes
 - Affirm personally with thanks
 - Provide training and resources
 - Give opportunities to practice and learn