

## “Understanding Spiritual Gifts”

(Part 4)

1 Cor. 12

- INTRO. - Let’s do a quick review. This will be our 4<sup>th</sup> week on the subject of spiritual gifts. Because there is so much we need to understand about this, it is going to take a number of weeks on it. So far in our study we’ve looked at:

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (they are essential to the building up of the body of Christ)

II. THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (they are given to *not only* build up the church, but also to preserve the unity of the body)

III. THE DIVERSITY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (we are all “idiots,” -- we all have a unique mix of gifts)

IV. THE CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. The Gifted Men

1. Apostles

a. To Bear Witness of the Resurrected Christ

b. To Lay a Doctrinal Foundation for the Church

2. NT Prophets

B. The Permanent Edifying Gifts

- Some of the gifts that are listed (here in 1 Cor. 12) the Spirit of God has given for the duration of the church’s ministry. There are other gifts (listed here) that were given for only a short period of time, and for a very specific purpose, and then were no longer needed.

- We’ll look at each of these one by one. Now, there are two groups of permanent edifying gifts: speaking gifts and serving gifts. Let’s look first at:

### 1. The Speaking Gifts

- There are five speaking gifts given in Rom. 12:6-8 and 1 Cor. 12:8-10. The first one is the gift of:

a. Prophecy

- This gift is to be distinguished from the *office* of prophet (that we talked about last time – the NT prophets). And of course, there is a big debate today over whether the gift of prophecy still exists today. I don’t think we can say *dogmatically* either way, but it probably depends on how it is defined.

- The word that is used here literally means “to speak before an audience” or “to speak publicly.” It does *not* necessarily mean “to predict or reveal.”

- Most often it is used in the sense of proclaiming something that God has already revealed -- and if this gift is indeed still for today, then I believe *that* is what the gift is now. *We* would call this the gift of “preaching.”
- 1Cor. 14:3 says, “...one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.” I really wish that the Bible translators had used the word “proclaiming” instead of prophecy, because *then* there wouldn’t be as much confusion about this.
- This is the gift of proclaiming God’s truth to men. And there has never been a time in the history of the church where there have *not* been men with this gift to edify, exhort and console the church.
- In fact, 1 Cor. 14:1 indicates that this is one of the most vital gifts for the life of the church. That verse says, “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.”
- Now, we must recognize that there was a time in the church’s infancy when this gift was also revelatory in nature. It (at one point) involved the giving of new revelation by God.
- But after the completion of the canon of the NT, this gift became limited to that of reiterating God’s truth that had already been revealed. Once the canon was complete, God was no longer giving new revelation.
- And I believe that one of the best definitions of this gift is given in Rev. 19:10. Turn with me to that passage. Rev. 19:10 says, “Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. (Look at this last phrase) *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*’”
- What is prophecy? It is giving the testimony of Jesus. What is the testimony of Jesus? It is the NT. So what does a prophet do? He proclaims the truth of the NT (and really the OT too because that gives the necessary background for the NT).
- 1 Cor. 14:37 indicates that any who would exercise this gift should be judged by the Word. How can you know if a preacher is preaching truth or *not*? Hold what he is teaching up to the standard of God’s Word. If he’s *not* teaching according to what is revealed in Scripture, then he is a false prophet.
- So, (to summarize), prophecy is the gift of proclaiming God’s revealed truth. At one time it was revelatory, but when the Bible was finished that aspect of its function ceased.

- As Rev. 22:18 says, "...if anyone adds to them (the words of this prophecy), God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."
- God says "There are two things you are *not* to do with My Word. You are *not* to add to it and you are *not* to take away from it." And there are some very severe penalties mentioned to show how serious this is.
- And yet, there are those in the church today who are claiming to have a new word of revelation from God. Listen, the revelatory aspect is finished. It belonged to the infancy of the church, but it concluded at the closing of the canon. *Now* only the non-revelatory aspect of this gift continues. But there's another speaking gift, and that is:

#### b. The Word of Knowledge

- Look at 1 Cor. 12:8, "For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit..."
- You say, "What is this gift?" Here's a definition: "It is the Spirit-given ability to observe facts and

make conclusions." In other words, it is the ability to understand the Bible.

- There are *some* believers who have a special ability to draw spiritual insights from Scripture, to point out facts, to make observations, and to draw conclusions.
- Now again, (like the gift of prophecy), there was a time in the life of the church when this gift was also revelatory. But it (too) became a gift of reiteration of God's truth.
- The way the charismatics view this gift is (I believe) a failure to understand that special revelation ceased with the completion of the NT canon.
- Now, perhaps the best definition of this gift is found in 1 Cor. 13:2. Look at that verse with me, "...If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge..." This is the gift of understanding the mysteries that have been revealed by God.
- It is often connected to the gift of prophecy, but it may stand alone as a separate gift. But it has to do with the God-given ability to understand the knowledge that God has revealed to us through Scripture. The third speaking gift is:

### c. The Word of Wisdom

- This one is also listed in 1 Cor. 12:8. What is this gift? Well, it is *not* the same as the word of knowledge. With *this* gift, the emphasis is *not* on *knowledge* of the *facts*, but on the *practical application* of the *truth*.
- Now, often these gifts go together, so those who are preachers and teachers of God's Word may have the ability to do both.
- But this gift is the ability to understand God's Word and to make an application in regard to how we are to obey it. This is the way it is used most often in the NT.
- Knowledge is collecting and organizing the facts; wisdom is the application of the truth. And, by the way, sometimes you may hear a teacher that is able to do a good job in giving the information about the truth of God's Word but is *not* as strong in giving the application of it.
- Other times there may be someone who is right in application but is *not* as diligent in exegesis. Many times this is because of the difference in gifts. One may have a word of knowledge gift but *not* a word

of wisdom gift, and for others it may be the other way around.

- Of course, in good expositional teaching, there should be *both* information *and* application, but some may do one better than the other depending on his or her gifts. Well, let's go on to the fourth speaking gift, which is:

### d. Teaching

- This gift is listed in Rom. 12:7. First of all, we need to understand that this is distinct from the *office* of "teacher" that we mentioned earlier. One is an office (or position), the other is a gift.
- The gift of teaching can be defined as the ability, (in the HS), to pass on the truth of God to others. Those who have this gift may also have the word of knowledge and/or the word of wisdom gift.
- But when we talk about gifted teachers, we are referring to those who have a special ability to help others understand the truth of God.
- *Not* everyone who knows how to do something can teach it to others. Have you ever known someone who was a really talented person but when they try to teach someone else to do what they do, they can't?

- Well, someone with the gift of teaching *not only* understands the Word of God, but they have a special ability to help *others* understand it as well.
- Now, there are many Greek forms of the basic word “teach” in the NT. There is “didaskalos, diasko, didaktikos, etc.” All of the various forms of the root word mean the same thing, and that is a systematic teaching or training.
- ILL. - The idea (here) is like that of a choir director who trains his choir over a long period of time until they are able to perform well.
- This gift is the ability to pass on truth in a systematic progression so that someone receives it, implements it, and a change of behavior takes place. Then there is the gift of:

e. Exhortation

- This gift is listed in Rom. 12:8. What is exhortation? The Greek word is “parakaleo.” As you probably know, the word “parakletos” (comforter) is a term used for the HS.
- But this word means “to comfort, help, advise or strengthen.” You could probably call this “the gift

of strengthening.” This gift is often one a counselor has.

- It is the ability to provide comfort, courage, help, and strength to those who need it. It *can* come through the pulpit as well, because prophecy includes exhortation.
- It can *also* come through teaching, or one-on-one discipleship, or many other ways. It is the ability to come alongside someone (who has a problem or a struggle) and to build them up, encourage them, and help bear their load.
- Now, before we go on and examine the *service* gifts, I want you to take note of how beautifully the speaking gifts compliment one another: prophecy *proclaims* the truth, knowledge *clarifies* the truth, wisdom *applies* the truth, teaching *imparts* the truth, and exhortation helps with *obedience* to the truth.
- All these speaking gifts work together for the full purpose of God’s revelation to us. Well, let’s move now to the next category of permanent edifying gifts, the:

2. The Serving Gifts

- The serving gifts are those gifts that are oriented around helping others. They are *not verbal* gifts, but *doing* gifts. They are designed to meet people's needs. There are six of these gifts and the first one is:

a. Leadership

- Leadership is listed both in Rom. 12:8 and in 1 Cor. 12:28. In 1 Cor. 12:28 we see the word "administrations" or "governments." Rom. 12:8 says, "...he who leads, with diligence..."
- All of these words are synonymous and refer to the gift of leadership. The word "ruling" (in the KJV) means "to lead, to manage, to have charge of, to oversee, to rule." That is leadership.
- The word "governments" basically means the same thing, but it also has a unique literal meaning: "to steer a ship."
- In other words, this is one who is at the helm of the ship, who charts the course, who knows the destination, and who is able to keep the ship on course.
- Leadership is the ability to see an objective, formalize it, mobilize a group of people, and then get them to reach that objective. It is the ability to

make decisions and determine direction...one who is an organizer, a motivator, an administrator.

- Really, two words best describe the gift of leadership: direction and decision making. Leaders are those who give direction to the church and have the ability to make decisions in such a way as to move the organization forward.
- Now, some people have the idea that this gift belongs to pastors, elders and overseers. In other words, that it doesn't belong to the general population of the church, but only to the people who are the pastors or elders.
- It is true, pastors usually have this gift, but the Bible does *not* say that they *must* have this gift, nor does it indicate that they are the *only ones* with this gift.
- It is true that the pastors and elders are the ones who are ultimately responsible for leading the church. But there may be *others* in the body who also have this gift. They can help with the direction and leadership of the church as a whole. The next gift is the gift of:

b. Serving

- All of these gifts are service gifts, but according to 1 Cor. 12:5 there is a *special* gift that focuses on serving in general. It is often called the gift of “helps” or “ministry.”
- The Greek word that is used here literally means “to take a burden off of someone else and place it on yourself.” This is a burden carrier. The person with this has a unique ability to lighten other peoples’ loads.
- And, by the way, this a great gift for a deacon to have. The role of the deacon is primarily that of meeting needs in the church body, and this gift really helps in that ministry.
- But the people who have this gift (as their primary gift) are people whose greatest joy and labor of love is to *serve* other people.
- And I personally believe that this is one of the most important gifts in the body -- and, therefore, it is the most common gift. There are more people with this gift than any other gift.
- Perhaps you would never think about getting up and preaching a sermon or teaching a class or singing a solo, but you can take someone a meal or give someone a ride to the pharmacy to pick up their medicine or clean someone’s house or mow their lawn.
- Now, we should *all* be doing those kinds of things in service to one another, but those who have this gift will thrive in doing so.
- And this gift is absolutely necessary to the health and the progress of the body of Christ. It doesn’t often attract a lot of attention. It is usually done behind the scenes and no one knows about it.
- And because that is the case, none of the Corinthian believers were interested in it. They wanted the showy, up front gifts. But they would have been better off if they had been content to exercise this gift in their church. Well, let’s go on to another service gift and that is:
  - c. Giving
- There aren’t many people seeking this gift either, but according to Rom. 12:8 it is a special gift. Rom. 12:8 says, “...he who gives, with liberality...”
- The one who has this gift should exercise it with great liberality. The word for “gives” (there) is a compound Greek word. The *normal* word for “give” is “didomi” and just means “give.”

- But this is the compound word “metadidomi,” which means “super give.” Someone who has this gift is a “super giver.”
- Now, don’t get excited (here) and start thinking that you don’t have to give if you don’t have this gift of giving. *All* believers are called upon to be faithful steward and give according to a standard of grace.
- The Bible tells us in 2 Cor. 9:6 that we are to sow bountifully in order to reap bountifully. The Scripture says in 1 Cor. 16:2 that *all* of us are to lay aside something for the Lord on the first day of each week in accordance with how the Lord prospers us.
- There are many passages in the NT that make it clear that God expects *all* of us to be faithful in giving to the Lord. But there are *some* of us who are going to be super givers. There are *some* of us who are going to go beyond the normal because God has given them the gift of giving.
- The gift of giving (again) is *not a public* gift. It is *not* to be done for public display like the Pharisees. It is to be done “as unto the Lord” in a private manner. Then there is the gift of:
  - This is found in Rom. 12:8. The word “mercy” means “pity” or “compassion.” *This* gift relates to those who are in need, such as those in poverty, orphans, widows, etc.
  - The spirit of *this* gift is like what was portrayed in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It is ministering to someone without any thought of return.
  - It is ministering to those who are in misery. A person with *this* gift will have a difficult time *not* getting involved when they see any kind of human suffering.
  - The gift of mercy is the enablement to sympathize with a suffering person and to do something to relieve that suffering (if possible). Then there is the gift of:
    - e. Faith
  - This is found in 1 Cor. 12:9. What is this gift? It is a supernatural capacity for believing God. It goes beyond the *normal* faith of believers in the Christian life. This is *not* “saving faith” because *all* believers have that.

d. Mercy

- And as Christians, all of us are to *live* by faith. But those who have this gift have a special ability to trust God. You might say they have “super-faith.”
- In the days of the Apostles, I believe that this gift was connected with astonishing miracles. It was given to the Apostles and NT prophets as a way of validating their authority. But in *our* day, it is connected with intercessory prayer.
- Those who have this gift are prayer warriors, who have a special ability given by God to trust God, and to intercede even in the midst of great trials and enormous obstacles. Then there is:

#### f. Discernment

- This gift is mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:10. The Greek root for “discern” is “diakrino” and it means “to judge through, to see through to the truth, to truly evaluate something.”
- Now, in the early church, this gift was the “watchdog” – the patrol or guardian – for the church. In the early years of the church, the NT had *not* yet been written down, and there were all kinds of false prophets who were claiming “God has said this or that...”
- It was difficult to know who was really speaking for God, so God gave some believers this gift of discernment to be able to warn the church when there was a false prophet or a false teacher.
- Sadly, those in the Corinthian church were (apparently) *not* listening to those with this gift, because, (as we have already seen), there was even someone in their assembly that had stood up and pronounced that Jesus is accursed (1 Cor. 12:3).
- But those with the gift of discernment will stand up (when they hear that which is *not* true to Scripture) and say, “This is false. This is *not* the Spirit of God speaking. This is *not* what is taught in God’s Word.”
- And this gift is very important in the church today as well. *Some* believe that this gift has ceased, but I believe that it is still a very important gift for the church, even though we now have the Bible.
- Even with the written Word, there have always been those who have taught things that do *not* line up with Scripture, and there have always been those who have led people astray from sound doctrine, and there is a need for those in the church who see it and are willing to stand up and say, “This is *not* right.”

- This kind of person seems to have an intuitive ability to tell truth from error. *Some* of these people (in modern times) have been those who have exposed the error of cults, such as the late Walter Martin.
  
- *Others* seem to have a special ability to identify false doctrine, such as John MacArthur, Al Mohler, and others. These people are often the “watchmen” of the church, and I (for one) am very thankful for their diligent exercise of this gift.
  
- Well, these are the permanent edifying gifts, and all these are essential for the health and vitality of the church. All of us (who are genuine believers in Christ) have at least one of these gifts – and God intends for us to be using these gifts for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ.
  
- How are we doing with that? Are we using our spiritual gifts for His purpose and work? Or are we neglecting those gifts (as the Corinthians were)? The command of God is to use the gifts He has given us in His church. We need to make sure we are doing that.
  
- PRAYER