NOW CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I Corinthians 12:1-11

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I Corinthians 12 begins a new section in the Book of I Corinthians.

• I Corinthians 1-11 has to do with carnality and was corrective; I Corinthians 12 begins a new section which deals with spirituality and is constructive.
• I think Paul was glad to change the subject. I think he heaved a sigh of relief when he got here to chapter 12.
• He was WILLING to discuss their problems with them, but he really WANTED to talk to them about the Spiritualities.

J. Vernon McGee says, “There are so many programs in the modern churches that the young people never get anywhere near the Bible. They have conferences on whatever carnality is the popular issue or the fad for the moment. All of that is a sign of carnality.”

In I Corinthians 12:1 Paul talks about “the Spirituals.” Actually, the word “gifts” is not in the original. The word “gifts” is in italics, which means that that word is not in the original. It was added for the sake of clarity; but adding the word has actually added confusion.

The word “ignorant” implies a condition of not knowing. He wanted them to know about and understand about the Spirituals. He didn't want them to be in the dark. He wanted them to have a proper understanding about the spirituals.

There was a good reason why he wanted them to have a proper understanding of spiritual gifts and he gives an example in verses 2-3.

Many feel that verses 2-3 are out of place, that they really don't belong here. But I remind you that nothing in the Bible is out of place because God put it there. There is a reason the Holy Spirit inserted these two verses here.

• The words “carried away” were often used of prisoners being taken under armed guard to prison or to their execution.
• Before we were saved we were slaves to sin and Satan and were held captive by him. The same devil who led us astray when we were lost is the same devil who tries to lead us astray now that we are saved.
• And the devil doesn't change his strategy after we're saved. He tries to lead us away from truth by deception. He tries to bring us into confusion.

When they were lost, Satan lead them astray by “dumb idols.”

• The word “dumb” means “with no voice.” An idol was not real; therefore, it could not speak or tell them what to do. They were being lead astray by dead, false dumb idols.
• There were some in Corinth who claimed they were “speaking by the Spirit of God” when in actuality, they were calling Jesus accursed. Instead of Blessing the Name of Jesus, they were Blaspheming His Name.

• The context of what Paul is saying seems to indicate that some who were speaking in tongues, supposedly glorifying the Lord, were actually saying things such as “Jesus is accursed.” Paul says that
one speaking by the Spirit of God would not dare say or do anything that would blaspheme the Lord.

- What they claimed was of God was not of God. Because of their perverted understanding of spiritual gifts, they needed a proper understanding. He wanted to remove their ignorance so such blasphemous practices could be eliminated.

The reason Paul writes of “the Spirituals” instead of just Spiritual Gifts is because there are more things connected with the spirituals than just Spiritual Gifts.

The Bible speaks of Spiritual Songs and Spiritual Food and Spiritual Fruit as well as Spiritual Gifts.

We need to make a distinction between the “gift of the Spirit” and the “gifts of the Spirit.”

- The gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit, Himself and is given to the believer at the moment of salvation.

  Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:23; Acts 2:38; John 14:16-17; Luke 11:13

The Gifts of the Spirit are also given at salvation and enable the believer to function in the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit knows which believer is best suited for which gift and He gives the gifts accordingly.

Six important questions about Spiritual gifts:

A. What is a Spiritual gift?

The Greek word translated “gift” (charisma) means “grace gift or a gift of grace”.

- We know grace is “unmerited favor,” so a spiritual gift is something we receive from God that we do not deserve.

- Simply defined, a spiritual gift is “a divine ability given by grace through the Holy Spirit to make each believer and the church more like Jesus Christ. These gifts enable us to serve the Church of the Lord Jesus in the power of divine grace by the Holy Spirit.

We can describe spiritual gifts like this:

1. They are Spiritual Gifts I Corinthians 12:1

   The discussion of “spiritual” gifts doesn’t interest many people.

   - If I were to talk about how you could receive material gifts like a new car or a new home, then most folks would be keenly interested.

   - But when I start to talk about spiritual gifts, some are not interested at all; yet, these are far more important that the temporal gifts.

2. They are Supernatural Gifts I Corinthians 12:4

   What is the difference between a gift and a talent?

   - Talents are also God-given but are usually derived genetically from parents.

   - Spiritual gifts are from the Holy Spirit I Corinthians 12:11

The difference between a talent and a gift is probably best illustrated by the fact that Billy Graham asks for George Beverly Shea to sing just before he preaches. When asked why, Dr. Graham explains that George Beverly Shea never performs; he always ministers. A talent performs; a gift ministers. Spiritual gifts makes us ministers; not performers.
The Holy Spirit may anoint a natural ability, therefore turning and enabling and enacting a natural ability to become a supernatural ability.

3. They are Service Gifts I Corinthians 12:7
   The words “to profit withal” means “for the common good.”
   • These gifts are not given for our personal edification, but to make us a blessing to others. They are to be invested in the common good of the church.
   - They are not given “so you can glory in them.”
   - They are not given “so you can compare your gift to the gift of others.”
   - They are given “for growth, maturity, and unity within the fellowship.”
   • Spiritual gifts are “for employment; not for enjoyment.”

4. They are Sovereign Gifts I Corinthians 12:11, 18
   • You do not decide which gift you get; the Holy Spirit discerns which gift is best suited for which believer.
   • It is important to realize that all believers have at least one spiritual gift.

5. They are Salvation Gifts I Corinthians 12:13
   • The question is often asked, “When do believers receive their spiritual gifts?”
   • It is at the point of Salvation that we are baptized by the Spirit, indwelt with the Spirit, placed into the body of Christ, and endowed with our spiritual gift (or gifts) so that we may function as a part of the Body.
   • I remind you again, every believer has a spiritual gift. “You fit into the Body somewhere.”
   • Note I Corinthians 7:7. The word gift is singular. The emphasis is that every believer has but one primary gift though he may have more than one secondary gift.
   • No one believer has all the gifts. We receive our gift at salvation, though it may be later that we discover what our gift is. When we do discover our gift, we should then develop our gift.

6. They are Supportive Gifts I Corinthians 12:14-22
   • Because no one believer has all of the gifts, we need each other.
   • As the Body of Christ, we are to share our gifts. I am to use your gift and you are to use my gift.
   • God has made us different to unite us; not to divide us.
   • It should be noted that a hundred believers with the same gift will not all have the same degrees or areas of usefulness of the gift that God has given to them. For example, one may excel in public teaching in the classroom or church. Another teaching gift will be for instructing children, another for teaching one-on-one, and so on.
   • Each believer is given the measure of grace and faith to operate his gift according to God's plan.

Add individual personality, background, education, influences in life, and needs in the area of service and it becomes obvious that each believer is unique.

• Believers' gifts are like snowflakes and fingerprints – each one is completely distinct from all others.

B. Who has spiritual Gifts? I Corinthians 7:7; 12:7; I Peter 4:10

According to the New Testament, EVERY Christian has at least one spiritual gift. That gift is usually in seed form, and therefore must be nurtured and developed.

All Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit.
I Corinthians 12:11 – The Holy Spirit assigns the gifts as He chooses. The day you become a Christian the Holy Spirit assigned you a Spiritual gift, and through that gift or gifts He wants to make you like Jesus Christ.
The Holy Spirit gives the gifts by divine choice because He knows what gifts are needed and where they are needed.

- These gifts are not assigned because of a person's Spirituality. Even backslidden Christians have Spiritual gifts. Just because a believer has a Spiritual gift does not mean that person is spiritual, for ALL Christians have a Spiritual gift.

C. How Many Spiritual Gifts are there?

Our God is a God of variety and diversity. Every person looks a little different, each fingerprint is distinctive, and every personality is unique.

- God's love for variety and diversity is also seen in the Spiritual gifts.
- The gifts are listed in five passage in the New Testament. (The number in parenthesis indicates how many gifts are mentioned for the first time in that passage.)
- There are 19 Spiritual gifts listed, but I am convinced that there are more Spiritual gifts given than are mentioned in the New Testament.
- With the time changing and the needs in the body of Christ changing, I believe that God gives gifts as they are needed to help the body function as it should.
- Note the five passages where Spiritual gifts are listed:
  - Romans 12:6-8 (7)
  - I Corinthians 12:8-10 (8) Some prefer to include the gift of hospitality
  - I Corinthians 12:28 (1) with the gift of helps and also include the gift
  - Ephesians 4:11 (2) of celibacy of singleness.
  - I Peter 4:9-10 (1)

These 19 Spiritual gifts may be divided into four categories with some overlapping:

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Shepherding gifts are Support gifts. These are public in nature and revolve around the ministry of the world in equipping the saints for service.

Service or Serving gifts function within the body in a much more Private manner. People with these gifts take on the personal ministry of encouraging, building up, and strengthening the body.
Sign gifts are supernatural manifestations of the Spirit's power. They authenticated God's message and His messenger when the Church, in its infancy, had no complete Bible to guide and instruct its members – Hebrews 2:1-4.

In summary, the Support (Shepherding) gifts Equip; the Service gifts Encourage; the Sign gifts Establish.

We need to understand that God gave gifts to Churches and He gave gifts to Christians.

A. God gave gifts to Churches Ephesians 4:7-12; I Corinthians 12:28

1. To equip the church overall He gives specially gifted men as leaders: “As apostles … prophets … evangelist … pastors and teachers.”
2. In I Corinthians 12:28, Paul says, “God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.” That statement adds weight not only to the idea of divine calling, but also to the chronological significance (“first...second...third”) in the giving of these gifted men to the church.
3. The first two classes of gifted men, apostles and prophets, were given three basic responsibilities:
   - To lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20)
   - To receive and declare the revelation of God's word (Ephesians 3:5)
   - To give confirmation of that word through “signs and wonders and miracles” (Acts 8:6-7; Hebrews 2:3-4)

I. Shepherding Gifts Ephesians 4:11-13

The gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 are different from most of those mentioned in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

• For the most part the gifts in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 are gifts that are bestowed on Believers (Christians).
• Here in Ephesians 4 gifted Believers are bestowed on the Church.

The five gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 can be summarized in this way:

1. Those gifted to deal with SITUATIONS
   - Those equipped to GUIDE the infant Church in ways it ought to go (Apostles).
   - Those equipped to GUARD the infant Church in what it ought to know (Prophets).
2. Those gifted to deal with SINNERS (evangelist)
3. Those gifted to deal with SAINTS
   - Those called to TEND the flock of God (Pastors)
   - Those called to TEACH the flock of God (Teachers)

A. Apostles

We need to understand that there is both an “office” and a “gift” of apostleship.
• The word “apostle” is found more than 70 times in the New Testament in more than half of the 27 books.
• The Office of Apostle passed away when the 12 died, but the gift continues today.

The Office of Apostle was limited to 12, as we find in Revelation 21:14.
• Judas Iscariot disqualified himself, and Matthias was chosen prematurely.
• God Himself chose the person who would fill the twelfth slot in the Office of Apostle. That
person was Paul.  
• Therefore, it is obvious no one today can fill the Office of Apostle.

The office requirements of Apostle cannot be met today.

1. An apostle was a man who had seen the risen Lord. Paul said that he had seen the risen Lord as one who was born out of due season.
2. He was one who had to be personally commissioned by the Lord Himself.
3. He enjoyed special inspiration from the Lord and built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was given the same instructing as the eleven for observing the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:23).
4. The Apostles received special abilities to authenticate their apostleship through sings and wonders (I Corinthians 9:1-2).

These were the requirements for Primary Apostles. There were also secondary Apostles who were intimately linked with the Primary Apostles; men like Barnabas, Timothy, and Silvanus (Silas).  
• When the New Testament was completed, the office of apostle ceased.

The “Office” of apostleship no longer exists, but the “gift” lives on.  
• The basic meaning of Apostle is “one sent on a mission.”
• The word “missionary” is not found in the Bible (that may surprise you), but its linguistic equivalent for the word apostle is “missionary.”
• A missionary is one sent forth, usually to one particular area, to win people and establish a church so the work will reproduce itself.
• Therefore, missionaries are usually strong on teaching, training, and establishing churches.
• The “gift” of apostleship can be defined as “the God-given ability to share the Gospel, make disciples, and establish churches cross-culturally.”

Manifestations of the Gift

• To receive special joy from meeting people from different cultures and races.
• A special ability to learn a different language and adapt to a new culture.
• Very mission-minded and gets a special blessing from giving monetarily to mission causes.
• This person will have a strong desire to share the Gospel with people in other countries.

Strange as it may seem, this very mission-minded person may have little interest in winning people in their own community.  
• They want to emphasize missions above everything else in the church.
• They tend to be critical of people who are not as mission-minded as they are.
• They may misunderstand persons with other gifts, thinking others don't care about winning the world to Christ if they don't emphasize missions as they think they should.

B. Prophets

Prophets were also appointed by God as specially gifted men who sometimes spoke new revelation from God, but for the most part just simply expounded revelation already given by God.  
• Occasionally New Testament prophets foretold things to come, but usually they were forth-tellers rather fore-tellers.
• The office of Prophecy is different from the gift of prophecy that believers have today.
• The office of Apostles and Prophets died out with the end of the first century and the completion of the New Testament canon of Scripture.
C. Evangelist

An evangelist is a man especially gifted by the Holy Spirit of God to win souls. He is the Church's salesman, so to speak.

- All believers can and should be soul-winners, but not all believers can be evangelist.
- When the evangelist comes to town, sinners turn to Christ in significant numbers. A person either has or does not have the gift of the evangelist.

Nobody can produce fruit like the person with the gift of the evangelist.

- His message and methods may be shallower than those of the pastors and teachers, but he gets the souls because God has given him the gift.
- He has the ability to draw in the Gospel net. He may speak the same words as the pastor does, but the pastor will not see near the spiritual fruit as the evangelist.
- Evangelist are itinerant but they do not usually minister cross-culturally.

- There will be an intense desire to personally win people to Christ.
- There will be a clear understanding of the plan of salvation and will be able to present it clearly and persuasively.
- They have a desire to preach evangelistic messages almost exclusively.

However, most with the gift of evangelism are weak on follow-up or discipleship and they are not concerned about learning deeper biblical truths because all they need to know to win people to Christ is the plan of salvation.

D. Pastor/Teacher

Notice in Ephesians 4:11 the word “some” is not repeated before the word “teachers”, indicating this is the same gift with two functions. THIS IS THE ONLY DUAL GIFT MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Three words describe a different function of the office of Pastor.

- Pastor means he shepherds the Church.
- Bishop means he oversees or sees that the work of the local Church is done correctly and guards against error or false doctrine.
- Elder means he has the maturity of spiritual experience.

As a shepherd he cares for the weak, the sick, and those who are going astray. He counsels the young, cares for the needy, and comforts the bereaved.

- A person with the gift of pastor usually has several other gifts to a lesser degree, such as leadership, preaching, wisdom, knowledge and teaching.
  - He loves to meet people's needs through sharing biblical truths.
  - He has a strong desire to see the Church grow numerically and spiritually and will work hard to see that come to pass.
  - He is very sensitive to the spiritual needs of other believers and enjoys training others to serve in the local church.
  - He has a strong desire to do everything through the local Church, because he knows new believers must be attached to a local Church if they are to grow.
  - A person with the gift of pastor may be offended if his flock feeds in other pastures.

Teachers are those who gives instructions and shares information with others from the Word of God.
• The gift of teaching differs from the gift of preaching in that preaching is proclaiming the Word of God in a way that leads to motivation and decision, while teaching has as its goal instruction that leads to Spiritual growth and maturity.
• The teacher has the God-given ability to explain and apply the Word of God so the hearers may understand and grow spiritually.
• A person with the gift of teaching prepares and serves a balanced diet of nutritious Spiritual food from the Word of God, resulting in Spiritual growth and maturity. One may not be a pastor without being a gifted teacher.
• A person with this gift has strong convictions that the Bible is the Word of God and believes Bible study is foundational to all areas of the Christian life.
• The teacher enjoys presenting biblical truth in a logical, systematic way, using hermeneutics, making the hard to understand, simple to understand.
• He enjoys teaching others how to divide the Word of truth for themselves and opens their eyes to the wonders of Scripture.

The pastor/teacher has a great responsibility:
• He is to Love God; Listen to God; Lean on God; Lead for God.
• He is to Love his people; Lead his people; Feed his people.

But the Church also has a responsibility to its pastor:

1. Pray for your Pastor: It's the greatest thing the Church can do for its pastor.
2. Pursue your Pastor (Follow him): Joshua 1:2, 5, 16-18; Hebrews 13:7, 17