

## God Gives Us Spiritual Gifts so We Can Be the Body of Christ

Message 2 of 4 in the series: "Christmas in July: Unwrapping Spiritual Gifts"

### A. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples an assignment which would be impossible to carry out apart from the Holy Spirit.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

### B. In his letter written to early Christians struggling to be a church in the materialistic, sexually immoral, idol-filled culture of Corinth, Paul explained that the Holy Spirit gives believers spiritual gifts so we can do the things Jesus commanded us to do.

"Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about **the special abilities the Spirit gives us**. I don't want you to misunderstand (be ignorant about) this." 1 Corinthians 12:1 (NLT)

- "There are **different kinds of spiritual gifts**, but the same Spirit is the source of them all."
- "There are **different kinds of service**, but we serve the same Lord."
- "God works in **different ways**, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us."
- "A spiritual gift is given to each of us **so we can help each other**."
- "**It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts**. He alone decides which gift each person should have." 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 & 11 (NLT)

**Life Application:** God wants us to make the most of the gifts He has given us.

"In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to **prophecy**, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is **servicing** others, serve them well. If you are a **teacher**, teach well. If your gift is to **encourage** others, be encouraging. If it is **giving**, give generously. If God has given you **leadership** ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing **kindness** to others, do it gladly." Romans 12:6-8 (NLT)

*Note:* Spiritual gifts are more than natural skills/abilities, they are supernatural (to a much greater extent than would be possible in our own strength).

### C. Paul explained to the Christians in Corinth, who had mostly come from pagan backgrounds, that they needed to change their understanding of what a church is and does.

1. A church is a local expression of the body of Christ, not just an organization or club. "The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the **body of Christ**. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NLT)
2. The Holy Spirit does not distribute spiritual gifts randomly. Churches, like our physical bodies, require lots of different parts to function well. "Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, 'I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,' that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, '**I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,**' would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and **God has put each part just where he wants it**. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body." 1 Corinthians 12:14-20 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We must never view ourselves as unnecessary if the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts which are not readily noticed by others. God notices, and He is the one we live to please anyway.

"Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. **If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.**" Galatians 1:10 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We must never use our understanding of our spiritual gifts (or lack of gifts) as an excuse for not doing the right thing. "**What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions?** Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, 'Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well'—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?"

James 2:14-16 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We must never be prideful about the spiritual gifts God has given us. **“The eye can never say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’ The head can’t say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’** In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.”

1 Corinthians 12:21-22 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We should use our spiritual gifts to care for each other. “And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that **all the members care for each other**. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.” 1 Corinthians 12:23-26 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We should earnestly desire the spiritual gifts that are the most helpful. **“All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.** Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can help others, those who have the gift of leadership, those who speak in unknown languages. Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! **So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.**”

1 Corinthians 12:27-31a (NLT)

**D. The Holy Spirit has arranged things so that no individual believer has all of the spiritual gifts, and no individual spiritual gift is given to all believers. This requires us to work together to carry out the mission Christ gave us.**

“Therefore, go and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)

“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and **we all belong to each other.**” Romans 12:4-5 (NLT)

*Note:* Spiritual gifts tests can be helpful, but prayer, actively serving in a local church, and committed personal relationships with other believers are vital to correctly identifying and using our spiritual gifts. “And **let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds**, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

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**Connect Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the mission Christ gave to us, His followers? How are ordinary people like us supposed to get this done? (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8)
2. How do spiritual gifts help us carry out our mission? (1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Romans 12:4-8)
3. Why does Paul say the Church is the body of Christ? Why does he describe it as a living organism rather than an organization or a club? (1 Corinthians 12:27, Romans 12:4-5)
4. Discuss the following statements:
  - The Holy Spirit does not distribute spiritual gifts randomly. (1 Corinthians 12:11 & 18)
  - We must never view ourselves as unnecessary if the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts which are not readily noticed by others. (Galatians 1:10)
  - We must never be prideful about the spiritual gifts God has given us. (1 Corinthians 12:21-22)
  - We must never use our understanding of our spiritual gifts (or lack of gifts) as an excuse for not doing the right thing. (James 2:14-16)
  - We should use our spiritual gifts to care for each other. (1 Corinthians 12:23-26)
  - We should earnestly desire the spiritual gifts that are the most helpful. (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

- “Spiritual gifts tests can be helpful, but prayer, actively serving in a local church, and committed personal relationships with other believers are vital to correctly identifying and using our spiritual gifts.” (Hebrews 10:24-25, James 1:5)

5. How / where do you think the Holy Spirit has gifted you to serve?