

# 1 Corinthians 12 - Teaching on Spiritual Gifts; Unity & Diversity of Spiritual Gifts

III. Questions asked of Paul (1 Cor 7:1—16:24)

- (5) Spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1--14:40)
  - (A) The test of the Spirit's control (12:1-3)
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## 1 Corinthians 12

- (5) Spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1--14:40)
  - (A) The test of the Spirit's control (12:1-3)

**1 Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brothers *and sisters*, I do not want you to be unaware.**

**1** Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

**1** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant.

**1** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

- "Now concerning" - *peri de*, indicates a change of topic; evidently spiritual gifts were another topic the Corinthian church had asked Paul about in their previous letter to him (Cf. 7:1,25; 8:1)

- "...spiritual *gifts*" - *tonpneumatikon*, literally "the spirituals" (note "*gifts*" is italicized in the NASB95/20 because the word is not in the original Greek, but was later added by the translators for clarity). *Pneumatikon* is a broader term than the gifts themselves, although it includes them. Paul used *pneumatika* when he wanted to emphasize the Holy Spirit, and he used *charismata* when he wanted to stress the gift.

— A "spiritual gift" is a God-given ability for service, and those who are given these gifts are "gifted people." Spiritual gifts are supernatural abilities possessed by individuals, and "gifted people" are sovereignly placed by God in the Church for the purpose of ministering to the Body (Cf. Eph 4:7-10).

— Spiritual gifts are the tools by which God wants to express Himself through us in our various ministry opportunities. See [Gifts of the Holy Spirit](#) for a list of Spiritual Gifts and the Attributes of Spiritual Gifts; see also the list of 19 Observations on Spiritual Gifts in [Ecclesiology 21 Spiritual Gifts - Part 1 \(1 Cor 12:7\)](#) and [Ecclesiology 22 Spiritual Gifts - Part 2 \(1 Sam 16:13-14\)](#).

— Two common errors having to do with spiritual gifts:

1. Ignoring them
2. Over-emphasizing or promoting one gift over another

- "...I do not want you to be unaware" - ignorant of the proper use of spiritual gifts (Cf. Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor 1:8; 1 Thess 4:13)

— Paul frequently says that he did not want his audience "to be unaware" (Rom 1:13) and expressed that same desire in other ways as well (11:3; 1 Thess 4:13)

[Eph 4:7,11-12]

Knowledge about our own spiritual gifts, and the spiritual gifts that others may have, is a powerful decision-making tool...it can inform what church you attend, it can inform fellowship with other believers, and it can help prioritize your life. Depending upon your gifts, it can inform you about whether you need more training in a certain area. Overall, this general knowledge on spiritual gifts can inform the priorities and direction of your life.

2 **You know** that when you were **pagans**, *you were* led astray to the **mute idols**, **however you were led**.

2 You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.

2 You know that when you were unbelievers, you were enticed and led astray to worship idols that couldn't even speak.

2 Ye know that ye were **Gentiles**, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

- "You know" - *eidō*, came to know by experience

- "...pagans" - *ethnos*, refers to their former lives as unbelievers

- "...Gentiles" [KJV] - this is the only instance in the NT where *ethnos*, translated as "Gentiles" refers to non-believers rather than non-Jews. All other usages in the NT, "Gentiles" refers to non-Jews.

- "...mute idols" - idols without voice, in contrast to the living God who speaks. Icons of wood and stone are voiceless and the gods they represent have nothing to say (Ps 115:5; Hab 2:18-19). Though the idol itself is "mute" (unable to speak), there are demons behind the idols (10:19-20) and these demons can inspire speech through people (Acts 16:16-21; 19:15-16).

— It's difficult to completely understand the exact situation going on in Corinth based solely on Paul's answer to their inquiry here, but he seems to be distinguishing between utterances made by demons versus those made by the Spirit

- "...however" - *hōs an*, may be translated "whenever" to indicate repeated situations

during their lives as unbelievers that habituated them to the practice of tongues speaking

- "...you were led" - *agō*, imperfect tense meaning repeated occurrences

3 Therefore I make known to you that 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.

3 Therefore I make known to you that 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.

3 For this reason I want you to be aware that no one who is speaking by God's Spirit can say, "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

- Paul now gives the Corinthians a Christology test to identify the source of the words spoken in the church, and decipher whether they come from the Holy Spirit or a demon

— There were many Christological heresies in the 1st century (Cf. Col 2:9; 1 John 4:1-3)

— However, this prescription was given by Paul to the Corinthians in order to address their particular situation, which was likely exacerbated by the lack of a complete NT canon

— Later, John instructs believers to "test the spirits" to see if they are from God (1 John 4:4-6). We do this by comparing what is said with what Scripture teaches.

- "...Jesus is Lord" - *Kyrios*, no one can sincerely acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, Savior, or Sovereign unless the Holy Spirit has some influence over them

— The Holy Spirit leads those under His control to glorify "Jesus" Christ, not dumb idols, with their speech (Cf. 2:10-13)

— The ultimate decider of the Spirit's activity is what is said about Jesus: if the speech exalts Jesus as Lord, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Anything that takes away, even a little bit, from Jesus Christ as Lord, and His glory, is not from the Holy Spirit.

### **Diversity in the Godhead and Gifts**

Diversity, not uniformity, is necessary for a healthy church, and God has seen to it that diversity exists (v6,7,11,18,24,28). Notice that what the Corinthians were doing in the area of spiritual gifts was essentially what they were doing in relation to their teachers (3:4-23). They were preferring one over another and thereby failing to benefit from them all.

This section of Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts puts the subject of gifts into proper theological perspective, whereas the previous pericope put it into its proper Christological perspective.

(B) The need for varieties of gifts (12:4-31)

(a) Diversity of gifts (12:4-11)

**4** Now there are **varieties** of **gifts**, but **the same Spirit**.

**4** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

**4** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit,

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

- "...varieties" - *diairesis*, distribution, distinction; a different distribution to different persons

- Used in v4,5,6 and probably unites these three groups as "the spirituals" referred to in v1

- Although there is only one Holy Spirit, He gives a variety of gifts to different people

- "...gifts" - *charismata*, from *charis*, meaning grace; these are divinely-distributed supernatural "grace gifts" that enable a believer to glorify and serve God and bless/edify other believers (the church)

- They are not received on the basis of works, but as favors freely given to us for use within the body of Christ

- The fact that they are "abilities" is clear from how Paul describes them here and in Rom 12. They are capacities which should be discovered and developed over time, with proper exercise (Cf. Eph 4:4ff).

- Every believer has at least one gift, likely at least a few gifts, but no believer has all of them (1 Peter 4:10). Unity, not uniformity, in its parts.

- "...the same Spirit" - the gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit; there are not a variety of spirits behind the variety of gifts, as the Corinthians likely believed

- "same Spirit" - used three more times in this chapter to bring unity to the divided Corinthians

- Evidently, spiritual gifts, their source, and the exercise of them all caused division in the church; Paul argues that they should bring unity

5 And there are **varieties** of **ministries**, and **the same Lord**.

5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

5 and there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

- "...varieties" - *diairesis*, distribution, distinction; a different distribution to different persons (see note on v4)

- "...ministries" - *diakonia*, areas or opportunities for service that a believer may serve in some capacity

- "...the same Lord" - contrary to the gifts (v4), distributed by the Holy Spirit, and the effects (results) of the use of our gifts, worked out by God the Father, the second Member of the Trinity provides us with ministry opportunities within His church

6 There are varieties of **effects**, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*.

6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*.

6 There are varieties of results, but it is the same God who produces all the results in everyone.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

- "...effects" - *energēma*, workings, manifestations of the Spirit's power at work; where we get the English word "energy"

— Paul is teaching that when you plug a spiritual gift into a ministry, you get a powerful result, and that result is powered by God the Father

### Note the 3 Pairings

- Gifts —> Holy Spirit (v4)
- Administrations —> Lord (Jesus) (v5)
- Operations —> God (v6)

Just as "Spirit," "Lord," and "God" are distinct yet closely related in v4-6, so are "gifts," "ministries," and "effects." We should probably not view these words as representing entirely separate ideas, but as facets of God's work in and through the believer. It is God who is responsible for our abilities, our opportunities for service, and the individual ways in which we minister, including the results.

Each believer receives one or more spiritual gifts from the Spirit to discover and use in some ministry that is assigned by the Lord with the effects being a result of God energetically working all things in all of us. Ultimately, credit will be given where credit is due (Rev. 4:11).

The important things for each believer are to discover his gift, recognize and take advantage of opportunities to minister his gift, and be content with the effects (results) that God brings about. It is often this last part that causes us discontentment, but we should rest in the Lord that He is bringing about the effects (results) He wants.

### Varieties of Gifts

Paul lists 9 *charismata* in this chapter: wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, faith, healings, miracles, spiritual discernment, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

There are at least 22 in the NT: some would count administration and apostleship from this chapter, along with serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leadership, showing mercy (Rom 12:6-8); celibacy (1 Cor 7:7); evangelism, pastoring (Eph 4:11); public service (Acts 6:2-4).

It is clear that these "lists" are not intended to be complete, only representative.

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

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

7 To each person has been given the ability to manifest the Spirit for the common good.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.'

- "...to each one" - each believer has at least one gift (1 Peter 4:10), and the Spirit manifests Himself in a great variety of ways (v4)

- "...given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" - gifts (v4), ministries (v5), and operations (v6), all working together "manifest" the Spirit's presence

- This is the purpose of spiritual gifts and why the Holy Spirit gives them to all believers: so the gifts can be released in "ministries" (v6), for the benefit/profit of all. He gives us gifts so we can be a blessing to others.

- Every believer makes a unique contribution for the common good, not just certain believers. Several examples of this follow in v8-10.

- The gifts are for the common good of the entire community and the edification of the Body (Eph 4:12)

8 **For** to one is given **theword of wisdom** through the Spirit, and **toanothertheword of knowledge** according to the same Spirit;

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;

8 To one has been given a message of wisdom by the Spirit; to another the ability to speak with knowledge according to the same Spirit;

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

- "For" - Paul now gives an explanation that shows that not all believers have every gift, but a variety of gifts have been given by the same Spirit so that we all depend on one another

- Paul now mentions nine ways in which the Spirit manifests Himself through believers (v8-10)

- The list is representative, not exhaustive, as there are other similar lists in Scripture (v28-30; 7:7; 13:1-3,8; 14:6,26; Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11)

- "...the" [2x] - there is no definite article in the Greek in either usage in this verse

- "...word of wisdom" - *sophia*, the ability to find knowledge from the Scriptures and apply it to daily life to solve a problem (2:6-7)

- Paul was concerned that no one in Corinth was manifesting this gift in the midst of their problems (Cf. 6:5; 2 Cor 8:7), even though they were not lacking in any gift (1:4-8)

- Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Knowledge shouldn't be our end game, wisdom should be our goal.

- "...to another" - diverse gifts; this is just a representative list; note that wisdom is first, tongues are last

- "...word of knowledge" - *gnosis*, special revelation of pertinent information, sometimes related to the "mystery" doctrines

- Paul probably had this gift because he repeatedly stated that he was not inferior in knowledge (2 Cor 11:6)
- Today, it's the ability to understand complex biblical truths
- Like the gift of Prophecy, the gift of Knowledge in one form passed once the canon was complete. But while we still have "prophets" today (proclaimers of finite/revealed truth), we also have the gift of Knowledge because it is necessary to understand finite/revealed truth.

Paul had Knowledge, and God had to straighten him out because of the pride that this God-given knowledge gave him. 2 Cor 12:7-10 is Paul's explanation of his knowledge, to such an extent that he was brought into the third heaven and heard things that he wasn't supposed to hear. Because he was privy to "the surpassing greatness of the revelation," and so he wouldn't exalt himself, God gave him a "thorn in the flesh." This "messenger of Satan" "tormented" him to keep his pride in check. Paul begged the Lord three times for relief, but Jesus told him "My grace is sufficient for you."

Paul was so knowledgeable that God had to initiate a special program in Paul's life to keep Paul's pride in check, to keep his knowledge from inflating his ego. Once our ego is inflated, God can't use us anymore. He is a good example of why believers shouldn't covet certain gifts...because with some of the gifts come some pretty unsightly baggage if we're not careful. One of those gifts is the gift of Knowledge because of the pride that it brings along with it.

9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit,  
 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,  
 9 to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit;  
 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;  
 - "...faith" - the spiritual gift of faith is the supernatural ability to trust God in the midst of severe difficulties

— All believers have at least some faith because faith is required for salvation/justification (Eph 2:8), but those with the spiritual gift of faith have the ability to trust God in extraordinary circumstances

— One of the reasons God gives this gift to people is so they can be an example of what faith looks like to other believers

— A parallel verse is Rom 12:3, which also speaks of the spiritual gift of faith (also see notes on Eph 2:1,8), specifically a measure of faith that God gives to believers in order for them to begin exercising their spiritual gift(s)

- Reformed theology (Calvinism) teaches that salvific faith is given to us by God before we can be saved. They believe that before coming to Christ, we are so dead in our trespasses

and sins (Eph 2:1) that we're unable to believe in Christ without first being regenerated by God.

— While the Calvinist view of the "gift of faith" is unbiblical, the context here is not salvation, but rather the spiritual gifts given to believers after they are saved. The faith gift here doesn't comport with Calvinism because the person receiving this gift is already saved.

— The faith Paul is referring to here is the faith a believer will use in sanctification, not justification. It's a supernatural ability, given by the Holy Spirit, to some people to have greater faith in the trials of life than others.

- "...gifts of healing" - plural, referring to the ability to heal many different maladies; it is the ability to cause healing to take place, with God's power, timing and will

— Healing is not a permanent gift, but a temporary or periodic sovereign manifestation of the Spirit. This gift appears to die off toward the end of Acts (Cf. Acts 3:6-10; 4:7-10,22; 7:13; 9:33-34,37-41; 14:8-10; 15:12; 16:18; 19:11; 20:9-10).

— Originally this gift served as a temporary sign to authenticate the message of God

— Even Paul's own "thorn in the flesh" went unhealed (2 Cor 12:9); Paul also indirectly admits that he lacked the ability to heal either Epaphroditus (Phil 2:27), Timothy (1 Tim 5:23), or Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20).

— The gift of healing is not operational in the church today, but that doesn't mean that God doesn't heal people, because He does...every day. However, God selectively and sovereignly chooses people to be healed, He doesn't heal through the same person because the gift no longer exists.

— We should never cease in asking for healing (Heb 4:16; James 5:16)

10 and **to another the effecting of miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the **interpretation of tongues**.

10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

10 to another miraculous results; to another prophecy; to another the ability to distinguish between spirits; to another various kinds of languages; and to another the interpretation of languages.

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

- "...to another" [4x] - *allos*, another of the same kind (vs *hetero*, meaning another of a different kind)

- "...the effecting" - *energēma*, same word used in v6 to describe the manifestations of the Spirit's power
- "...of miracles" - *dynameis*, mighty works that cause astonishment and alter the natural course of events
  - This gift is no longer operational in the church, but that doesn't mean that God is not effecting miracles today
  - More miracles took place during Jesus' ministry than at any other time in Biblical history
  - God gave His Son the ability to perform miracles, as well as the Apostles and some Christians in the early church, to signify that He was with them and empowering them (Luke 4:14–9:50; Gal 3:5; Heb 2:4)
  - God also powerfully used signs, wonders and miracles to authenticate His Son, so that mankind would believe (John 20:30–31)
  - Luke's gospel, in particular, presents Jesus as teaching and then validating His teaching by doing miracles; Acts shows the Apostles doing the same thing
  - Miracles were the distinctive mark of an Apostle (2 Cor 12:12); they were used to confirm the message of the gospel (Acts 6:8; 8:7; 13:6–12; Heb 2:4)
- "...prophecy" - the ability to proclaim God's truth or make inspired statements without compromise (Cf. 12:28; Rom 12:6)
  - The gift of prophecy is defined as receiving revelation from God and proclaiming it to others, has ceased. That was a foundational gift that was in operation in the first century, but ceased with the closing of the canon.
  - The gift of prophecy today is not a person who receives revelation from God directly, then proclaims it as divine revelation, but rather a preacher and proclaimer, not of new truth, but of finite/known truth as found in Scripture.
- "...distinguishing of spirits" - the gift of discernment; the ability to detect moral or doctrinal error (Cf. Rev 2:2)
  - It's the ability to take what someone says and screen/test it against God's Word. The best way to recognize counterfeit currency is to know the look and feel of the real thing.
  - The body of Christ needs this gift because of 1 John 4:1: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
  - As we get closer to the end, more false teaching and false doctrine becomes prevalent in society in general, as well as in the church
  - Satan (often as an Angel of Light, 2 Cor 11:14) communicates false information and deceit, as with Eve (Gen 2:16–17; 3:1,4–5). This gift is critical in the church to identify and call out false teaching.
  - Jesus discerned the voice of Satan in Peter (Matt 16:23)
  - Paul recognized Bar-Jesus as the son of the devil (Acts 13:10)

- The fortune-telling of the slave girl (Acts 16:18)
- In the end times there will be false teachers teaching false doctrine (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1-2; Jude 4)
- You protect yourself from counterfeits by carefully studying the genuine
  - "...kinds of tongues" - *glōssa*, this is a poor 21st century translation; the KJV translation made perfect sense in the 1600s but language has changed significantly since then and "tongues" in today's vernacular no longer fits its original meaning
- "Tongues" is the ability to speak in one or more known languages that the speaker had not learned; it is the miraculous speaking of the gospel in a foreign language, when the person speaking it never learned the language they are speaking in
- The gift of tongues was a sign gift, which is clear in Acts 2; 10; 19. It ceased after the fulfillment of its purpose, which was to warn the generation of unbelieving Israel of the coming judgment of 70 AD, which resulted in the death of over one million Jews due to their rejection of the Messiah in the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Cf. Matt 12:22-32; 1 Cor 14:21-22).
- "...interpretation of tongues" - a person with this gift could accurately translate what a tongues-speaker said, so that others present could know the meaning and be blessed

A main point in listing these gifts was to show that they were all sourced in the same Spirit. The Corinthians may have been thinking that the variety of gifts meant there were a variety of spirits behind the gifts, and these spirits were causing divisions that were somehow justified. To bring about unity, Paul emphasized that they were all from the same Spirit .

11 But **one and the same Spirit** works all these things, distributing to **each one individually** just **as He wills**.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

11 But one and the same Spirit produces all these results and gives what he wants to each person.

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

- "...one and the same Spirit" - Paul drives the point home to the Corinthians that each gift did not have a different spirit behind it; all the gifts were given and empowered by the Holy Spirit

- "...each one individually" - that same Spirit distributes gifts to each believer individually

- "...as He wills" - as He wills, not as we want; believers should not try to manipulate the Spirit in the distribution of gifts, but should accept and submit to His will

— No one received all the gifts, and no one is without a gift

— The Spirit neglects no one and all is the result of His divine prerogative. We each can have all of the “graces” (Gal 5:22-23), but we cannot have all of the “gifts”

### Our Relationship with the Holy Spirit

- Three Greek prepositions are used to describe our relationship with the Holy Spirit:
  - *Para*, “with” - the Holy Spirit works with us to convict us of sin and lead us to Jesus Christ
  - *En*, “in” - once we’ve accepted Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us (John 14:17)
  - *Epi*, “upon you” - there are some events where the Holy Spirit comes upon us (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 10:44; 19:6)

(b) Human body analogy (12:12-26)

**12** For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

**12** For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

**12** For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, form a single body, so it is with the Messiah.

**12** For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

- Paul uses a comparison between the human body, made up of many parts, with the body of Christ (the church), which is also made up of many parts

— There is a whole, but there are parts that make up the whole

— There is distinction of the parts, but not separation

— Paul spoke about this comparison in his other epistles (Rom 12:4-5; Eph 4:11-13; Col 1:18; 2:19)

- There can be unity in a body without uniformity, but diversity among members is an essential part of a unified body

— It appears the Corinthians were striving for unanimity (all having the same function), and did not appreciate the fact that you can have diversity yet still have unity

**13** For **by** one Spirit we were all **baptized** into **onebody**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were **all made to drink** of one Spirit.

**13** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

**13** For by one Spirit all of us—Jews and Greeks, slaves and free—were baptized into one body and were all privileged to drink from one Spirit.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

- Continuing with the explanation of disparate parts making up a whole, Paul now tells us how that happens...through the baptism of the Holy Spirit

- "...by" - *en*, translated "with" in Acts 1:5, however it's the same word in the Greek

- "...baptized" - *baptizō*, to dip or plunge so as to change identity; Jesus baptizes his followers with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8) the moment they place their faith in Him.

— At the point of faith, Jesus supernaturally "baptizes" (immerses to change identity) the believer with the Holy Spirit. This is the invisible, supernatural act that introduces the new believer into the body of Christ, the church (Eph 1:22-23).

— This baptism of the Holy Spirit began at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:15-17, see notes there; Rom 8:9) and has included every believer since that time

— In Spirit baptism, the Holy Spirit baptizes (*baptizō*, submerges) the believer into the body of Christ; water baptism is that outward expression of Spirit baptism, illustrating outwardly what the Spirit has already done internally

— See [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete explanation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit

— The moment a believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit, they receive their spiritual gifts (Cf. Gal 3:27-28)

- "...one body" - Paul is stressing the unity of the Church

- "...all made to drink" - *potizō*, to receive Him internally at the same time as His baptism so that He takes up permanent residence within us (Rom 8:9) as the guarantor of our future resurrection (Rom 8:11)

— Some view this verse as referring to the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper, however the Greek verb tense calls for a single occurrence of drinking, which is incongruent with the repeated observance of the Lord's Supper.

— The sacraments are not Paul's focus, but rather the explanation for how and when spiritual gifts are given to believers, and how the disparate parts make up a unified whole

**14** For the body is not one part, but many.

**14** For the body is not one member, but many.

14 For the body does not consist of only one part, but of many.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

- Both bodies, the physical human body and the spiritual body of Christ, consist of many members

— This illustration helps us realize our limited contribution to the larger organism

15 **If** the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any less a *part* of the body.

15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.

15 If the foot says, "Since I'm not a hand, I'm not part of the body," that does not make it any less a part of the body, does it?

**15** If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

- "If" - first class condition, assumed reality; Paul lays out this condition for the sake of argument

- His argument is that if someone held what they considered a lesser status, such as a foot rather than a hand (v15), or the ear relative to the eye (v16), it doesn't mean it is a lesser part of the body

- Every part of the body is important and plays a role in the overall function of the whole

16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.

16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.

16 And if the ear says, "Since I'm not an eye, I'm not part of the body," that does not make it any less a part of the body, does it?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole *body* were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

- If every part of the body was an eye, you could see very well but could not move, eat, hear, smell, etc.

- The body would become non-operational and useless

18 **But** now God has **arranged the parts**, each one of them in the body, just as He desired.

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

18 But now God has arranged the parts, every one of them, in the body according to his plan.

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

- "But" - a contrastive; Paul is now going to tell them how God intends the body to operate

- "...arranged the parts" - God has sovereignly, in His omniscience and omnipotence, arranged believers and their gifts, so as to fulfill His purpose and will

- Rather than complain about our gifts or desire another gift, we should give thanks that He knows exactly what gifts are needed in the body at any given time

- We need to discover how God has gifted us, and to become as effective as possible where He has placed us

- We should concentrate on using the abilities we've been given, not longing for other gifts or insisting on doing things that God has not gifted us to do (Cf. 7:26-27)

19 If they were all one part, where would the body be?

19 If they were all one member, where would the body be?

19 Now if all of it were one part, there wouldn't be a body, would there?

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

- Every believer does not have the same gift; if they did they would all be an arm or an eye, and then where would the rest of the body be?

- Paul is driving home the point that the one body (the church) is composed of a variety of members that function as an organic whole

20 But now there are many parts, but one body.

20 But now there are many members, but one body.

20 So there are many parts, but one body.

**20** But now are they many members, yet but one body.

- Uniformity is not the case in the human body, likewise it's not the case with the church

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again, the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you," or the head to the feet, "I don't need you."

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

- The absurdity of independence and superiority...clearly every part relies on every other part to be successful and fulfill its purpose

Too often, because we differ *from* each other, we also differ *with* each other.

22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the parts of the body which seem to be **weaker** are necessary;

22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;

22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are in fact indispensable,

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

- Rather than superiority, it is important to remember that all parts are required for the effective operation of the whole organism

- "...weaker" - unimpressive; more contemptible, at least in the eyes of the Corinthian church (Cf. 2 Cor 12:9)

— The members of the body that seem to be of relative unimportance actually turn out to be necessary

23 and those *parts* of the body which we consider less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor, and our less presentable parts become much more presentable,

23 and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,

23 and the parts of the body that we think are less honorable are treated with special honor, and we make our less attractive parts more attractive.

23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

- The unrespectable parts of our human bodies (likely referring to sexual organs) are treated with even more respect (since they are covered up)

— On the other hand, our more respectable parts (our faces) do not require special covering

— The point is that we take special pains to honor our less esteemed physical members, and we should do the same in church, rather than neglecting or despising them

24 whereas our more presentable parts have no need *of it*. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *part* which lacked,

24 whereas our more presentable members have no need *of it*. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked,

24 However, our attractive parts don't need this. But God has put the body together and has given special honor to the parts that lack it,

24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.

- In the body of Christ, God has put greater value on the members which lack in some way relative to the others

— God has put greater value on the members whose gifts seem lacking in importance relative to the others

— Perhaps Paul is referring to the gifts that didn't attract much attention in Corinth

25 so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the parts may have the same care for one another.

25 so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.

25 so that there might be no disharmony in the body, but that its parts should have the same concern for each other.

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

- The reason why God promotes or puts greater value on the members whose gifts seem lacking in importance compared to others is so that there may be no division (schism) in the body (Cf. 11:18)

— Divisions would be a natural result if the gifts that were more prominent were given greater value

26 And if one part *of the body* suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if a part is honored, all the parts rejoice with it.

26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is praised, every part rejoices with it.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

- If one member suffers, all the members suffer as well, and if one member is glorified, all the members are glorified

— The church is an organism, not a society; a communion, not a guild; a fellowship (*koinonia*), not an association

(c) Diversity of gifts restated (12:27-31)

**27** Now **you** are **Christ's body**, and individually parts of it.

**27** Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

**27** Now you are the Messiah's body and individual parts of it.

**27** Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

- After completing his teaching on spiritual gifts, Paul now makes the application to the local church...

- "...you" - emphatic in Greek, plural; the Corinthian Christians are in view, but it applies to all Christians

- "...Christ's body" - made up of believers, each of whom is an "individual member"; this is true for both the universal church and the local church

### **Tongues are Low Priority**

28 And God has appointed in the church, first **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, then **miracles**, then gifts of **healings, helps, administrations**, and *various* kinds of **tongues**.

28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.

28 God has appointed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who perform miracles, those who have gifts of healing, those who help others, administrators, and those who speak various kinds of languages.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

- Eight kinds of members, each with special functions; they appear to be listed in order of importance of their ministries

— When Paul said that all members were essential (v21), he did not mean that some did not have a more crucial function to perform than others; some gifts are more important than others (v31; 14:1)

- "...apostles" - *apostello*, "sent ones"; of first importance on this list. We need to differentiate between the "office" of apostle and the "gift" of apostle.

— An apostle (whether "office" or "gift") is a person sent on behalf of or in the authority of another. Since Christ is the sender by means of the Spirit, those who are apostles are sent on His behalf and in His authority.

— God did not give the "office" of apostle to anyone other than those whom Christ Himself selected (Cf. 1 Cor 15:9)—those who had visibly seen the risen Lord (the original 12 + Matthias (after Judas' suicide, Acts 1:20-26) + Paul (1 Cor 15:8-9)

— The apostles were foundational to the church (Eph 2:20). Since no one has seen the resurrected Christ since the 1st century, the "office" of apostle could have only existed in the 1st century.

— A number of others were called "apostles" in the non-technical sense: Acts 14:4 (none of the original 12 included); Barnabas, Acts 14:14; Rom 16:7 (none of the original 12 included); Titus, 2 Cor 8:23; Epaphroditus, Phil 2:25 (called a "messenger," same Greek word as "apostle").

— The "gift" of apostle, in the general sense of "one sent out with a message," continues today in the form of missionaries

- "...prophets" - *prophetes*, the ability to proclaim God's truth without compromise (Cf. Rom 12:6)

— The gift of prophecy, as defined as receiving revelation from God and proclaiming it to others, has ceased. That was a foundational gift that was in operation in the 1st century, but ceased (became unnecessary) with the closing of the canon.

— The gift of prophecy today is not a person who receives revelation from God directly and proclaims it as divine revelation, but rather a preacher and proclaimer, not of new truth, but of finite/known truth as found in Scripture.

— The church had predictive prophets, as Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10), Barnabas, Simeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, in Antioch; in Caesarea, the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9); in Jerusalem, Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32)

- "...teachers" - the ability to explain clearly what God has already revealed in Scripture (Cf. Rom 12:7)

— This gift is similar to prophecy, but again is not proclaiming or teaching new, unrevealed truth, but rather teaching the revealed Word of God

— Teaching is all about accuracy and clarity. It's about taking God's Word and accurately explaining it so that anyone can understand and comprehend. A teacher "places the cookies on the bottom shelf" so all can understand and apply.

— The gift of teaching can be displayed in numerous ways: preaching behind a pulpit, through writing, through a small group, and even one-on-one (Cf. Priscilla and Aquilla teaching Apollos, Acts 18:26)

- "...miracles...healings" - gave dramatic, visible proof that the power of God was working in the church, so that others would trust Christ

— They may have especially ministered to the Jews, since Jews looked for such signs of God's presence and blessing (Cf. 1:22)

— These were both sign gifts that are not operational in the church today. Rather, today God does both miracles and healing directly, based on our prayer and His sovereign will

- "...helps" - the ability to free up others from certain responsibilities so that they can exercise their gifts more effectively

- The instinctive ability to assist others in organization, management, or simple helping, without being asked or prompted
- A good example is in Acts 6:1-6 when the Lord raised up deacons in the church to remove the burden of temporal tasks, to free up others (elders) so they can focus on exercising their gifts (devotion to God's Word and prayer). So the newly minted deacons liberated the apostles from temporal tasks so that they could focus on their calling by God.
- A similar situation occurred in Ex 18, where Moses was handling every minor dispute between parties, for ~2.5 million people. Jethro gave him good advice, which was to setup a lower court system to handle these disputes, and Moses could act as more of a "Supreme Court."
- "...administrations" - the ability to effectively run or manage a church program; a leadership position that involves supervising or overseeing anything that needs close attention
- "...tongues" - the ability to speak a foreign language without having learned the language beforehand
- It's primary purpose was to spread the gospel; it was also a sign for unbelieving Jews (Cf. 14:20-22)
- Notice the gift of tongues is last on the list, being the least important of the gifts listed. It was a flashy and desirable gift by the Corinthians, Paul wanted to offset its emphasis with the greater gifts.

How does a believer discover their spiritual gifts? See [Ecclesiology 38 Spiritual Gifts - Part 17 - Gifts; Determining Your Gifts \(1 Cor 12:7\)](#).

*A scholar will learn more from a good teacher than he will from any book. We have books in plenty nowadays, but it is still true that it is through people that we really learn of Christ.*  
[Barclay]

*God has not given teachers to the Church in order that they may replace the Bible and save His people the trouble of studying the Word for themselves, but that they may spur the people of God on to more intensive searching of the Scriptures.* [Ironsides]

Some scholars believe that the short list here, compared to Eph 4:11, is an indication that the regular exercise of extraordinary gifts in public worship was already dying out. Most scholars believe Paul wrote Ephesians (62 AD) about six years after he wrote 1 Corinthians (56 AD).

29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of* miracles, are they?

29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of* miracles, are they?

29 Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all perform miracles, do they?

29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

- Paul asks seven rhetorical questions, each expects a negative answer

- His point is that no gift is universal, variety is essential, and it is wrong to equate one gift (speaking in tongues, in particular) with spirituality

- Each believer is dependent upon others, and every believer is necessary for the proper function of the body

- How strange it is that the gifts were to facilitate the unity of the church, yet some insist that a single gift is essential, and thus divide the body

- Others deny the validity of the gifts, and they, too, divide the body

30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

30 Not all have the gift of healing, do they? Not all speak in foreign languages, do they? Not all interpret, do they?

30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

- In v29-30, Paul teaches that all do not speak in tongues (although they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit). Thus, Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues cannot be seen as a cause-and-effect relationship.

31 But **earnestly desire** the **greater gifts**. And yet, I *am going to* show you **a far better way**.

31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

31 Keep on desiring the better gifts. And now I will show you the best way of all.

31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

- "...earnestly desire" - *zē/oō*, where we get the English word "zealous"; we (as a corporate body) are to "be zealous" for the greater gifts

- The verb *zē/oō* is plural, meaning the desire for the "greater gifts" is not an individual desire, but rather should be the desire of the church as a whole. The church at large should earnestly desire the greater gifts be exercised more prominently among them because the "greater gifts" are greater in value for edifying the whole assembly (v7,25,28).

- The church as a whole should desire that the "greater gifts" (apostle, teaching, pastor-teacher, prophecy) be given positions of influence and prominence in the life of the church

so that the broadest number of people could be edified within the body.

- "...greater gifts" - the gifts that most edify and grow the whole body of Christ: teaching, prophecy, apostle, discernment

- Public proclamations and teachings from the Word of God should be the most prominent gift on display in the church today...but unfortunately it's not

- Instead of individual believers desiring the gift of tongues (as in Corinth), the church collectively should be desiring the "greater gifts" be featured prominently in the church

- Paul urges believers to "earnestly desire" some gifts more than others, because some are more important in the functioning of the body than others

- "...a far better way" - not another gift among many, but a context or foundation from which all gifts should proceed

- It is a "way" where love is the controlling power in all our actions

What Paul is about to embark on is a description of what he calls 'a way that is beyond comparison.' The way they were going was basically destructive to the church as a community; the way they were being called to is one that seeks the good of others before oneself. It is the way of edifying the church (14:1-5), of seeking the common good (12:7). In that context one will still earnestly desire the things of the Spirit (14:1), but precisely so that others will be edified. Thus it is not 'love versus gifts' that Paul has in mind, but 'love as the only context for gifts'; for without the former, the latter have no usefulness at all—but then neither does much of anything else in the Christian life.