

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Value of Every Believer **1 Corinthians 12:8-18**

Keywords: church, body, community, gifts, Spiritual gifts, unity, body of Christ

PowerPoint Presentation included:

SermonAudio Blurb: There is much confusion over the purposes of the gifts. In this passage Paul helpfully gives us some clarity and understanding as to the purpose and identity of spiritual gifts. But do not let the listing of the gifts become cause you to miss the point of the passage. It is not what the gifts are; rather, it is that because of the uniqueness of the gifts every believe has incredible value to the church as a whole.

I. Introduction.

- A. Turn your bibles to 1 Corinthians 12 again. We continue today our study of Spiritual Gifts.
- B. As you turn there, let me explain the importance of this subject.
 1. In four different books of the NT the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to discuss these gifts and the people who use them.
 2. At the heart of these gifts is a care and love for the church. As I have said in the past, it is wrong to try to separate the Body of Christ from its Head, Jesus Christ. And it is just as wrong to separate the Head from the Body.
 3. As we properly use these gifts given to each of us we are actually worshiping and serving Christ. Not just Christians, but the one whom we love and worship and follow.
 4. The health of Christ's body is partially determined by how obediently and effectively these gifts are used for the building up of the church.
 5. Often a serious error creeps into a church and renders it weak and ineffective.
 - a. That error is the emphasizing one of two gifts over the others. And therefore that church becomes known for those things.
 - b. Perhaps it is teaching, or evangelism. It may be tongues or healing. It may be works of service or mercy.
 - c. But regardless of which ones are emphasized, the purpose of these gifts is lost.

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- d. The challenge for us is to encourage the use of gifts for the sake of the building up of the church. To strive to have a good balance.
 - e. And the passage before us today is one that I believe will help us see my point here.
- C. We first looked at vss. 1-7 and saw that there was a problem in the church there.
- 1. Those called the “spirituals.”
 - 2. The putting down of all others in the church who were not seen as “spiritual.”
 - 3. The allowance for even blasphemy to occur because they claimed to be spiritual.
 - 4. So we also considered a few quotes by some who are held up as being "spiritual" today and found them wanting.
- D. Not only was there this problem regarding these supposedly spiritual people, but Paul also showed that all spiritual gifts come from the same source (4-7).
- 1. “Varieties” shows that there is no duplication of a gift. Each is unique. But it all comes from the same Spirit.
 - 2. “Ministries” speaks of how each gift has an outlet. Not all who are gifted with evangelism will have the same type of ministry using that gift. Some will be on the street, others in the pulpit, and others in the various relationships God puts them in. But again, those there are many ministries, only one Lord.
 - 3. “Effects” speaks to results that come from using your gift. Mostly likely there were those who had great effectiveness with their gifts, and they were the ones being called “spiritual.” Paul corrects this by showing that regardless of the effect, it all comes from the same God.
- E. Lastly, I pointed out that verse seven makes it very clear that all of the gifts are given out for one specific purpose—the common good.
- 1. You do not use your gift when you want to.
 - 2. You do not use your gift how you want to.
 - 3. Rather, you use your gift with a strong sense of duty.

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4. You use your gift with the needs of the Body, the Church in mind. “How am I building up the church with this gift?”
- F. And this gives us a good transition into today’s study.
- G. **Read with me 1 Corinthians 12:8-19.**

Propositional Statement

In this passage we will learn three key aspects to the gifts of the Spirit: Paul makes clear that there are three things that we must learn if we ever hope to have maturity as a church.

Now all of this is important because in it you will see that every believer has true value to the Lord and to His Church. But the exact opposite is too often seen. Guilt trips have been laid on others because they do not do not perform the “right” gifts. Or they are no good at their gifts. Or people begin to think that they have no purpose other than to just sit there like a lump on a log.

Chapter 12 cries out with a resounding “No!” to that type of thinking or teaching.

II. The Value of Every Believer.

A. *The Diversity of Gifts* (8-10).

1. Paul now builds off of his statement that the Holy Spirit has given these gifts for the purpose of the common good of the church.
 - a. The way he does this is by giving a sample listing of some of the gifts to show that diversity.
 - b. It is important that you understand that this is not designed to be an all inclusive listing. Rather, it is designed to show how the **same Holy Spirit** gives out tremendously diverse types of gifts and giftedness.
 - c. Again, the reason for this is to fight against that false teaching going on there at Corinth that there were some gifts that were “the spiritual ones” and those who had those gifts were the “spiritual men and women.”
2. Now **look at the overhead** to see how this listing breaks down because the English does not give the format that the Greek language does.
 - a. *Allos* versus *heteros*.

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3. Note that these categories “Mental Gifts” etc. are not set in granite, but merely something to help see the distinctions.
4. A basic meaning behind each of these gifts:
 - a. “Word of Wisdom
 - (1) This speaks of the ability to speak of wisdom. But not in some vague or broad manner.
 - (2) Wisdom here is most probably the ability to speak of spiritual things clearly.
 - (3) This was a real issue in Corinth. Paul speaks about wisdom indepthly in chapters 1-2.
 - (a) There he speaks of those who try to speak with the wisdom of man and the wisdom of this world. How man’s ways is to try to persuade a person through clever speech.
 - (b) But the right way was to preach in the power of the Lord, which is what Paul did. The result was that he preached a mystery that was the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:7ff).
 - (c) This mystery was the depths of the plan of God to bring salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - (d) Paul apparently had this gift for Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:15-16 “. . . just as also our beloved brother Paul, **according to the wisdom given him**, wrote to you, ¹⁶as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. “
 - b. Word of Knowledge.
 - (1) At the time of the writing this may have had a revelatory aspect to it. The teaching of divine revelation.
 - (2) Today it would be the ability to grasp to a fuller level the Word of God.

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- c. Faith.
 - (1) This is not the gift of faith unto salvation. All who are Christians have been granted faith by God.
 - (2) This is a unique ability to trust in the faithfulness and power of God. It is unusual and enables the person to overcome major roadblocks. It is not a blind faith, but one that is resting on the truths about God and His will.
 - (3) This is the person who is not fazed by events facing the church; rather, he instinctively trusts God and continues to press on.
 - (4) Such a valuable gift to the Body in difficult times!
- d. Healings.
 - (1) This is quite obvious what it means.
- e. Miracles.
 - (1) Here we must distinguish this from healings even though how is not clear since it is linked elsewhere to healing. It is the ability to do things that are contrary to what we would expect to happen.
 - (2) Examples may be making people not be able to speak. Resurrecting people. In Acts 13 we see a man blinded by Paul.
- f. Prophecy.
 - (1) It is the prediction and proclamation of the future.
 - (2) It is the proclamation of the message of the Lord.
- g. Distinguishing of Spirits.
 - (1) This is an ability to immediately discern whether someone was saying or doing something by the Spirit of the Lord or by a false spirit. Something like 1 John 4:1.
 - (2) The same word is used in 14:29 where after a prophecy was given others would “pass judgment,” literally, “distinguish.”

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The idea was a person claimed to have a word of prophecy but others would determine whether it truly was or not.

- h. Tongues.
 - (1) This is often seen today as a type of ecstatic speech. Others see it as the speech of angels.
 - (2) But the Bible teaches otherwise. It simply is the ability to speak in another language, one that you do not know.
 - (3) This is what was happening on the Day of Pentecost.
- i. Interpretation of Tongues.
 - (1) This is also obvious as to its meaning.

B. *The Unity of The Source* (11)

- 1. Verse 11 then brings out the key point in all of this.
 - a. Yes there are a lot of gifts. Yes they accomplish a lot of different things. Yes, some are more obvious than others. Yes, some are more powerful than other gifts.
- BUT**
- b. But all of these gifts come from only one source. The Holy Spirit.
 - c. It is not my work or your work that is the point—it is God’s work!
- 2. Paul makes it clear here that all spiritual gifts come from only the Holy Spirit and no other source. But he also makes **another key point**.
 - 3. “Distributing to each one...”
 - a. This emphasizes that every believer individually receives a gift or gifts.
 - b. There is no mass-production of gifts. But rather a unique crafting of a mix of gifts by the Holy Spirit who then gives them individually to each believer.
 - c. Now this is neat to think about. I am always trying to emphasize the corporate aspect of the church because we tend to think to individually.

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- (1) However, this is a time where the Holy Spirit focuses on each person uniquely. Now in vss 12 ff he will shift back to the corporate picture, but not right here.
 - (2) The point of this is to show that each believer sitting in this room right now has tremendous value to the Lord. He is concerned about you and how you will help strengthen His Church.
 - (3) Not one of us here who is saved is worthless. Not one of us here is expendable. We are all uniquely gifted by the Spirit so that we can fit perfectly into the Body. No one else can do your gift like you.
- d. This also helps bring out **another key truth**.
- (1) Too often gifted people end up in opposition to one another. Each of them vying for supremacy.
 - (2) This cannot make sense in light of this verse.
 - (3) If all spiritual gifts and giftedness comes from the one and same Holy Spirit then there is no way that they should ever be in opposition to one another.
 - (4) Rather, each person needs to be thinking about how their gift can work in cooperation with the others in the church.
- e. Another point that bears mentioning is that never does Paul say that all gifts are to be always operating.
- (1) Again remember that a church has the gifts distributed in a unique and individual manner by the Spirit.
 - (2) In fact there is also the distinct possibility that these gifts can come and go. Never is it promised that one has a gift permanently.
- f. One last point, and that is that all gifts are given based upon the will of God, not the will of man.
- (1) If you have some very strong gift, it is not due to some good thing you have accomplished.

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- (2) It is not a reward. It is not an indication that God loves you more or that you are a more worthy recipient than another person.
- (3) You possess it simply by the grace and will of God. Humility needs to reign over the area of spiritual gifts. There should be no tolerance for arrogance or one-upmanship.

C. *The Value of Diversity* (12-18).

1. Transition.

- a. Paul has so far shown the Corinthian church the difference between something that comes from the Spirit and something that does not in vss 1-3.
- b. He has then shown them that there is a huge variety of gifts, effects and ministries but that in all of this there is only one God at work.
- c. Now he takes all of these individual Christians and brings them all back to focus on the fact that though they are many, they are really one.
- d. There is still that group of people who call themselves the “spirituals.”
 - (1) They still think that they are the key people of the church. That without them everything else fails.
 - (2) They were also at odds with one another. Each of them trying to exalt himself by trumpeting his giftedness as being the most important.
 - (3) So Paul now steps into that disturbance to bring clarity and instruction.

2. Verse 12 shows Paul using our own bodies as an illustration of unity and diversity.

- a. Though our body is comprised of many different parts, none of them can function alone.
- b. Use illustration of the value of nerve cells from the findings of Dr. Brand on leprosy.

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- (1) The point of the illustration is to show how just one facet of the body, gone haywire, causes the body to destroy itself.
- c. Now Paul says then at the end of this verse that just as each part of the human body is critical, so too with the body of Christ. There is only one Body, not multiple bodies of Christ.
3. This is seen for us in Verse 13.
 - a. Mark 1:8 John the Baptist talks about Jesus baptizing people with the Holy Spirit.
 - b. This is what this passage is saying. Not that the Spirit baptizes us. Nor is it some special event where the Spirit falls upon us to do great and powerful things.
 - c. Rather, it is speaking of that point in time when each person was saved and the Lord baptized them with the Spirit so that they became part of His Body, the Church.
 - d. Note how it is translated “by” which gives the impression that it is the Spirit baptizing us. “By” is not a bad or wrong term to use, but it does cause too many to make the wrong conclusion in today’s church, primarily due to weak grammar.
 - (1) However, that is not the point. The preposition is ἐν which means that it is “in” the Spirit that we are baptized. “By” here carries the meaning of “with.”
 - (2) In fact, this is the same preposition used in Mat. 3:11 and Acts 1:5 (for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with [en] the Holy Spirit not many days from now.) where it is translated more clearly as “with.”
 - e. By the way, this is also a good passage to see the fact that the Church is a unique entity that did not exist in the Old Testament. The Bible spoke of this event as a yet future event in the time of John the Baptist. But this could not be true of the Church, the Body of Christ was already in existence.
 - f. This baptism is done for all believers in Christ. It does not matter what their nationality, gender or social position. If they believed in Jesus, then they had been baptized in the Spirit.

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- g. And it is the Spirit, if you will, that is the glue that holds the Body of Christ together. Which is why Paul commands every believer to make sure that they preserve the unity of the Spirit in Eph. 4.
4. Vss. 14-18 then show that there can be no room for exalting one gift over another. Or speaking of one ministry over another. And certainly it should prevent us all from cutting ourselves down, seeing that we have no value or real purpose in the Church.
 - a. Walk through these vss.
 - b. Emphasize that it is an unhealthy church that focuses only on one type of giftedness.
 - c. It is unhealthy for people who have one gift to try to get everyone else to do that gift instead of their own.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Again we must come to the conclusion that there is no place for a passive believer within the Body.
- B. The local church is to be a place where we minister to one another in and through our gifts.
- C. And it is to that end that I hope we continue to explore how that is developing here at MDF.

Small Group Questions

- Having heard the definitions of these gifts, has your understanding of how God has put you together changed?
- What are you doing to promote the diversity of gifts at Missio?
- How may you be harming the health of this church by not practicing your gift or seeing yourself as of little value?