

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

God-Centered Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1-7

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: The divine origination of every gifts given to the Church is critical to approaching a subject that has brought more division than unity in the recent decades. Once you understand from Whom the gifts came you can then inquire properly as to the value, function, and glory that is found in them. Our triune God has given us these gifts and the reason given is clear in 1 Corinthians 12:7, ". . . for the common good."

I. Introduction.

- A. Last week I started off a short series on the nature of spiritual gifts.
 - 1. Driven by the recent Strange Fire conference.
 - 2. But also driven by a lack of clarity on this whole subject, especially in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit within the Church.
- B. We learned last week that we must approach this whole subject both in study and in practice with great humility.
 - 1. Romans 12:3 tells us that in relation to living with others within the church we must not think too highly of ourselves.
 - 2. Each person has been given a measure of faith by God, and that measure/amount is not the same. But in accordance to that measure we will exercise our gifts.
 - 3. I noted that the verse that followed simply said that whatever gifts you possess you are to use them to the fullest that you can. And as you do so there can be no room for arrogance or envy for it is the Lord working in and through you to whatever effect takes place.
- C. Now we come to the fullest discussion on gifts given to the people of God in 1 Corinthians. **Today we will look at 12:1-18 (read).**
- D. Introductory Material on Corinth.
 - 1. Though Corinth is of no significance in the modern world, it was a powerhouse of trade and religion in the NT days.
 - 2. It was the center of a major Olympic style game called the Isthmian games.

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3. It was a very corrupt city, morally speaking. It had a high place that was known as the Acrocorinth. This was a huge raised area that could hold the entire population of the city in times of siege.
 - a. It was 2,000 feet above the city and you could see over 45 miles away on a good day.
 - b. In the Acrocorinth was the temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. There were at least 1,000 priestesses who were really only prostitutes.
 - c. This city was so corrupt that a common word of the day to refer to someone morally bankrupt was “corinthianized.”
4. There were some serious problems in this church. The world around them had followed many of them into the church, while others were seeking to withdraw from the world all together.
 - a. There was the severe problem of factions/divisions among the believers. They divided themselves according to the teacher they preferred.
 - b. There was the moral problem where they allowed gross immorality to exist in their church without rebuke or challenge.
 - c. There was the problem of divisive and false teachers who were trying to steal the people’s affections away from Christ and onto themselves. The way this was done was by constantly criticizing the faithful teaching of Paul to these people after he had left them. Much of 2 Corinthians is about this.
 - d. There was also the presence of false teaching that was tolerated under a wrong understanding of spiritual gifts. This is something we will deal with today.
 - e. But what stands out for me is the utter lack of real love for the body/church there at Corinth.
 - (1) There was the attitude of every man for himself.
 - (2) There was the mind set that you need to be up front showing off your abilities.
 - (3) “Look at me!” “Look at me!”
 - (4) Flip back one chapter and I will show you just one example of this (1 Cor. 11:17-22—point out how they were despising

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the church of God and showed no care for those weak and needy in the church).

(5) The result was much chaos and much harm to the church.

5. It is this lack of concern for the well being of the body of Christy there at Corinth that causes Paul to teach at length on the topic of gifts.

E. And the first thing he puts before the people is that they must grasp that any giftedness they might have and any effects that may occur is not because of them but because of God.

II. God-Centered Gifts.

A. First, Paul clears up a false understanding of how spiritual gifts operate (1-3).

1. “Now concerning spiritual gifts....”

a. You will notice if you have the NASB that the word “gifts” is in the italics. This is because it is not part of the actual words of Paul.

b. It is literally renders as “spirituals” and can refer to spiritual people and spiritual gifts, depending on the context. In fact, there is a little mix of both in this verse.

c. This is a point of great interest to the Corinthian church. The word, “spirituals” (*Pneumatikos*) appears 15 times in this book.

d. There was a misunderstanding regarding spiritual things that manifested itself in many different ways. This is why Paul deals with this subject right away in 1 Corinthians 2:4-16 (read).

e. Now Paul picks back up with that subject of those who are "spiritual" and relates it to their ministry to the church through gifts given by the Spirit.

f. Apparently the church there had asked Paul for clarification on this subject, and for good reason....notice verses 2-3.

2. Now these verses seem out of context for the subject of spiritual gifts. Why this sudden shift?

a. Well actually there is no shift, Paul is merely dealing straightforwardly with a serious problem that had arisen in the church there.

b. This church was not lacking in any spiritual gift. And this church specifically loved showing off those gifts, especially the gift of tongues and prophecy.

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- c. The great desire of many of them there is found in 1 Corinthians 14:37.
 - (1) They wanted to be known as the spiritual person—a prophet or spiritual, the same word that he has been using to refer to spiritual gifts.
 - (2) Apparently they all wanted to be known as the person with the most gifts and the most powerful gifts.
 - (3) And through this clever wordplay Paul puts them into the corner they deserve.
 - (4) Too many of them were thinking that they were prophets as well. And this was causing no end of problems because they were often not giving true prophecy.
 - (5) That is the point of Paul’s comment there in verse 37-38.
 - d. Now go back to chapter 12.
3. The problem (2-3).
- a. There were those in the church who were standing up and claiming a word from the Lord and what came out was “Jesus is accursed.”
 - b. This, naturally, caused quite a stir among the rest of the church!
 - c. But the defense being given by the ‘prophet’ was that he was merely prophesying what was given to him by God.
 - d. But many of these people had come out of a pagan religious background and they remembered when the priests of these various religions would go into trances and do and say all sorts of amazing things.
 - (1) The result was that these people began to think that all prophetic utterances were really demonic. That they were no different then in the days they were idolaters.
 - (2) Therefore they were ignoring true prophecies.
 - e. On the other hand, those who were falsely prophesying were being accepted by others because the church had such a horribly immature and sinful understanding of the nature of spiritual gifts and the Giver of spiritual gifts.

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- (1) I must say that this is stunning to me in many ways. I have a hard time conceiving of a way that a church of believers could sink this low in confusion.
 - (2) But then I need only to consider the many silly and even dangerous excesses that are occurring today in churches and realize that it is not only from the time of the New Testament.
 - (3) So Paul, gives them a simple and quick way to know if a person is truly prophesying or not, and at the same time, deals with a very real issue in that church.
- f. It appears that we should understand these utterances occurring in a trance-like state, or a state of heightened frenzy. Again, this would be similar to modern-day events where a person goes into a trance or gets all excited and claims that it is of the Holy Spirit.
- g. There appears to be a Jewish contingent in the church there, for the statement, “Jesus is accursed” is very Jewish. It is very possible that the origin of this statement came from Deuteronomy 21:23, “He who is hanged upon the tree is accursed of God.”
- (1) This was perhaps twisted by the person there in the church to say that Jesus was therefore still accursed of God.
 - (2) Paul, of course, simply says that this is false and is not of the Spirit. No discussion, no debate.
- h. At the same time, the statement “Jesus is Lord” is a mark of one who is speaking by the Spirit.
- (1) Again, keep in mind that this is not speaking of day to day talk. But rather, of those claiming to have a word from the Lord.
 - (2) To make a prophetic declaration like this is nothing less than a confession of full allegiance to Jesus Christ.
 - (3) It is a term of adoration, love and worship. It is truly and properly declaring Jesus as God Himself.

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- (4) The word, "Lord" (Kurios) is the way the Jew would translate the word YHWH so that they would not take the name in vain.
- (5) And note that this is considered "speaking by the Spirit" which likely is another way of saying "prophecy."
 - (a) If this is the case, note how basic the words are. Not real deep mysteries as much as declarations that are true.
 - (b) Unfortunately for the Corinthian church they were too quick to allow anyone to say anything like Jesus is accursed.
 - (c) I am reminded again of Mike Bickle (IHOP) admitting that 80% of what he sees is likely false but doesn't want to say or stop anything because he might hinder the Spirit.
 - (d) In fact, in the many, many conversations I have with various people in the Charismatic arm of the Church this argument is used over and over. "Who are we to restrict what God is doing?" But when asked to show how they know it is God at work they become very vague.

Examples

Bill Johnson out of Redding, CA has said, "One of our biggest areas of confusion in the church is concerning the sovereignty of God. We know that God is all powerful. We know that he is in charge of everything. But with that we make a mistake in thinking that he is in control of everything. There's a difference from being in charge and being in control. If you think that he is in control of everything then you have believe that Hitler was his will."

"This ministry of Jesus that dealt with every single person that came to him with affliction or torment, he ministered to them. That is the only standard to follow. I refuse to create a theology that allows for sickness. Now here we got a problem, only one. A small one. The apostle Paul gives a warning in Galatians and he says this, he says, "if I (he's the one who brought the gospel to them)." He said, "If I or even an angel comes to you and preaches to you a different gospel you are to reject it." . . . what gospel is it? It is the gospel of Jesus. It is the gospel of the kingdom. . . . Let me illustrate. Paul refers to his thorn in the flesh, which has been interpreted by many as

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disease, allowed or brought on by God. That is a different gospel. Jesus didn't model it and he didn't teach it."

"Did you know that Jesus was born again? . . . I will show you, it is in the bible. He had to be, he became sin. [He then quotes Acts 13, "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'

"As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay. . . (Act 13:32-34a) He was born through Mary the first time and through the resurrection the second time. He was born again." (From <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhG1x4fOtBw>)

His senior worship pastor, Jenn Johnson has taught on numerous occasions that she views "the Holy Spirit like the genie from Aladdin. And he is blue. . . And he is funny. And he is sneaky. And he is courageous and he is everywhere and he is wonderful." (From <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Wu-WqLjoJo>)

4. So, Paul first clears up this basic issue of how some spiritual gifts operate and how you can discern whether they are true or not. Now he moves into the subject of **where** these gifts come from, which is the key point.
- B. The second point Paul wants to make clear to this church is that all spiritual gifts come from the triune God.
 1. Verse 4-6 show how the Lord God, the Trinity, is behind the existence, dispensation and workings of all true spiritual gifts.
 2. "Varieties" (differences/diversity) is used three times in these vss to emphasize that there is no duplication of giftedness in the church.
 - a. This is important to understand and revel in!
 - b. **None of us is a copy of another person.** There is a rich mixture of gifts, ministries and effectiveness within this church. All of us are uniquely put together by God.
 - c. This is important to understand for I fear that some here may have the same problem that some of the Corinthian believers had....that they were not good enough to be really used of God.
 3. The word "gifts" is really a much more richer word in the Greek. They are "gifts of grace."

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- a. This is used by Paul to again correct a wrong view of gifts in this church at Corinth.
 - b. They had begun to think that they earned their gifts and abilities and that they had perhaps done something right that caused them to get the “good ones.”
 - (1) Very possibly some were claiming that they had gifts of prophecy or tongues because they were more spiritual.
 - (2) This is where Romans 12:3 comes back into play.
 - c. Nothing could be further from the truth however. The term, gifts of grace, emphasizes that all gifts come from the sovereign choice of God.
 - (1) It is no different than that gift of salvation, which is by grace.
 - (2) We do not earn our spiritual gifts. We have no reason to be proud if we have a large measure of a gift.
 - (3) It was given to us by God for his own reasons and according to His own good pleasure.
 - (4) Paul says it this way in Romans 12:6, “And since we have gifts that differ **according to the grace given to us. . .**”
 - (5) And Paul restates this very clearly again in 1 Corinthians 12:11.
 - d. But, even with this immense variety of giftedness, they are all produced by the same Holy Spirit.
4. “Ministries” (vs 5).
- a. This speaks of the way the gifts work themselves out.
 - b. The word speaks of service or ministry. The Bible uses this word to refer to deacons.
 - c. The point is simple, and yet often missed by us.
 - d. Spiritual gifts do not exist for us. They exist so that we can minister, care for, serve the church. (Repeat)

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- e. This shows that though many people in a church may have a specific gift, they will not have the exact same ministry.
 - (1) The way they serve the church will be different. Different in scope, different in impact, and different in method.
 - (2) Some may teach through preaching. Others may teach in S.S. classes. Others may teach in small discipleship groups. Others may excel in lecturing, while others shine on a one on one situation.
 - (3) The only issue really for any Christian is whether they are seeking to use that giftedness to the fullest possible.
 - f. But regardless of the variety, it all comes from the same Lord, a reference of Jesus Christ.
5. “Effects (vs 6).
- a. The word here is where we get our word “energy” (ἐνεργημάτων).
 - b. This brings the focus to the effects or results of the gifts.
 - c. Paul emphasizes that it is not some natural ability at work here, but rather a divine work, a divine expression of power. God is at work in the gifts He has given.
 - d. But there are variety in the effect.
 - (1) Again, some may make many prophecies while others may make but a few.
 - (2) Some may teach thousands while others only teach 5 or 6.
 - e. Here again there was probably a problem occurring in the church.
 - (1) Most likely there were those who claimed to be more “spiritual” and therefore able to perform greater works.
 - (2) This of course, did nothing to promote love or care for the others.
 - (3) So Paul makes it clear that whether the effects of using their gifts are great or small, all, and he means all, come from the Father.

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III. Conclusion.

- A. Verse 7 then sums up his point from verses 4-6.
- B. No matter how big or small the giftedness is; no matter how large or small the ministry is, no matter how great or little the effect is, there is only **one purpose** in the presence and use of these gifts.....the common good of the Body.
 - 1. God never intended these gifts that we all have if we are Christians to be used for private purposes and goals
 - 2. And to any extent that any of us use our gifts out of selfish motives, we are sinning. The same for those who would withhold their giftedness out of fear or lack of concern for the well-being of the Body.
- C. Let me draw out a couple of key details from this verse:
 - 1. “Each one...”
 - a. In the Greek this phrase is placed in what is called the “emphatic position.” It is the focal point of the verse.
 - b. It is here that I can absolutely tell you that if you are a Christian, then you have a gift from God to share in to the Church.
 - c. These gifts are not reserved for outstanding Christians or a select few.
 - d. As Paul says in Ephesians 4:7, “but to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”
 - 2. “For the common good.”
 - a. This is the secondary emphasis of the verse.
 - b. Each Christian in a church has been gifted by God for the express purpose of benefitting the rest of the body.
 - c. Therefore, each Christian here at MDF ought to be asking how they are ministering their gifts to the others here at the church.
 - (1) Are you asking yourself this?
 - (2) What is it that you personally are doing with your spiritual giftedness that is designed to care for the others here?

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Small Group Questions

- Some gifts are naturally before the church—most obvious is the gift of teaching. How do those whose gifts are more prominent guard against a “look at me” mind set?
- If no person is a copy of another in their giftedness what key conclusions must we come to regarding the need for each person in the church?
- At Missio where are some areas that need strengthening and what are the types of gifts that would most help in those areas?