

THE CHURCH AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

STUDENT GUIDE

DAILY BIBLE READING

DAY 1	I CORINTHIANS 12: 1-7
DAY 2	I CORINTHIANS 12: 8-11
DAY 3	I CORINTHIANS 12: 12-31
DAY 4	I CORINTHIANS 12: 1-7
DAY 5	I CORINTHIANS 12: 8-11
DAY 6	I CORINTHIANS 12: 12-31
DAY 7	I CORINTHIANS 12: 1-31

Last week we discovered the Apostle's concern about Christian attire. Today, he faces head-on Christian activity in public worship. He begins by affirming spiritual gifts, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (v.1). The Corinthians had spiritual gifts; Paul offers no denial (cp. 1:7). Their problem was carnality. In other words, they had spiritual gifts but were not spiritual themselves! Possessing one or even all of the spiritual gifts offers no authentic evidence of Biblical spirituality.

What, then, is the church to make of spiritual gifts? How are spiritual gifts useful?

OUTLINE

1. Explaining the Spiritual Gifts (vv. 1-7)

Paul Begins by explaining the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-3).

A.) *Foundation of spiritual gifts.* Following satanic idols was the way of the old life, the life of an unbelieving Gentile. When the Corinthians came to Christ, however, they came under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit (v.3). Spirit-controlled worship is never frenzied or disorderly. In fact, Paul makes clear God never oversees confusion (cp. 11:34; 14:40). Paul plainly affirms that a person cannot "say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Unless the Spirit of God works His work in the human heart, no conversion will ever take place.

Indicative of the Holy Spirit's control are two important truths. First, if one is Spirit-controlled, the will is absolutely yielded to the authority of Jesus Christ in His Word. Second, if one is Spirit-controlled, much emphasis is always placed upon Jesus Christ. The Spirit will not speak of Himself. Instead He speaks about Jesus (cp. John 15:26; 16:13-14).

B.) *Variation of spiritual gifts.* The key word is "diversities" (v.4). There is not a general spiritual gift given to every believer. Instead there are many spiritual gifts, gifts given at the sole discretion of the Holy Spirit (v.11b).

As we think about spiritual gifts, it is helpful to remember a three-fold distinction. First, there is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 10:45; Rom. 8:9). Second, there are the gifts of the Holy Spirit (v.4). Third, there are the graces of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). God's Spirit enters us, regenerating us and indwelling us. As He comes into our life, He gives us gifts — spiritually empowered abilities—to serve Him in Kingdom work. Not only so, He also forms the character of Jesus in us.

This helps us to understand the *origin* of the spiritual gifts (God the Holy Spirit). Since He is the sovereign God, He gives us as he wishes (v.11). This also helps us to understand the *operation* of the spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are spiritual capacities endowed by the Holy Spirit to all believers. Gifts are endowments of which the exclusive source is the Spirit.

Question: Explain the difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents? Is it possible for natural talents to be spiritual gifts? Why or why not?

2. Exploring the Spiritual Gifts (vv. 8-11)

A.) *Particularity of the gifts.* The list Paul offers is not intended to be exhaustive; instead it is representative. Other lists of gifts are recorded in the New Testament not of which are identical (Rom. 12: 6-8; Eph. 4:7-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Gifts may change in every age as the needs of the church change.

B.) *Presentation of the gifts.* We cannot emphasize enough: the Holy Spirit is completely sovereign in the dispensation of the gifts. He gives unilaterally according to His own discretion. In the list Paul gives in this chapter, he mentions nine in number: *Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Working of Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of spirits, Tongues, and Interpretation of Tongues.*

Question: Are you able to identify your spiritual gift?

3. Exercising the Spiritual Gifts (vv. 12-31)

As spiritual gifts are explored and identified, spiritual gifts must be exercised and implemented into church life. Paul gives three principles to properly exercise the spiritual gifts.

A.) *Unity of the Body of Christ (vv.12-13).* Paul places emphasis upon oneness of the church. We are the body of Christ on earth. At salvation, the believer is placed into vital union with Jesus. This means the church is a living organism, not a stale organization.

B.) *Diversity of the Body of Christ (vv.14-19).* No church member can do all functions within the church anymore than one physical member of the physical body can do all the functions of the body.

C.) *Harmony of the Body of Christ (vv. 20-27).* If every member is functioning properly, harmony will be the result. What does harmony include? How may we judge if harmony exists in Christ's body, the church? There are two clear measurements:

- 1.) We must determine if there is *cooperation* with one another (vv. 20-24).
- 2.) We must determine if there is *concern* for one another. (vv. 25-27).

Paul sums the chapter up by mentioning the gifts of the Spirit once again, followed by a series of rhetorical questions to drive the point home once again that all are gifted but gifted differently. Therefore we must strive for harmony (vv. 28-30). In the end, however, Paul ends this section anticipating a way to guarantee the glory of God is honored. While gifts of the Spirit are good, Paul says, "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (v. 31b).

Wrap Up

After we get a handle on what spiritual gifts are, we must make sure we are taking actions to integrate the gifts into the life of the church. Furthermore, we must make sure jealousies are laid to rest in the body of Christ concerning spiritual gifts. Divisions must cease. Christ's glory depends on harmony and unity in the body of Christ.