

## Understanding Spiritual Gifts 1 Corinthians 12:1-7

### Introduction:

1. In the 20th century, there was probably not a Biblical topic more abused and misunderstood than the topic of spiritual gifts.
2. It was happening in Paul's day, too. Paul will take the next three chapters and deal with the subject of spiritual gifts in the local church.
  - Chapter 12 will provide a doctrinal framework for the subject.
  - In Chapters 13 and 14, Paul will bring the corrective doctrine to this local assembly.
3. The church at Corinth had become a church full of carnal pleasure-seekers who were focused on sensationalism and supernatural phenomena. Corinth was your poster child for the entertainment driven church of today.
  - The idea of, "When I go to church I want to be worked up into an emotional frenzy, I want to **feel** something, and I want to be entertained."
4. Paul will lay down some valuable principles in verses 1-7 that will serve as the guideline for the next three chapters.

### First, ignorance of spiritual gifts is very dangerous. vs. 1-3

1. Notice in verse 1, Paul says, "*I would not have you ignorant.*"
2. The Holy Spirit had distributed gifts to these believers, and they desired to use them, but there was a prevailing ignorance among this assembly concerning this subject.
3. Paul was very concerned because he knew these people's background. The church at Corinth was predominantly Gentile, and they had been saved out of a life and culture of idolatry. vs. 2
4. In the same way they were deceived by dumb (speechless) idols (before salvation), they were in danger of spiritual deception once again (after salvation).
  - Idolatry was, at its root, a supernatural, mystical, experience-based religious system. **Habakkuk 2:18-19** - a piece of wood or metal can't talk, but they were convinced it could. False prophets would purport to speak on behalf of that idol.
  - Satan used this to lead people away from the truth of God. **Zechariah 10:2**
5. Is it any wonder that the first gifts being counterfeited in the early church were gifts that had to do with speaking? What better way to introduce false doctrine? vs. 3
6. False doctrine was being communicated by means of supernatural phenomena that would take place. People were demonstrating "miracles," but the doctrine being communicated was corrupt. This is what verse 3 is all about.
7. Paul is teaching them that the issue is not the experience, but the doctrine being communicated. Just because something looks as if it is a supernatural occurrence does not validate as being from God.
8. There were people that were manifesting supernatural gifts, but they were communicating false doctrine concerning Jesus Christ. Paul knew that the Corinthians were in danger.

9. Did you know Satan can induce supernatural phenomena? **Matthew 24:24; Exodus 7:9-11, 20-22, 8:6-7; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13-14, 16:13-14** – Experience-based religion is very dangerous! God's Word is the final authority.

### **God is the focus of spiritual gifts. vs. 4-6**

1. Notice how all three members of the Godhead are involved in the distribution, use, and operation of spiritual gifts.
  - God the Holy Spirit - vs. 4
  - God the Son - vs. 5
  - God the Father - vs. 6
2. This will provide an outline for the rest of this chapter.
  - The role of the Holy Spirit in giving the gifts - vs. 7-11
  - The role of Christ as Head of the body - vs. 12-27
  - The role of the Father in overseeing everything - vs. 28-31
3. When it comes to spiritual gifts, God is the focus - the issue is not your experience, your feelings, your position, your recognition, your personal edification, etc.
4. The reason why so many churches become places of fleshly behavior and false doctrine is because the focus becomes the subjective experiences of people rather than the focus being on God and the objective standard of His Word.
5. The truth of spiritual gifts has absolutely nothing to do with your experience (I know what I saw or what happened to me). Your experience is not the test of truth.
6. The truth of spiritual gifts lies in God as revealed in His Word.
  - There are different gifts, but the same Holy Spirit. vs. 4
  - There are different administrations (ways to serve the Lord using those gifts), but Christ should be the focus of it all. vs. 5
  - There are different operations (spiritual benefits and results that come from the use of those gifts), but God should be the facilitator of it all. vs. 6

### **Spiritual gifts are given for corporate edification. vs. 7**

1. In verse 7, "*profit withal*" means to "bear together, contribution."
2. Spiritual gifts are not given so you can edify yourself and make you feel better or have a hair-raising, tingling experience.
3. They are given so members of the body of Christ can contribute to the edification of the church, the body. The believer is the channel whereby profit, benefit, and edification can come to the body.
4. The Holy Spirit was manifesting Himself through the use of these gifts for the profit of the church, not the individual exercising the gift. 14:12, 17, 26, 31
5. Paul is specifically dealing with supernatural sign gifts in this section. We will discuss these in the coming weeks. But there are also ministry gifts (**Romans 12:6-8**). All of these gifts are given for the corporate edification of the body of Christ.