

**International Sunday School Lesson**  
**Study Notes**  
**May 10, 2015**

**Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11**  
**Lesson Title: Gifts of the Spirit**

**Introduction**

“Is my child gifted?” That seems to be a common question among many parents today. But finding the answer to that question is not always easy. There are tests, evaluations, and years of development required before that can be determined. “Are God’s children gifted?” The answer to that question is easy. Yes. Every Christian has a spiritual gift that is designed to function within the body of Christ. God designed that every born again believer would contribute to the maturity, growth, and spiritual health of the church.

In First Corinthians chapters 12-14 the Apostle Paul discusses the gifts of the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts. Paul had been asked by the Corinthian believers about spiritual gifts. Because of their ignorance and misuse of spiritual gifts, he devotes considerable time and attention to instructions on this important subject in the body of Christ.

Spiritual gifts are special endowments given by the Holy Spirit to the believer to enable him to worship, witness, and work in the kingdom of God. Spiritual gifts are more than natural talents or abilities. Spiritual gifts given to the believer are gifts of grace. You don’t earn them. You don’t receive them by becoming more spiritual. It’s sad that something given by God to be a blessing to the believer and the body of Christ has become so divisive and abused. It seems that Christians today are either ignorant of the fact that they have a spiritual gift or they misinterpret the purpose and function of spiritual gifts. When that happens the body of Christ suffers and the lost world concludes the church has gone mad (1 Corinthians 14:23-25).

Writing to the Ephesian church, the Apostle Paul said, *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:11-13). Paul’s point is that every believer has a vital part in the ministry of the body of Christ. And the goal of the body of Christ is that we be like Him. For that to happen you must know, understand, and properly use your spiritual gift or gifts.

**The Importance of Knowing Our Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-3)**

## Verse 1

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”

“Now concerning spiritual gifts” is Paul moving from the discussion of the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 to the subject of “spiritual gifts.” The word “gifts” is in italics in our King James text because the word was not in the original manuscripts. Paul is saying, “Now concerning spirituals.” “Spirituals” means “non-carnal.” Paul had been speaking about “carnalities” in the first section of his letter and now he is going to speak about “spiritual” matters such as the spiritual gifts the Lord has given His children.

Paul does not want the Corinthians to be “ignorant” about spiritual matters. They can’t function or minister in the body of Christ without knowledge of their spiritual gifts. “Ignorant” means “to ignore, not understand, or not to know.” There is no excuse for the Corinthians or any New Testament Christian to be in the dark concerning spiritual gifts or spiritual matters. Paul is going to give them clear definition and instruction concerning spiritual gifts. Likewise, believers have the infallible word of God and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit to teach us (Psalm 119:105; John 16:13).

According to 1 Corinthians 1:4-7, the believers at Corinth had received an abundance of spiritual gifts, but they were lacking in a proper knowledge and understanding of the purpose and use of those gifts. The believers at Corinth were carnal, immature, and divided as a church. And much of that could be contributed to their “ignorance” of spiritual truth.

## Verse 2

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

It is interesting that as Paul begins to discuss the importance of spiritual gifts with the Corinthians, he reminds them how they were formally led astray into lifeless worship. Prior to their conversion the believers at Corinth “were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.” “Gentiles” means they were heathen people who did not know God. They were “carried away” or “led” to “dumb idols.” The words “carried away” and “led” suggests they were like prisoners being led around into worship of every “dumb” or voiceless, lifeless idol that could be imagined (Psalm 115:5; Habakkuk 2:18).

Tragically, some of the Corinthians had fallen back into their old idolatrous beliefs and practices. And there were those in Corinth who were “carrying” and “leading” them into forms of worship and use of spiritual gifts that was not biblical. Sadly, the same is true today among many who are ignorant of spiritual gifts. In many places of worship where spiritual gifts are said to be

practiced, it is actually nothing more than carnal fleshly emotions attributed to the Holy Spirit. The believers at Corinth mistook the work of Satan for the work of the Spirit. And that is happening in too many people and places today.

### Verse 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 wanted the Corinthians “to understand,” to be clear about the fact that “no man” would ever “speak by the Spirit of God” and call “Jesus accursed.” No person speaking under the power of the Holy Spirit would ever stand up and say, “Jesus be damned.” Evidently some people were standing up the public worship services at Corinth, supposedly manifesting the gifts of the Spirit, but actually cursing Jesus!

The word “speaking” is the Greek word *laleo* {lal-eh-o} which means “to utter a voice or emit a sound.” This indicates that Paul had the issue of speaking in tongues in mind at the very outset of his discussion of spiritual gifts. Like many today, the Corinthians thought the real test of spirituality was some type of frenzied outward speech that no one could understand.

Paul also wanted the Corinthians to know that “no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” When someone stood in the congregation at Corinth and said, “Jesus is the Lord,” they could know that individual was speaking “by the Holy Ghost.” Now obviously anyone can stand up and say, “Jesus is the Lord” (Matthew 7:21). But Paul is contrasting those who are cursing Jesus with those who truly know Him as “Lord.” When you hear someone confess His Lordship and see them commit to that lordship, you can be assured that is of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Differences of Our Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-10)**

In verses 4-6, Paul uses three different words in referring to spiritual gifts, each describing the nature of the gift. The words are gifts, administrations, and operations. In each instance Paul names a member of the Godhead as the source of the gift: the Spirit, the Lord (meaning Christ), and God the Father. Once again we see a clear and unmistakable case of Paul’s reference to the Trinity.

### Verse 4

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

It seems the Corinthian church had bought into the idea that only a few select people had the “spiritual gifts” that were important. Paul is now going to let the air out of that balloon! He said there are “diversities” or many spiritual “gifts.” The word “diversities” literally means “variety of kind, sort, or class.” The church, like the human body, has different members or parts that all work together for the health of the body.

The Greek word for “gifts” is *charisma* {khar-is-mah}. It means “a favour which one receives without any merit of his own.” Think of it in the sense of a gratuity or an endowment. While believers have different gifts, all believers receive their gifts by “the same Spirit.” They are not to be acquired in any other way.

#### Verse 5

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

Believers not only have different gifts, they have “differences of administrations” or different kinds of ways to serve the Lord and one another. The word “administrations” is the Greek word *diakonia* {dee-ak-on-ee-ah} meaning “service.” Every member has his particular service to render. The Lord does not expect one individual, one family, or one group of people to carry or control the ministry of the local church.

While our service may be different, we all serve or minister to “the same Lord.”

#### Verse 6

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

“Operations” is from the Greek word *energema* {en-erg-aymah} from where we get our English word energy. It is used here to describe unusual manifestations of miraculous power. “Worketh” is *energeo* {en-erg-eh-o} meaning “to be operative, to put forth power.” Paul is saying there are different ways to accomplish the work of God but it all must be accomplished through His power.

#### Verse 7

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

“The manifestation of the Spirit” speaks of what spiritual gifts do. They “manifest” or make clear what the Holy Spirit is doing and accomplishing in the body of Christ through all the members. Spiritual gifts are given “to profit withal.” That means when properly understood and properly used in the power of the Spirit, spiritual gifts bring the body of Christ together, not divide it.

Spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit are intended to be used within individuals for the benefit of all within the church. Many churches had never made an effort to help Christians determine their spiritual gifts. Some Christians know their gifts but are never allowed to use them. Others know but refuse to live a committed life where they can use them. May the Lord help us to know our gift, help others know their gift, and work together to each use our gift to edify and build up the body of Christ.

### Verse 8-10

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 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:”

The various spiritual gifts are listed here in verse 8-10, and verse 28, and also in Ephesians 4:11 and Romans 12:6-8. Here, Paul lists several spiritual gifts, possibly in what he considers to be their order of importance in regard to the Corinthians need for understanding. He spoke about “diversities of gifts” in verse 4, so he now lists a few of them.

First, “the word of wisdom” is speaking of the ability to understand Scripture and communicate it to others. Paul’s use of the word “word,” *logos* in the Greek, indicates this is a speaking ability. “Wisdom” is the ability to understand God’s will and apply it. “Wisdom,” then, refers to the ability to make application of biblical truth in daily living. Coupled together with “word,” this is a spiritual gift of communicating to others how the truth of God’s Word and how to apply it.

Who might have this spiritual gift of “the word of wisdom?” It could be a pastor or a Sunday school teacher. It could also be a Christian counselor or just a believer in the family of God who sees a problem and he or she by their knowledge of God’s Word is able to apply truth to the solving of a problem.

Second, “the word of knowledge” is the ability to know biblical truth and put those truths together and communicate them to others. Again, the word “word” is *logos*, indicating this is a speaking ability. Remember, you can speak audibly or through electronic means or through the written page. Either way it is communication.

Without question there was a time in church history when “the word of knowledge” would come to someone and God would reveal His will to that person and through that person. God was revealing His word and His will. But now we have the completed word of God. There is no more biblical revelation.

Therefore, the spiritual gift of “the word of knowledge” is simply the God-given ability to take what is written in God’s Word, study it, understand it, put the pieces together, and communicate it to others.

Who might have this spiritual gift of “the word of knowledge?” Again, it could be a pastor, a teacher, a Christian author, or a biblical scholar.

Third, the spiritual gift of “faith” is the God-given ability for believing God. This, of course, cannot mean saving faith because that enters a repentant heart at the moment of salvation. Someone with the spiritual gift of “faith” is someone who believes beyond what is visible and in some cases possible. In the early days of the church the gift of “faith” was connected with miracles. Today, the gift of “faith” is connected with prayer and with God’s response to prayer.

Who might have this spiritual gift of “faith?” It might be someone like George Mueller, the director of the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England, who cared for over 10,000 orphans during his Christian life. Mueller never requested financial support, nor did he ever go in debt. Many times he would receive donations of food as the children sat at the table waiting to eat. That is the gift of “faith.”

Fourth, the spiritual “gifts of healing.”

*Note: Before dealing with the gifts of healing, below is a list of the PERMANENT GIFTS and the TEMPORARY SIGN GIFTS. The permanent spiritual gifts are still operative in the church today and the temporary sign gifts are no longer operative.*

*The permanent gifts are: gift of knowledge and wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8); gift of discerning of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10); gift of giving (Romans 12:8); gift of exhortation (Romans 12:8); gift of ministering (Romans 12:7); gift of showing mercy (Romans 12:8); gift of ruling or administration (1 Corinthians 12:28); gift of faith (1 Corinthians 12:9); gift of teaching (Romans 12:7; Ephesians 4:11); gift of evangelism (Ephesians 4:11); and gift of pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11)*

*The temporary sign gifts are: gift of apostleship (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28); gift of prophecy (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10); gift of miracles (1 Corinthians 12:28); gifts of healing (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30); gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10); gift of interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10; 13:8)*

The “gifts of healing” were exercised by the apostles and perhaps others in the early church to authenticate the message of the gospel and the apostles. In Acts 5:12-16 the sick were placed in the streets, “*that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them...*” And the Bible

says, "...*they were healed every one.*" In Acts 28:1-9 the Apostle Paul healed an entire island of unbelievers and through that miracle of healing he was able to tell them about Jesus Christ, the great Physician of the soul. But this same Paul, near the end of his ministry, left one of his best friends sick and continued on in the ministry without him (2 Timothy 4:20). If the "gifts of healing" were still operative, you would have to ask, "Why?" The "gifts of healing" are not in operation today. No individual alive today has the "gift of healing."

*Teachers note: I am aware that many Christians believe that the gifts of healing are still operative. However, my commitment is to biblical truth, not denominational tradition or personal experience. I believe divine healing is based on the sovereignty of God. There is a difference between divine healing and the gifts of healing God used to authentic the gospel and the message of the apostles.*

Fifth, the spiritual gift of "working of miracles." "Miracles" is the Greek word *dunamis* {doo-nam-is} meaning "strength, power, and ability." Some in the early church were given the gift to actually perform miracles by the supernatural power of God. The purpose of this gift was to prove the God-sent authority of the one doing the miracle.

In Acts 6:8, the Bible says, "*And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*" The wording of the text indicates that this was a reoccurring thing in Stephen's life. Miracles were taking place all around these apostles. It happened to confirm that they were God's sent men.

The spiritual gift of "working of miracles" is no longer in operation. That gift had a unique purpose and that purpose has been served. Does God still do miracles? Yes. Every time a sinner is saved by grace it is a miracle. That kind of change can be nothing less than miraculous. But the "working of miracles" through men has ceased.

Sixth, the spiritual gift of "prophecy." Depending upon how you interpret this word "prophecy," it may or may not be in operation. If the "gift of prophecy" was a special ability to speak forth the revealed truth of God, or give utterance to some new revelation as many did in Scripture, then this gift has ceased (Acts 19:6; 21:9; 21:10). If the "gift of prophecy" is a spiritual gift to "speak forth or proclaim" the revealed word of God without extra biblical revelation then the gift may still be operative. It is this teachers interpretation that the former is the correct interpretation and that this gift is no longer operative.

If the second interpretation is correct, who might have this spiritual gift? Most likely a biblical pastor, evangelist, preacher or teacher.

Seventh, the spiritual gift of “discerning of spirits.” The word “discerning” means “to judge” or “see through something to the truth.” This gift helped protect the church spiritually. Just as there are true prophets of God and true pastors and teachers in the world, so there are false prophets, false preachers and teachers. Some Christians had been given a special gift of discernment in order to detect false teachers and when false doctrine was taught. Evidently, not many if any had this gift at Corinth. If so, they weren’t using it. Likewise, not many have it in the church today. If they do and are using it, there wouldn’t be so much false doctrine and teaching in the church.

Who might have the spiritual gift of “discernment?” It could be any Christian who spends time in the word of God and prayer. If you read your Bible it will unfit you for a lot of preaching and stuff that goes on in the name of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Eight, the spiritual gift of “divers kinds of tongues.” The most controversial spiritual gift of our day is that of speaking in “divers kinds of tongues.” Paul discusses it in detail in 1 Corinthians 14. And we will study it in detail in a couple of weeks. It is unfortunate and only God knows the eternal damage that has been done to the body of Christ and to unbelievers because so many have embraced a faulty interpretation of this most special spiritual gift.

The word “divers” is not in the original manuscript. The word “tongues” is *glossa* {gloce-sah} in the Greek. It refers to that organ of speech in your mouth. From the very beginning of the church, “tongues” were known languages, not some pagan gibberish resulting from a worked up flesh in a sensual worship service. The original gift of “tongues” at Pentecost was in fact, that everyone present, though from many different countries, heard the apostles speak in his own language (Acts 2:6, 8, 11).

The Apostle Paul said, “...*whether there be tongues, they shall cease*” (1 Corinthians 13:8). “Cease” means “to come to a stopping point.” The original gift of “tongues” described in Acts 2 has come to an end. No one in the church today has the “gift of tongues.”

Nine, the spiritual gift of “interpretation of tongues.” Obviously if the “gift of tongues” is no longer in effect, there is no need for “interpretation” of what is being said. Evidently the original “gift of tongues” was still operating at the time of Paul’s writing to the Corinthians and the Holy Spirit had given some the “gift of interpreting” what was being said in order to protect the church from confusion. The “gift of interpretation” ceased when the “gift of tongues” ceased. No one today has the “gift of interpretation” of tongues in the church.

## **The Source of Our Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11)**

### Verse 11

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

All of the spiritual gifts that were working in the church at Corinth and all the permanent spiritual gifts that are still working today are working through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasizes again that it is the Holy Spirit who distributes “to every man severally as he will.”

The word “severally” means “pertaining to one’s self, belonging to one’s self.” Each spiritual gift is handed out by the Holy Spirit. He and He alone decides who gets what gift, when, and for how long.

## **Conclusion**

Spiritual gifts are given to believers according to the sovereign choice of God the Holy Spirit. They are not earned or deserved. The Puritan John Owens wrote, “Spiritual gifts are that without which the church cannot subsist in the world, nor can believers be useful to one another and the rest of mankind to the glory of Christ as they ought to be.”

All believers are gifted children. Peter said, “*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (1 Peter 4:10). And all of us are called to know our spiritual gift and minister the gifts He has given. Do you know your spiritual gift or gifts? If not, ask the Lord to help you identify your spiritual gift. Read and study those portions of Scripture in Romans and Ephesians that emphasize the believer’s spiritual gifts and the purpose of the body of Christ.

Remember, you are a gifted child!

Amen.