

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. 2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Corinth was full of temples and shrines to Greek gods. Immorality was rampant. People who were very rich and had anything they wanted lived beside people who were so poor that they didn't have food. The people of Corinth rank among the greatest in the history of the world, but they were steeped in the wisdom and philosophies of this world. Paul's letter to the Christians in Corinth was written to encourage the Corinthian Christians. He told them, "Remember that not too long ago you were like the others but now you must continue to grown in your faith.

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It was important that they understood that since they worshiped Jesus Christ as their Savior they would notice that they were now different from others in Corinth. For starters, the way Christians speak of God will be changed.

3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Not only will Christians recognize the differences between the pagans and themselves they also need to see that there are differences among Christians.

4 There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit.

Here's an interesting description of what it is that the Holy Spirit does: When distributing various talents and abilities to people, the Holy Spirit gives different amounts, in different combinations, to different people, at different times, under different circumstances, for different reasons and purposes ... But one and the same Spirit is the one who gives all those abilities. Paul said it in a more concise way,

5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

With all the variety of talents and abilities, God enables each Christian to grow, to change, to increase and to develop as we learn more and more of God's Word and we think how to apply His Word in our lives.

Paul write a list of gifts for us to consider; among them are: wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophesying, judging spirits and kinds of tongues.

When we first think about it *wisdom* and *knowledge* may seem to be the same thing. But one is the ability to learn much and the other is the ability to use the knowledge, to make meaningful and helpful application to peoples' needs and lives. Both gifts are great blessings, but they must not be confused. Perhaps you've encountered the frustration of meeting with an "expert" who possesses knowledge and knows what you need to know, but is unable to communicate at your level. His conversation is way "over your head." He cannot sympathize with you because although he understands facts he doesn't have the *wisdom* to use his *knowledge* to help you.

Faith is the joyful trust and certain unshakeable confidence that Christ Jesus came to save sinners, including you. What a precious gift of the Holy Spirit to have *faith*, even the size of a mustard seed (Mt. 17:20) that can move mountains. What a gift to have *faith* that can sleep on a cushion unafraid, in a boat that is nearly being swamped on the Sea of Galilee, because I know my Father in heaven is watching over me. What a gift to have *faith* to walk on water so that you can be with your Lord Jesus. What a gift to have faith that is not threatened by a fiery furnace, or a lion's den, or something even worse.

Distinguishing between spirits. Actually this would seem to be so obvious, and perhaps even easy, distinguishing between preachers who speak truth and those who deceive and lie, and yet our world is so confused about what to believe when it comes to religious matters. People who have grown up surrounded by God's Word and teaching still ask, "How can we know what is right?" The gift to "*distinguish between spirits*" is the ability to determine what teachings and principles are in line with God's Word.

In the days of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit enabled some people at some times to *speak unique words* in a wondrous way as evidence of God's presence. Today we thank God for those people whom he has blessed with the ability to translate the language of the scriptures. We thank him for enabling people to learn foreign languages and dialects so that the gospel can be preached around the world.

We would certainly desire to possess these gifts for ourselves but we understand that it is not likely than one person would have all these abilities: knowledge, wisdom, faith, preaching, teaching, judging spirits and language skills.

11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Where do you fit in? What talents, what gifts has the Lord given you? Can you identify what gifts God expects you to use in his kingdom?

Do you have the ability to teach Bible stories to your children or other children? Can you explain Bible stories to others who have never had the chance to learn and discuss them?

Do you have a gift of being able to listen to others and sort out what they say and then offer good and helpful advice?

Can you distinguish the difference between applying God's law and the gospel? Can you determine under which circumstances someone needs to hear God commands and recognize their sinfulness so that they ask for forgiveness and when they need to hear the comfort and the grace of God's love and forgiveness through Jesus?

Can you pray for the children of our Sunday School? Can you pray for the treasurer and his committee who must manage a variety of accounts and make wise use of the money that's available? Can you pray for church leaders who oversee the congregation's business? How about praying for the visitors who come to our church looking for a spiritual home where they can lean about the love of their Savior, Jesus? Can you pray for the families in our church and community who struggle to live in a God pleasing way but must overcome serious problems and complications in their lives?

Can you enhance our worship with your joyful singing and praise or with your musical abilities? Can you let people know that you're glad to see them at worship by smiling and greeting them sincerely on the way in or out of the church?

From these verses of 1 Corinthians 12 we learn that God made each one of us differently. We may be able to notice that we're not like unbelievers who do not know Jesus or care whether they live their lives for Christ. But we should also learn to appreciate the fact that even as Christian brothers and sisters we are different from one another. We were all sinful and God took sinful people like us and he made,

Some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

But no matter how God uses us, his purpose is,

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Eph 4:12,13

He gave each of us different talents. He brings us all together so we can do works of service.

When we talk about stewardship, it certainly is not simply about how much money we can put in an envelope (although we are grateful when people recognize that God has blessed them with that ability). Stewardship also includes how we use everything that God has given us, including the opportunities and special abilities he gives to us.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for the many abilities you have brought together in this congregation. May we use them to your glory and the growth of Christian faith among our congregation members and others.

Amen

Let's see how many questions it takes to get everyone to stand.

Stand up if—

- * you like broccoli
- * your favorite color is yellow
- * you've ever been to Mexico
- * you have never been on an airplane
- * you wish it was warmer outside today

Sit down if

- * you're not wearing socks
- * you don't know what you're going to have for supper
- * you don't like watching television
- * you almost always eat only vanilla ice cream
- * you really thought the Vikings would win the Super Bowl this year
- * you ate breakfast today
- * you haven't had your birthday yet in 2013

Do you see how many people are alike? They like the same things. But it also took us 5-7 questions to get everyone to stand up or sit down, so we're not really all that much alike.

God makes each of us differently and today we're going to talk about what God has done to make each of us special. We might be special because of something that you like, or it might be because of something you can do, or it might be because of something that you have.

God's love for us is certain for each of us, because he doesn't love us based on what we can do, or what we have. Because of Jesus God loves us.

Let's Pray:

Order of Service: Page 38, Service of the Word (2 & Closing)

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 62:1-5; John 2:1-11

Psalm: 133-134 page 115

Hymns: # 91 The Star Proclaims the King is Here

#481 O God, Your Hand the Heavens Made
#177 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest (verse 6)
Engel and Others in Israel until January 23
Children's Devotion