

# The Temple of God

## An Exposition of 1 Corinthians

<sup>12:1</sup>Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware<sup>a</sup>. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led astray to the mute idols, however you were led<sup>b</sup>. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit<sup>c</sup>.  
<sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit<sup>d</sup>. <sup>5</sup>And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord<sup>e</sup>. <sup>6</sup>There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons<sup>f</sup>. <sup>7</sup>But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good<sup>g, h</sup>.

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<sup>a</sup> 12:1 **Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.** Paul’s use of “concerning” can be found in this letter as he introduces new teaching topics, like marriage (7:1, 23) and meat sacrificed to idols (8:1). He communicated his desire to make sure his readers were not ignorant regarding “spiritual” things. The word “gifts” was inserted by the translators, but with good reason as you will see by the contents of this chapter.

<sup>b</sup> 12:2 **You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.** This reference to the past was an embarrassing but necessary reminder of how blind and deceived the people were before their conversion to Christ. They had been led astray. Paul pointed out that the idols were “mute.” This contrast is important upon entering a study of spiritual gifts because the Holy Spirit is not mute. He speaks the truth about Jesus, as Jesus explained:

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning. John 15:26-27

<sup>c</sup> 12:3 **Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.** Of course saying “Jesus is Lord” is much more than a mantra or spiritual formula. Even a pagan can pronounce those words. The contrast here points out that what you believe about Jesus is vital to Christian identity. You can tell the underlying loyalties of a prophet based on what He says about Jesus. Spiritual gifts serve the purpose of identifying Jesus as He is. That is why Jesus asked the disciples a catechism question in Matthew 16. Peter’s correct response did not come from being smart but came as a gift from God.

He *said* to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 16:15-17

<sup>d</sup> 12:4 **Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.** A “gift” (*charisma*) is something you receive rather than something you earn or deserve. This word is used of the gift of salvation as well as the service gifts described here. The pagans created different deities for different purposes. Paul says that the diverse gifts operating in the Church of Christ come from one God.

<sup>e</sup> 12:5 **And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.** “Ministries” are places of service. This word is actually the source of our word *deacon*. The church is not a building or an organization. It is an organism. If we are the church every member has a ministry that the Master Himself designed.

<sup>f</sup> 12:6 **There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.** “Effects” are the outworking of the gifts. For instance, there are some things God does that are

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clearly visible. Whether it is the work of physical healing or the work of salvation, God is the chief actor.

<sup>g</sup> 12:7 **But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** Every believer has at least one spiritual gift. The purpose of that gift is to serve others.

Godliness and spirituality are not measured by the use of spiritual gifts. That should be evident here. The gifts of the Spirit do not demonstrate Christlike character. The fruit of the Spirit does.

<sup>h</sup> 12:1-7 By nature our affections are self-centered, even in religious fervor. The major shift in worldview that happens when someone becomes a Christian is the redirection of love. In Christ you no longer need to live for yourself. If you have the Holy Spirit you are gifted by God to love Him and His people. Because of this truth the discussion of spiritual gifts does not need to stir up controversy. This discussion is not first about what gifts are for today or not. It is certainly not about some “need” you have to exercise your gift. The discussion centers on how we can glorify the King and serve others in His kingdom with the gifts He gave us.

Before entering the list of spiritual gifts there are some important biblical statements that provide a foundation for the study:

1. The primary concern of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Jesus. This needs to be said because of extreme positions Christians have taken on the gifts of the Spirit. They are not ends in themselves. That is why in a first century church Paul was already putting restrictions on their use. If it does not in some way adorn the gospel it is not being used the way God intended.
2. It is possible to imitate any of these abilities and not be a believer. Remember that Judas never possessed eternal life but he was actually given the ability to do signs and wonders. Matthew 7:22 records that one day very gifted people will be cast away because the Lord never knew them.
3. It is possible to exercise any of these abilities selfishly. Some people do great things for others because it makes them look or feel good.
4. The gifts God gave you are designed to benefit others. Spiritual gifts are a way to act out the second great commandment. It is a satisfying thing to be used by God, but that satisfaction can quickly turn selfish if you glory in the gift more than you glory in the Giver.

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