



## Teaching on Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-11)

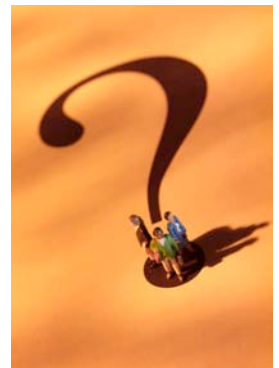
Paul now moves on to the new topic of the use of spiritual gifts in the church. This will be his focus for the next three chapters. This is an important topic of which Paul does not want the church to be “uninformed.” Gifts that had been given to some in the church were be misused and Paul wanted to instruct and inform the church about these gifts.

It was from this idolatrous background that the Corinthian Christians had come. In verse 2, Paul reminds them that they had been led astray by mute idols. The Corinthians left a polytheistic, animistic, pagan world and they were sometimes confused if something was from God or not.

### 1. How does a person’s background before coming to Christ sometimes influence him after he becomes a Christian?

In the midst of all the chaos that existed in the pagan city of Corinth, the Christians had difficulty knowing what was from God and what was not from God. Distinguishing these matters was not an easy task for these Christians because in many of these idolatrous religions there were what might be called “counterfeit” gifts. They are counterfeit because they contained some of the same elements that are found in Christianity.

These pagan religions had their own temples and worshipped their gods. Baptism was a part of the life of some of the religious groups while others had celebrations that some might appear similar to the speaking in tongues. Some groups claimed to prophecy, or work miracles, or heal the sick. The Christians, who would have received their gifts through the laying on of Paul’s hands, were confused and Paul writes to clear up any confusion.



### I. Does it Honour Christ?

Certainly chaos and division and confusion are not from God and cannot honour Christ. Anyone who claims to have a gift and is not honouring Christ, must not have a gift from the Holy Spirit. In verses 4-6 Paul says that there are varieties of gifts, varieties of service, and varieties of activities, but there is only one Spirit, one Lord, and one God.

While these false gods are gods of disorder, God is a God of order and love and unity. According to verse 3 some in Corinth were claiming to be from God, while blaspheming the name of Jesus. How or why this could happen we don’t know for certain. The opposite of this equation is that anyone who claimed that Jesus was Lord was indeed doing so through the Holy Spirit.

## 2. What is it impossible to say in the Spirit of God?

The Greek word *anathema* is translated in the ESV as “accursed” and means to be delivered up to divine wrath.<sup>1</sup> The word Lord indicates sovereign authority. He is our ruler, and creator. We owe to Him all our allegiance. It is true that someone can say with his lips that Jesus is Lord and not mean it in his heart. The Bible is not teaching us that mere lip service means that something comes from Christ, but anyone who is from God will speak well of him.

What the Bible is teaching is that the one who is speaking by the authority of the Holy Spirit is going to bring honour to Jesus Christ. Those who claim to have gifts from the Holy Spirit are going to be acting in a way that will bring honour to Christ. This was a good test in the first century and it is a good test in the late 20th century to ask if something brings honour to Christ. If it does not, then it cannot be a gift from the Holy Spirit.

## II. A Variety of Gifts



In verses 4-6, Paul mentions the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who stand in complete unity. All miraculous spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit and though they were varied they all came from the same Spirit, and though they were utilised in various ways they served the same Lord and God.

Verse 7 is a key verse for this section. “*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*” Every gift given by the Holy Spirit was given to build the church. Any purported gift that does not help to build the church cannot be from God.

## 2. What does the phrase “common good” mean?

## 3. What gifts are listed in verses 8-10 and what did they accomplish?

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

<sup>1</sup>Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 198.

G.

H.

I.

Every gift (Greek word is *charismaton*) that is from the Holy Spirit has the same source of power. It is he who gives to each one the gift he individually wills. These gifts were given in the New Testament through the laying on of the hands of an apostle, but it was the Holy Spirit who apportioned the gifts as he desired. Every gift was given for the building up of the church.