

Good morning! In **John 14:12**, Jesus told the disciples an extraordinary thing, Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”** Jesus was preaching the Kingdom of God with power and He was doing many amazing miracles that proved the reality of His message. Now, Jesus says that His disciples will not only continue the work, but, in fact, they will do even greater things. How can this be? Jesus explains a few verses later in **John 14:16**, **“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.”** The, “Counselor,” referred to here is the Holy Spirit.

For several weeks, we have been looking at the events of Acts 2, at the time when the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit. On that day, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and they were transformed in their words and actions as they began to live in the power of the Spirit. As we continue in Acts, we will see the disciples boldly preaching Jesus and performing great miracles by the power of the Spirit. But first, before moving on in Acts, I think it would be helpful for us to learn a little more about the work of the Holy Spirit. So, we are going to pause in our study of Acts and take a look at the gifts of the Holy Spirit this week, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit next week.

Peter introduced the topic of the gifts of the Spirit in his message to the crowd when he proclaimed that the events that were happening were a fulfillment of prophecy. Peter quoted Joel 2:28, saying in **Acts 2:17**, **“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”** Prophecy, the speaking of messages received from God, including messages received through prophetic dreams and visions, was to become widespread when God poured out His Spirit. We will see this fulfilled in Acts and we will also see that God gave many other gifts of the Holy Spirit as well. Let’s take a look at some of those additional gifts.

Lists giving examples of the gifts of the Spirit are found in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. Let’s read some of the key verses.

I. Scripture Readings, (NIV 1984)

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 “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.”

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 “27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.”

Romans 12:6-8 “6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

Ephesians 4:11-12 “11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”

II. Teaching

In these verses, a wide variety of spiritual gifts are listed and some are listed more than once. Dropping the duplicates, I found the following gifts in these verses: message of wisdom, message of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, apostleship, administration, helping others, teaching, encouragement, generous giving, leadership, mercy, and evangelism.

This is quite a list, but, even so, I think these are only examples. Some of the gifts are dramatic and amazing, but others are quieter and more subtle. Some, such as administration and encouragement are things that we may usually think of as natural abilities. The picture that emerges is that the Holy Spirit gives some spiritual gifts that are uniquely supernatural, and also some spiritual gifts that strengthen or enhance a natural ability. Many people, including non-Christians, have a natural talent for administration and leadership. But on a few occasions I have met Christian leaders whose abilities to organize information and tasks and motivate people to follow them are truly extraordinary. I think we can say that these people had, not just natural talent, but also supernatural spiritual gifts for these tasks. Now, I considered going through these gifts one by one and discussing them in more detail, but actually, we will see most of these gifts in operation as we go through Acts and will be able to talk about them more as we go along.

So, what I would like to talk about today is the context in which these lists of gifts appear. First of all, let's take a closer look at **1 Corinthians 12: 11, "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."** The gifts are given to each believer, just as the Holy Spirit determines. Notice that this shows that the Holy Spirit is a person; the Holy Spirit considers and decides what gifts to give, when to give them, and who to give them to. Paul also strongly emphasizes that the gifts are given by the same Spirit. Why does Paul emphasize this? Well, the Greek and Roman cultures that dominated the Roman Empire were polytheistic and most of the people in Corinth would have grown up believing in many gods and many spirits. The common thinking in that culture was that there was a god or spirit for each thing – a spirit for health, a spirit for wisdom, and a spirit of gold to bring wealth, etc. etc.

In some ways, the thinking of those people was similar to the Shinto ideas we see in Japan. In Shintoism, every rock and tree, every stream and waterfall, each and every thing is associated with its own spirit or god. Shinto believers use the word, "yaoyorozu," written in kanji as, "eight million," to refer to their belief in many gods, but they really mean that there are an infinite number of gods. Now, there are some significant differences between Roman and Greek mythology, and Shinto mythology and beliefs, but there are also a lot of similarities, especially in the idea that there are many gods and spirits. So, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul makes a point of emphasizing that the wide variety of gifts of the Spirit that are seen in the church are the work of, **"one and the same Spirit."** Paul was writing to the church in Corinth, so his main readers were people who had already made the decision to believe in the One True Creator God, but Paul wants to make sure they don't get confused and slip back into polytheistic thinking.

In fact, at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 12, Paul reminds them of the Christian belief in One God who is revealed in the three persons of the Trinity. Take a look **1 Corinthians 12:1-6, "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."**

Paul doesn't want the Corinthians to be ignorant about spiritual gifts, and he especially doesn't want them to fall back into pagan thinking and the worship of many idols. So he first emphasizes faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and he emphasizes that all of the different gifts come from the one Holy Spirit. Then, he writes in parallel structure saying (1 Corinthians 12:4-6):

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."

With this threefold, parallel structure, Paul is teaching that although there are many different kinds of gifts, service, and working, it all comes from the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God; in other words, there is one Trinity of God who does all of these things. Paul strongly affirms the unity of God, while supporting the Trinity doctrine of one God in three divine persons, Father, son, and Holy Spirit.

Next, in **1 Corinthians 12: 7**, Paul tells us the purpose of the gifts, **“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”** The gifts of the Spirit are given for the common good, to strengthen and build up the church as a whole. A few verses later, Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ and says in **1 Corinthians 12:12**, **“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.”**

What kind of image comes to mind when you think of a strong and healthy body? I found this photo of Liu Xiang, a champion 110 meter hurdler. This kind of athletic performance is possible only when the body has been thoroughly trained and all parts of the body are working in harmony with great strength.



The church is the Body of Christ and our mission is to take the Good News of Jesus to the ends of the world, making disciples of all peoples. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to equip us for the task, but we can be effective in our mission only if we work together in harmony. Paul’s letters to the church at Corinth strongly emphasize the need for unity and harmony, effective cooperation in the body.

Take a look at **1 Corinthians 12: 20-21**, **“As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!””** What is the message here for us? It is very simple. We need each other. The church cannot effectively do the Lord’s work unless we work in harmony, united in purpose. The body cannot accomplish even a simple task without harmony and unity of purpose. I want to give a simple example, just to illustrate the point. It is actually a silly example, but maybe that will help you to remember it. The head thinks, I want a cup of water. The eye sees the cup of water. The feet carry the body across the room. The hand reaches out and brings the cup of coffee to the head. Obviously, even for a simple task, all the parts of the body must work together.



1 Corinthians 12: 27, **“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”** We are a diverse group here at OIC, we come from many countries and we have many different gifts and abilities. But I hope that you will join with me in praying for complete unity and harmony, so that we might work together for the glory of God.

The various spiritual gifts described in the passages we have looked at are like the different parts of the body. Each has its function and place, but for the gifts to be used effectively, they must be used in harmony with the whole of the body. Paul emphasizes this in 1 Corinthians 14 where he discusses the proper uses of the gifts. For today, I would just like to share Paul’s concluding words in **1 Corinthians 14:39-40**, **“Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”** Spiritual gifts are good, and it is good to desire them. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way, for the good of the whole body.

As I mentioned a moment ago, here at OIC we are a diverse group and we come from many different backgrounds. Because of this I want to be sure to also mention the Seven Gifts of the Spirit. The seven gifts are commonly listed as: knowledge, fortitude, understanding, piety, counsel,



wisdom, and the fear of the Lord. These gifts are different than the spiritual gifts that we have been looking at in that they are said to be given to all Christians instead of to particular individuals. In particular, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that all believers receive these seven gifts, although they may be manifested in varying degrees in different individuals.

If you go to a Christian bookstore or look through a catalogue, you may sometimes see artwork, like this cross, based on these gifts. The list of the Seven Gifts of the Spirit comes from **Isaiah 11:2-3**, the words on the artwork come from an older translation, but we can still see the same ideas in our NIV translation, **“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears.”** This passage is prophetic about the coming Messiah, and so it refers first of all to our Lord Jesus Christ. But since all Christians are to be made like Christ, it is not unreasonable to interpret the passage in a way that sees it as a description of the mature Christian life as well.

III. Conclusion

In between his list of spiritual gifts in chapter 12 and his instructions on the proper use of the gifts in chapter 14, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 13. This famous passage is sometimes called the, “love chapter,” and it is very often used in weddings. In a way, it seems out of place, inserted into the middle of the discussion of spiritual gifts. But when we realize that Paul has introduced the whole discussion of spiritual gifts because he wants to emphasize the need for unity in the church, then we understand why the love chapter is placed in the middle. It is because love brings unity and harmony. Let’s close with a few verses from this beautiful chapter.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7 “1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Let’s pray.

IV. Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

Thank you for the joy and privilege of coming together today to praise your name and to give thanks for all of your wonderful works. Thank you for the wonderful salvation you have provided for us through your love, shown so wonderfully at the cross of Jesus and in His resurrection. Thank you also for your Spirit, given to all who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Fill us with your Holy Spirit and pour your love into our hearts. Help us to walk with Jesus and to become more like Him day by day as we continue the journey of faith until we arrive home in heaven with you. Provide spiritual gifts and every needful thing to our church family so that together we might be effective witnesses of your love and grace, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in this time and place. Teach us to be kind and compassionate, generous and gentle, loving others as you have loved us. Pour out your Holy Spirit in this place Lord, for your glory! Bless each person, their families, their friends, and their neighbors, that they might know your goodness and grace. Have mercy on us and on this land, forgive our sins, and heal this land, out of the wonders of your love, and for your glory. We give thanks that you are the true and living God and that you hear all of our prayers. Thank you, Lord! In the Name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.