

## Di122 Essentials of Christianity

### *Lesson Di122-10 The Gifts of the Spirit*

How many Christian places of worship exist in your town? How many non-Christian places of worship are there? About 20 years after the Holy Spirit had been poured out in Jerusalem, the apostle Paul arrived in the very prosperous city of Corinth. The church was growing in Jerusalem, in spite of persecution, but there was no place of Christian worship yet in Corinth. Instead, the city boasted 12 temples to pagan gods and one synagogue. Paul was on his second missionary journey.

In many ways Corinth was the chief city of Greece. It had over 650,000 people and was known for its commerce and sexual sins. As Paul visited the synagogue in Corinth, he met two Jewish believers who had been expelled from Rome—Priscilla and Aquila. They too were tentmakers, so Paul lived and worked with them, reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath, “trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4). Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. But after facing opposition, he began to minister to the Gentiles. Many of the Corinthians believed in the Lord and were baptized. Paul stayed one and a half years teaching them the Word of God (Acts 18:11). A church was born.

Perhaps due to the wickedness of their city, the church in Corinth was plagued with problems. The apostle Paul began to receive reports from several sources, concerning conditions in the church. Factions, immoral practices, disorderly worship, false teachings, and other abuses were evident. Some questions concerned the use of spiritual gifts in the church. There seemed to be some people who were abusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit as the church came together to worship. Some people thought they were better than the others because they had a certain spiritual gift, while others seemed not to have one.

So on his third missionary journey, Paul wrote a letter back to the church at Corinth. We call it First Corinthians, one of the epistles in the New Testament. He explained, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1Cor 12:4-7). The apostle Paul reminded the believers that the Holy Spirit is the source of the gifts to the church. Each person was seeking God in prayer, to be baptized in the Spirit and to be used in the church for the benefit of everyone else. They could be confident that God would distribute the gifts as he saw the Body needed them.

Every time Paul teaches about spiritual gifts he speaks of the body of Christ. “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were given the one Spirit to drink. As it is, there are many parts, but one body. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1Cor 12:12-13, 20, 27). The gifts are for the whole Body of Christ. They are not sent to be special gifts only for the ones using them. One of the main problems in Corinth was a lack of unity. The people sought for positions of power and prestige. Paul used the picture of the human body to show how important

unity is, if a church is to use the gifts properly. Every person, no matter how exalted or humble, plays a crucial role in the life of a church. There should be no division in the body.

Then Paul explained further the identity, the nature, and the practice of the spiritual gifts. “To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 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. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines” (1Cor 12:8-11).

How refreshing for them to know that God wanted to be very close and very active in the church! Paul pointed out that God was calling them to obediently serve him. God would equip them with whatever spiritual gift the church needed for the common good. There was no one more special than another. They were blessed with those spiritual gifts as a body to make them a fully-functioning light for the lost.

The Corinthians were learning how to function as a united spiritual body of Jesus Christ. The gifts Paul lists are often called the “sign gifts.” They can be discussed in three groups. The first group is the revelatory gifts: the words of wisdom, the words of knowledge, and the discerning of Spirits. The second group can be referred to as the vocal gifts: prophecy, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. The third group can be seen as the power gifts: faith, healings, and the working of miracles.

The Holy Spirit gave some faith to pray for a need and see God resolve it. Others were given gifts of healings, believing that God would miraculously restore the sick. Whatever gift he gave, it was to bring honor to him. He gave the gift of miracles for the purpose of authenticating his Word for the common good of the church. Paul doesn’t go into a long explanation about how to use each of these gifts in this part of his writing. He only identifies their source: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”

As a body sensitive to the Holy Spirit, the Corinthians had been given the insight to discern good and evil spirits in the lives of people. They knew the truth, distinguishing true prophecy from false. It was a gift to them from the Holy Spirit. His gifts brought comfort and strength. They are all still vital to spiritual life. When the people needed encouragement other gifts were given, such as speaking in an unknown language and the giving of an interpretation. These brought the direction of the Holy Spirit into the gathering.

God promised not to leave his church. He has proven this by empowering his church with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This lesson is **important** because it helps us to understand the way the Holy Spirit uses Spirit-filled believers to minister to other members of Christ’s Body, the church, as well as to witness to those yet outside the Body.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God will give his church the spiritual gifts needed for the common good of believers and unbelievers.

**Review** questions:

1. What happened in the church at Corinth that made the apostle Paul write his first letter to them?  
A. [Pause] If you answered, “Paul wrote his letter to clear up the believers’ abuse of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their church worship,” you answered correctly.
2. Which believers are to expect God to use them in manifesting the gifts of the Spirit?  
A. [Pause] If you answered, “Those who have experienced Holy Spirit baptism and continue to seek God,” you are right.
3. In how many gifts should a believer expect to be used?  
A. [Pause] If you answered, “In as many gifts as God desires for that believer,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson, until you have a grasp of the truths. Memorize First Corinthians 12, verses four through seven: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” Once you understand the lesson, teach it to a small group of believers who have been baptized in the Spirit. The purpose of gathering together will be to seek God for his gifts for the common good. After praying together, ask if anyone has a word to share with the group.

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for sending your Holy Spirit upon your people. We invite you to come mightily upon us as we seek you. As your body, we need your gifts. Keep us from any pride as you pour out your goodness upon us and use us to do your will. May you receive all the glory for every manifestation of your Spirit in our midst. Amen.*