

Discovering God's Wisdom

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Lesson 14 1 Corinthians 12

Searching the Scriptures for hidden treasure

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162

Continuing with the theme of behavior in public worship, Paul now responds to another question brought by the Corinthians. The words, "Now concerning" reveal that he is moving in a new direction, responding to specific questions or issues that have been raised. The concern of chapters 12-14 is the matter of spiritual gifts.

Where verse 1 has translated *spiritual gifts*, the actual wording in the Greek is *pneumatikos*, which simply means spiritual. It may refer to spiritual things, spiritual matters, or spiritual persons. The word for gift, *charisma*, is not actually introduced until verse 4. We might translate verse 1, "Now concerning spiritual things" or, "Now concerning matters of the spirit" (or perhaps even "matters of the Spirit"). Although this chapter is predominantly about spiritual gifts, the teaching here centers on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-3

1. What is Paul's desire for the Corinthians in bringing up the subject of *spiritual things*? v. 1

We realize that they have asked some specific questions on this subject, but there is also evidence in this chapter and chapter 14 that there was some misunderstanding in this church concerning the purpose and work of the gifts. These chapters form a sort of apologetic for the true nature and purpose of spiritual gifts. It seems the Corinthians were equating spirituality with the more spectacular and outward gifts. This was causing rivalries in the congregation, as well as jealousy and chaos in worship. Paul wants to help them see the truth.

2. In their former pagan religious ceremonies, where were they led? v. 2
 - a. Who was influencing them as they were led astray?

The fact that these idols were *dumb* means that they were voiceless or could not communicate. Evidently they "spoke" through their worshippers in what was called *ecstatic* or *inspired* speech. This could easily be confused with the spiritual gift of tongues which was a genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit through believers in Christ. Others may have been giving forth prophecy or what they were calling a word of knowledge or wisdom. This was possibly happening right in the worship services of the Corinthian church. Paul gives them the formula so that they might know whether or not a word is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

3. What kind of spirit would want to portray Jesus as accursed?
 - a. If the speaker (of religious things) is *not* speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, how would this eventually be known?
 - b. What kind of spirit would portray Jesus as Lord?
 - c. If the speaker *is* speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, what will be the heart and result of their message?
4. Does your *mouth* say Jesus is Lord? What does Romans 10:9-10 say about this?
 - a. Does your *life* say Jesus is Lord? Is there any area in your life that gives lie to the fact that this is your testimony? What can you do about this?

Making It Personal...

5. If you read a book or hear a message that has good things to say, even things that you recognize as true, but does not lead you to recognize your need for Jesus as Lord and Savior, no matter how many good things it tells you, is it truly good? Share your thoughts on this.
 - a. What should you recognize about philosophical books or self-help messages that never lead you to Christ? Have you had an experience with this? Share your experience and what you learned.

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Pearl of Great Price

“A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.”

1 Corinthians 12:7 NLT This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

A main theme of chapter 12 is *unity in diversity*. That theme begins to shine forth in the verses we will study today.

1. How do you see *diversity* in verses 4-6?

The word diversities in verse 4 is the Greek word *diairesis* which means difference, distinction, variety.

- a. Is there only one gift? Name some of the varieties of spiritual gifts. (You may see verses 8-10 for help.)
- b. Is there only one ministry? Name some of the different types of ministry. (You may see verse 28 for help.)

The word for activities is *energima* which means operations, workings, effects. It could be defined as *different ways God works*. Verse 7 NLT says “*There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us.*” We might consider the fact that the same God works through different people in different ways, even people with the same gift.

- c. What might be some different ways God could use a person with the gift of teaching?

Does this open up to you an understanding of the varieties of gifts, the varieties of ministries and the varieties of God’s activities?

2. What does the teaching of verses 4-6 mean to you?
 - a. How would these thoughts help the Corinthians, who may have been singling out particular gifts and people as being more important than others?

3. How do you see *unity* in verses 4-6?

What a beautiful picture of the Triune God as the source and distributor of the gifts of the Spirit. God the Father, Jesus His Son, and the Holy Spirit are in complete control of every aspect of the gifts!

4. For whom are the gifts actually given? v. 7 What does this mean?

- a. How would this fact help turn the Corinthians' thinking around?

Making It Personal...

5. Have you found yourself coveting a particular gift of the Spirit? Perhaps you have even been jealous of someone with the gift you want. How does our passage today clarify your thinking on this point?
 - a. Have you thought you had no gifts? How does verse 7 dispel this lie of the enemy?

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-13

1. From verses 8-10, name the gifts Paul lists here for the Corinthians. Beside each gift share your understanding of what that gift actually is.

verse 8

•

•

verse 9

•

•

verse 10

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2. Where, again, is the unity found in this diverse list of gifts? v. 11

- a. Can you take any personal pride in the gifts you have been given? What insight does John 15:5 give on this point?

Alan Redpath says, “*We have nothing unless we receive it from Him.*” This thought should forever cancel out any pride and, in fact, should bring deep humility as we seek to exercise the gifts we have been graciously given.

3. How is the human body a picture of diversity in unity? v. 12

- a. What do you think Paul means when he says, “*all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.*”?

4. In verse 13, Paul speaks of the fact that all believers have been baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. How does that truth eliminate race, social status, and even sex? (Also see Galatians 3:28.)

Making It Personal...

The Life Application Bible Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians makes the point that God’s purpose in giving gifts has nothing to do with self-esteem. We are not to seek for or ask for gifts to help us feel important or significant, but instead, by making ourselves available to God and seeking to serve others for His sake, our gifts will come. It offers these steps to help us recognize what our gifts might be:

- 1) Ask God to increase your usefulness.
- 2) Seek opportunities of service.
- 3) Observe how others serve.
- 4) Ask those you’ve served and those who serve with you to help you discern your spiritual strengths.
- 5) Practice those gifts even more.

Digging Deeper

- ❖ As an overview of this lesson in chapter 12, consider how the Holy Spirit is the *unifier* of the body of Christ.

- ❖ Tie this week’s memory verse (1 Corinthians 12:7) with the heart of what Paul is saying in this chapter as a whole.

Fourth Day:

Deeper Discoveries

This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research.

Spiritual gifts (12:1) *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant..."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? 1 Corinthians 2:14; James 1:17; Luke 11:13; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 1:11 _____

❖ Write your own definition: _____

One body (12:12) *"...All the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:27; Ephesians 4:4, 12; Colossians 1:18 _____

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Fifth Day:

Heartsearch

Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.

Faithfully Administering God’s Grace

Any parent knows that no two children, no matter how alike they may seem, are exactly the same, they are different and unique in the way they behave and must be treated accordingly. In a similar way, God respects our uniqueness and deals with us on an individual basis, according to who we are, what our need is, and how we respond.

Paul explains in our chapter this week that there are different spiritual gifts—but only one Spirit, and it is the Holy Spirit who distributes all of the gifts. Together they complement one another. Paul states there are different ministries—but the same Lord who directs them all. We can serve Him in all kinds of ways, but we serve the same Lord. He also says there are diversities of activities, meaning that the way a certain gift operates in one person’s life is not necessarily the way it will work in someone else’s. What is the reason for all the variations? The Holy Spirit works differently in our lives according to our own unique personalities and the place He has sovereignly appointed for each one of us to fit in to the body of Christ.

In 1 Peter 4:10-11 it says: *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.”*

1. Go back and reread the above verses slowly before considering the following:
 - a. Who does it say has received a spiritual gift? Does this include you? Please share your thoughts.
 - b. With what thought in mind are you to minister that gift?
 - c. What specific gift(s) has God given to you?
 - d. Who supplies the resources you need to use your gift?
 - e. What *similarities* and/or *differences* do you notice between the operation of your gift and someone else who has the same gift?
 - f. With what resources has He equipped you to exercise your gift?

These verses in 1 Peter 4 tell us that we are to be *good stewards* of what God has entrusted to us. A *steward* in Scripture speaks of one who has been trusted with his master's wealth—it is not his own to do with as he pleases. It is his master's wealth to be distributed according to his master's will.

Now, apply that understanding to yourself. God has sovereignly bestowed upon you a gift, but it is not yours to do with as you please. Rather, it is God's gift for you to use as *He pleases*. You are to use your Master's gift according to your Master's will, for the building up and strengthening of the body of Christ—the Church. Every time you use your gift, you are ministering to others the *manifold*—many faceted—grace of God. When you serve others, you make God's grace visible to them.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”
1 Corinthians 12:7

2. Take a moment and think about what God has given to you for the profit or benefit to the body of Christ. How are you using your gift to glorify God?
 - a. If you don't know what your spiritual gift is, would you take a moment now and ask God to reveal to you what your gift is and show you where you fit in to His plan?
 - b. Would you write down a few thoughts thanking Him for finding you trustworthy, and will you ask Him to help you to further develop the gift(s) He has given you for His glory?

Heartsearch: Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week's study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

Sixth Day:

Laying Up Treasure

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God that I _____

I thank God for _____

I am asking God _____

Praise for answered prayer: _____

People/things I want to pray for this coming week: _____

Pearl of Great Price: _____

Notes