

## 1 Corinthians 12

This chapter continues the discussion of issues and practices in the local assembly that Paul began in Chapter 7. This chapter along with chapters 13 and 14 focuses on the right and wrong ways to recognize and use gifts in an assembly. It seems that the Corinthians had a tendency to be overly influenced by natural gifts, putting persons with spectacular public gift on a high pedestal, while barely recognizing others who were making substantial contributions to the assembly. These substantive gifts were critical for the growth and the well-being of the assembly.

Chapter 12 gives an overview of the scope of gifts and how they should be used and evaluated. God gives a diversity of gifts to His people and yet He desires that this diversity should be used to promote the unity of the assembly where they are manifested.

The term spiritual <pneumatikos> is not a noun in the Greek but refers to “things” or could even be translated “spirituals”. These spiritual gifts were given to individuals for the benefit of others for their common good and edification.

Three lists with up to nine gifts are mentioned here in 1 Cor. 12 and the spectacular and sign gifts are included.

	Rom. 12:3-8	1 Cor. 12:8-10 (28, 29, 30)	Eph. 4: 11-16
Given by	God the Father according to His grace	The Spirit	The ascended Lord for the growing church.
Total	seven	Nine (seven)	Five
	Prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, showing mercy	Word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, <u>healing, miracles, prophecy</u> , discerning of the spirits, <u>tongues, interpretation of tongues. (apostles, teachers, helps, governments)</u>	Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers
General role of gifts (after Heading)	Sacrificial giving of one’s life for the outworking of the gift	Divine control of the body (local church) through the Spirit	Heavenly purpose for the assembly: Christ-likeness and maturity.

12: 1- 11: Gifts and the individual. The area of gift is one where we see the flow of God’s grace, blessing an individual and in turn using that individual to bring blessing to an assembly.

12: 1-3: Spiritual gifts contrast natural endowment and engagement. Spiritual gifts are distinct from natural ability. When a person is saved God develops spiritual gifts in that person and may or may not use their natural abilities in that process. The difference between the natural realm and the spiritual realm is described the first three verses.

12:1: The existence of spiritual gift – There is spiritual gift and, while it differs from person to person, everyone has one or more gifts.

12:2: Experience of unregenerate Corinthians being led by other spirits to a profitless life

12:3: Criterion for determining if a person and his gift are from the Holy Spirit: source of the gift is evident based on their attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

12: 4 -6: The relationship of Spiritual gifts to the Triune Godhead: the source of unity in the midst of the diversity of gifts.

12: 4: Diversities in function are unified by the Holy Spirit (in the individual life)

12:5: Diversities in forms of service are unified by the Lord (in the assembly)

12:6: Diversities in outcomes of service are unified by God in their overall result (in the effectiveness of the exercise of the gift)

12: 7-11: Gifts in the individual (gifts are named, not the individuals): The role of the Holy Spirit in the distribution of gifts ensures both diversity and unity

12: 7: The Holy Spirit provides the gift so the person's life will be profitable for the Lord.

12:8: The Spirit provides different gifts to meet the diversity of need. In some cases this may be through multiple individuals with different gifts or one person with several gifts.

12:9: The miraculous nature of gifts is through the Spirit's empowerment.

12:10: In addition to the Spirit's role giving the "sign" gifts He also gives the ability to discern those gifts.

12: 11: The Spirit's sovereignty determines what a person receives. Since He has allocated our gift to us we should not complain or argue about what we have received.

12:12 – 31: Individuals with specific gifts are given to the church to enable the functioning of the local assembly. Each person has their set of individual gifts.

12:12 – 12:13: Diversity (many members) and unity (one body) mark the local assembly - the receiving body for these gifts. (The local church and the universal church are different. The local church is a microcosms of the universal church and the principal place on earth for the exercise of these spiritual gifts. The universal church will be assembled after the rapture of believers.)

12:12 – The unity arises because all members are part of the one body of Christ.

12:13: The Spirit has worked to produce unity in the body through baptism and by providing a common source of joy.

12:14: Oneness is obtained from many individual elements. Oneness is not uniformity but it means diversity operating in harmony for the goal for the glory of God and for the advancement of the assembly and the work of God. The human body provides an object lesson for these principles.

12:15-20: By referencing different parts of the body, the apostle explores threats to the unity of the body.

12:15: Danger of jealousy: The peevish, self-pitying grumbling of the foot - one of the action-oriented parts of the body envying another action-oriented part.

12:16: Self-pitying rumbling by a part of the body used for perceiving the world (the ear) that envies what it thinks is a more important part of the senses (the eye).

12:17: Danger of monopoly: All of the diverse capabilities in the body are needed. Failure to accept and carry out our role could lead to a body that cannot sustain itself because it is too intent on being one thing.

12:18: The Sovereign God sets members in place in local assemblies. He has a role for each of us in the local assembly, (Do you know what your role is?)

- 12:19: Without a divine plan a body would not exist.
- 12:20 God's choice – many members – one body. The challenge: keeping the plurality of gifts active recognizing their diversity and, at the same time, maintaining unity.
- 12: 21- 22: Overcoming the human tendency to promote superiority and to depreciate another's gift
- 12:21: Danger of independence: Maintain an appreciation for every believer – the eye was not to despise the hand nor is the head to despise the foot even though they are above and have a better view. Without the hand or the foot that actions required and the path to be followed cannot be pursued.
- 12:22: Maintain a special concern for the vulnerable: The vulnerable persons are important because they draw out and lead to a display of Christian character both in the person and in the believers in the assembly.
- 12: 23-24: Need for empathy: Paul compares the members to three body parts: 1) the less honourable - usually clothed; 2) the uncomely parts – always clothed; 3) the comely parts - no need of clothing.
- 12:23: For the body to function smoothly we must ensure that those less attractive components are given more attention and care.
- 12:24: The members who are attractive in their own right receive enough attention – we need to help out those who are less comely (argumentative spirit, physical limitations, ...). God has put the comely with the uncomely so we all will praise God for his goodness.
- 12:25: Mutual Care prevents divisions: A different attitude which spurns the uncomely will lead to division. We should have a word of encouragement for those whose gift may not be public.
- 12:26: Mutual Sympathy: When one person suffers we should be forthcoming with our sympathy and prayers (even if we may feel we have as many problems). When one is honoured we should rejoice with them (rather than being envious).
- 12:27: They were body of Christ; or members of an assembly (a microcosm of the whole body of Christ) with the qualities or conditions of Christ. The challenge is to live out this unity through diversity..
- 12:28 – 29: What God has ordained for the church. While the Spirit allocates gifts to people, God allocates the people with those gifts to the church to take up certain roles.
- 12:28: Gifts that God established for the beginning of the church (apostles, prophets teachers)
- Apostles spoke with authority for they had seen the Lord, especially after his resurrection (1Cor. 9:1, 2). The apostles had an authoritative role to play in the early assemblies.
- Prophets – received supernatural revelations of the mind of God for the occasion or the situation. They would edify and encourage the believers (Effect on believers is seen in 14:25, 26).
- Teacher –gathered his ministry from the completed revelation in Scripture. The teaching gift is associated with the pastor (Eph. 4:11).
- Other gifts followed, many of which were for an age when the gospel was receiving witness by the "sign" gifts because the Word of God was not complete. It also included two gifts that have continued: helps and governments. Helps – laying hold of someone so as to support, consists of any way of rendering assistance, especially the weak and needy (1 Thess. 5:14). We all have the gift to be a help. Governments refers to spiritual guides in an assembly (especially overseers) which are an essential part of assemblies today.
- Tongues are last in this list of gifts, not because they continue to the end but their role needed to be understood. Diverse tongues were a temporary gift that served as a sign of judgement to the Jews. (In general, Jews were always present when the tongues were used.) This gift was prominent in the early church at Corinth. When its purpose had been served the gift was withdrawn.

12:29 -30: Seven questions are introduced which demand a negative answer. These questions are rhetorical and should be answered easily and consistently. If the answer was yes then it would mean everyone should have that gift and diversity would be diminished. The questions test for: a spirit of independence, self-sufficiency, ostentatious (under cloak of liberty) or a drive for prominence.

12: 29. Not all are apostles. Not all are prophets. Not all are teachers. Not all are workers of miracles.

12:30: Not all have the gifts of healing. Not all speak with tongues. Not all interpret. One individual does not need to exercise all of the gifts. Our focus should be on the gifts and opportunities that the Lord has given us.

12:31: The assembly was told to covet the best gifts. They were told to desire a selection of gifts that edify – not necessarily a collection of spectacular gifts. We should ask the Lord to raise up certain gifts that are lacking amongst us.

How we should use our gift – 1) recognize that we cannot all have the same gift, we must be satisfied with what we have and are, and 2) recognize that God can develop gift in us as time progresses. Let each of us wait on the Lord to develop our gift and to develop avenues for its use. Let us be obedient to His will and the leading of the Spirit so we put ourselves at His disposal ready to be content with what he gives or withholds, and assured that when all is understood God will use us for his glory.