COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 45 2 OF 5

The Gifts & Offices in the New Testament

STUDY GUIDE 2 OF 5:

One Spirit, Many Gifts

An overview of spiritual gifts serving the one body.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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Spiritual gifts belong to the operation of the Holy Spirit within the body of Christ. They are not independent powers possessed by individuals, and they do not make one believer more spiritual, more complete or more important than another. Every born-again believer possesses the same Spirit of Christ, while the one Spirit works through different members according to His will.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

Paul begins with diversity but continually returns to unity. There are different gifts, different areas of service and different operations, yet there is *"the same Spirit," "the same Lord"* and *"the same God which worketh all in all."* The gifts differ, but the divine source does not.

This is important because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ dwells within His born-again people as Spirit and works through the members of His body according to His purpose. A spiritual gift must therefore never be separated from the Person who gives and operates it.

The gifts are also given for the benefit of others. Paul says that *"the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."* Spiritual gifts are not given so that believers can compete for recognition, establish spiritual rank or draw attention to themselves. They are given so that the members of Christ's body may serve one another and contribute to the edification of the Church.

Paul also teaches that love must govern the operation of every gift. Spiritual ability without charity does not accomplish God's purpose. The life of Jesus Christ within the believer must therefore govern both the motive and the manner in which every gift is exercised.

Spiritual gifts must also be distinguished from offices. A believer may receive a spiritual gift without holding an office in the Church, and possessing a gift does not automatically appoint someone to a position of leadership. Gifts concern the ways in which God works through the members of the body, while offices involve recognised areas of ministry and responsibility.

This Study Guide will examine what spiritual gifts are, why they are given, how they are distributed and how they operate within the one body. It will also begin examining particular gifts named in Scripture, including the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge.

Throughout this study, the central truth must remain clear: there are many gifts, but there is one Spirit. Jesus Christ remains the Head of His Church, and He works through the members of His body as the Holy Spirit according to His will.

The gifts are many, but the Person working through them is one.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do different gifts point us to the one Spirit who works through Christ's people?

Personal Reflection

Have you compared a believer's gift with your own and valued one more highly?

Action Step

Identify that comparison and explain how you will honour the work of the same Spirit through both members of Christ's body.

INTRODUCTION

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Paul did not want the Church to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. The gifts of the Spirit were already operating among the believers at Corinth, yet they still needed clear teaching concerning their purpose, order and proper use. Spiritual activity by itself does not guarantee spiritual understanding.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:1**:

> *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."*

The subject therefore requires careful study. Spiritual gifts are not given for personal recognition, spiritual competition or religious excitement. They belong to the work of Jesus Christ within His body and are given so that the members may serve one another and the Church may be edified.

The Corinthians were not lacking spiritual gifts. Earlier in the same letter Paul acknowledged the abundance of what God had given them.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:4-6**:

> *"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:"*

Paul continued by saying that they came *"behind in no gift."* Their problem was therefore not the absence of gifts. They needed understanding concerning how those gifts were to operate within the body. This is why Paul devoted substantial teaching to the subject in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 to 14.

Spiritual gifts must first be understood from the foundation already established. There is one body and one Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and Jesus Christ dwells within His born-again people as Spirit.

The gifts are therefore not independent powers added to the believer apart from Christ. They are part of His operation through the different members of His body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

Paul repeatedly directs attention away from the individual gift and back to the source. There may be different gifts, areas of service and operations, but the Spirit working through them is one. Jesus Christ remains the Head of the body and the source of its spiritual life.

The purpose is also stated clearly: *"the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."* Spiritual gifts are given for the good of the body. They enable believers to contribute according to the work God has appointed for them and to strengthen, encourage and edify others.

This means that gifts must never become a basis for pride or comparison. One believer may serve through one gift while another serves differently, but both remain members of the same body. The value of a member is not determined by how public or unusual a particular gift appears.

Spiritual gifts must also operate through love. Paul placed his teaching on charity in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 between his major teaching on gifts in chapters 12 and 14. This shows that spiritual ability without love cannot fulfil the purpose for which God gives it.

This Study Guide will therefore examine the nature, purpose and distribution of spiritual gifts. We will distinguish gifts from offices, consider how gifts serve the whole body, and begin examining particular gifts named in Scripture.

Throughout the study, one truth must govern everything else: there are many gifts, but the Spirit working through them is one. Jesus Christ Himself works within His people as the Holy Spirit for the edification of His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What the Bible shows that there are many gifts, but the same Spirit works through them all? What does this teach us?

Personal Reflection

Do you find it easier to recognise Christ's work in gifts that are familiar to you than in gifts that are different?

Action Step

Choose one form of service you have overlooked, examine your attitude to it, and explain how you will show greater appreciation for Christ's work.

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

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A spiritual gift is a God-given operation of the Holy Spirit through a believer for the benefit of the body of Christ. It is not simply a natural talent, personal ability or learned skill. Natural abilities may be useful in service, but spiritual gifts belong specifically to the operation of the

Spirit of Christ within His people. Paul introduces this subject by directing attention away from the individual and towards the source of the gift.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

The gift is therefore not the possession of an independent spiritual power. It is the manifestation of the one Spirit working through a member of Christ's body. Jesus Christ remains the source, and the gift operates according to His purpose.

The Meaning of CHARISMA

One of the Greek words translated *"gift"* is CHARISMA. It is closely related to the Greek word CHARIS, meaning grace. CHARISMA carries the thought of something freely given through grace rather than something earned or produced by human effort.

This connection is important. A spiritual gift is not a reward for personal achievement, education, personality or religious status. It is given according to the grace of God.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:6**:

> *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;"*

Paul connects *"gifts differing"* directly with *"the grace that is given to us."* The gift belongs to grace. Because it is received by grace, there is no ground for boasting as though the spiritual ability originated within the believer.

This also means that one gift should not be treated as evidence that its recipient is more favoured by God than another believer. The differences belong to God's distribution of grace within the body.

Natural Ability and Spiritual Gift

Every person has natural abilities. Some may communicate clearly, organise effectively, understand complex ideas, show unusual compassion or possess strong practical skills. These abilities can be useful in the service of God.

Natural ability and spiritual gifting, however, are not the same. A person may be naturally confident in speaking and yet not possess a spiritual gift of teaching. Another may have limited natural confidence yet be used by God because the Spirit is working through that person according to His purpose. This distinction protects the Church from treating natural talent as though it automatically produces spiritual ministry.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:6**:

> *"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."*

The important expression is *"God which worketh all in all."* Spiritual gifts depend upon God's operation. Natural ability may become useful in the hands of God, but it does not become

spiritual simply because it is used in a religious setting. The spiritual dimension is found in Christ working through the believer as Spirit.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should no believer treat a spiritual gift as a power that belongs to them?

Personal Reflection

Have you praised a person's ability while overlooking the grace of Christ working through them?

Action Step

Recognise one example of service and explain how your response will give honour to Jesus Christ rather than encourage pride in the person.

The Manifestation of the Spirit

Paul uses another important expression when describing spiritual gifts. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:7**:

> *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

A manifestation is something made evident or brought into view. The gift therefore reveals the operation of the Spirit through the believer, but the believer does not become the source of the spiritual power. The manifestation belongs to the Spirit.

This distinction is essential. If a gift is treated as personal spiritual property, pride and competition can easily follow. The believer may begin to think of it as *"my gift"* in a way that forgets the One who gives and operates it.

A better understanding is that God has entrusted a particular operation to a member of the body for service. The believer is the vessel through whom Christ works.

Spiritual Gifts Are Given

The language of Scripture consistently presents spiritual gifts as something received. Paul asked the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 4:7**:

> *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"*

The question removes the basis for spiritual pride. What the believer has was received. A person therefore cannot boast about a spiritual gift while recognising that it came from God.

Neither should another believer become discouraged because they do not possess the same gift. The value of a member of Christ's body is not determined by comparison with another member. God distributes gifts according to His purpose, and every gift remains dependent upon Him.

Gifts Are for Service

A spiritual gift is not given simply for the personal benefit of the person through whom it operates. Its purpose is service.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:10**:

> *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

Peter again connects gift and grace. He also connects gift and ministry: *"minister the same one to another."* The word *"minister"* here carries the thought of serving, so the purpose of receiving a gift is not possession but usefulness.

The believer is also described as a *"steward."* A steward manages something that belongs to another. This is an appropriate picture of spiritual gifts because the gift belongs to God's purpose, and the believer is responsible to use what has been entrusted in a way that serves others and honours Jesus Christ.

The Gift Never Replaces the Giver

Spiritual gifts are important, but they must never become more important than the One who gives them. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. He dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit and works through the members of His body in different ways.

The gift has no independent spiritual life of its own. Its value is found in the operation of Christ through the believer. This protects the Church from becoming gift-centred rather than Christ-centred.

Spiritual gifts should never become the main measure of spirituality, the basis for personal identity or the centre of Christian fellowship. The believer possesses the Person before exercising the gift. Every spiritual gift must therefore be understood in this order:

Christ within → the Spirit working → the gift operating → the body being served.

A spiritual gift is a gracious operation of Jesus Christ through His Spirit within a member of His body. It is received, not earned; exercised, not possessed independently; and given for service, not self-exaltation.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What is a spiritual gift, and how does Christ work through a member of His body?

Personal Reflection

Have you confused natural confidence or talent with evidence that someone possesses a spiritual gift?

Action Step

Examine one assumption about gifting using **1 Corinthians 12:7***, and state how you will judge a person's service more carefully.*

SPIRITUAL GIFTS BELONG TO THE WHOLE BODY

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Spiritual gifts belong to the life and operation of the whole body of Christ. They are not reserved for a small group of unusually spiritual believers, nor are they given so that certain members may become more important than others. Every born-again believer is part of the one body, and every member has a place within that body according to the purpose of God.

The Church therefore cannot be understood as a small group of gifted people serving while everyone else simply watches. The life of Christ is present throughout His body, and the one Spirit works through different members in different ways.

Every Member Belongs to the Body

Paul uses the human body to explain the relationship between believers. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:12-14**:

> *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."*

The Church is one body, but that body contains many members. Paul does not describe the Church as one member doing everything while the others remain unnecessary. The body requires many members.

Every person who is born again has been brought by one Spirit into that body. This means that every believer belongs before any particular gift or function is considered. The gift does not create membership in the body. The new birth does.

This distinction is important because the value of the believer is not established by the prominence of a gift. A person belongs to Christ because of the new birth, not because of a visible ministry.

Different Members Have Different Functions

Paul also teaches that the members do not all perform the same work. Paul wrote in **Romans 12:4-5**:

> *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."*

The members of a human body differ in function, yet they remain part of the same body. The same principle applies to the Church.

Different functions do not create spiritual inequality. They reflect the way God has arranged His body. One believer may serve publicly while another serves quietly. One may speak, another may encourage, another may give, another may help, and another may exercise a gift that few people notice.

The difference in function does not create a difference in spiritual value. The question is not whether everyone serves in the same way, but whether each member is faithful in the place God has given.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do different functions never make one member more valuable than another?

Personal Reflection

Which less visible member of the Church have you treated as less important than a public minister?

Action Step

Acknowledge that attitude and show appreciation for that person's service as something Christ uses to strengthen His body.

The Body Needs Its Different Members

Paul warns believers against thinking that their different function makes them less important. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:15-18**:

> *"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."*

Paul shows the danger of comparison. The foot may look at the hand and conclude that its own function is less important, while the ear may compare itself with the eye. Such comparisons misunderstand the purpose of the body.

If every member performed the same function, the body could not operate properly. Diversity is therefore necessary. The important statement is that *"God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."*

The arrangement belongs to God. The believer does not need to compete for another member's place. This should free believers from both envy and pride.

We do not need to become someone else in order to be useful to Christ. We need to remain yielded to Him and faithful in the place He gives.

No Member Can Say, "I Have No Need of Thee"

Comparison can move in two directions. One believer may feel inferior, while another may become proud and imagine that they have no need of others. Paul addresses this error directly.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:20-22**:

> *"But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:"*

No gift makes a believer independent from the rest of the body. Even a member with a highly visible ministry still needs the contribution of others.

Paul goes further and says that members which *"seem to be more feeble"* are necessary. Human recognition is therefore not a reliable measure of spiritual importance.

Some service is public, while some service is hidden. Some gifts attract attention, while others may operate quietly over many years. God sees the whole body and knows the value of every member.

Not Every Member Has the Same Gift

The unity of the body does not mean uniformity of gifting. Paul asks a series of questions later in the same chapter.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:28-30**:

> *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"*

The answer to each question is no. Not every believer has the same gift or function.

This is important because no one gift can be made the universal evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. All born-again believers possess the Spirit of Christ, but the Spirit works through them in different ways.

A believer does not lack the Holy Spirit because they do not exercise a particular gift. Neither should one gift be treated as the spiritual standard by which every other believer is measured. There is one Spirit, but there are many gifts.

Every Member Can Contribute

Although not every believer has the same gift, every member can contribute to the body. The New Testament picture is not passive Christianity in which a few people perform all spiritual service.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:10**:

> *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

The emphasis is upon service *"one to another."* Spiritual gifts are meant to operate through the body so that believers strengthen and serve one another.

This does not mean that every person must perform the same type of ministry. It means that every believer should recognise that they belong to the body and have a responsibility to serve according to the grace and ability God gives. The body is strengthened when each member contributes faithfully.

The Value of a Gift Is Found in Its Purpose

The importance of a spiritual gift is not determined by how dramatic it appears. A gift is valuable because it contributes to the purpose of Christ within His body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:7**:

> *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

The gift is given *"to profit withal."* Its purpose is the good of others. This means that a quiet gift exercised faithfully may accomplish more for the body than a spectacular gift exercised without love or humility.

Visibility is not the same as usefulness. Christ determines the value and purpose of the gift.

The believer therefore should not ask, *"Is my gift as impressive as someone else's?"* The better question is, *"Am I allowing Jesus Christ to work through me for the good of His body?"*

Spiritual gifts belong to the whole body. Every born-again believer belongs to Christ, every member has a place, and no member is designed to function independently of the others. The gifts differ, but they serve one purpose: the one Spirit working through the many members for the good of the whole body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do spiritual gifts belong to the whole body rather than to individuals alone?

Personal Reflection

Is there a need you have noticed but neglected because you think your own contribution is too small?

Action Step

Identify the reason for holding back and make a specific response through the love of Christ within you to meet that need.

GIFTS AND OFFICES ARE NOT THE SAME

BACK TO CONTENTS

Spiritual gifts and offices both belong to the operation of Christ within His Church, but they are not the same thing. A spiritual gift describes a way in which the Spirit works through a believer, while an office involves a recognised ministry and responsibility within the body. Confusing these two subjects can cause believers to assume that possessing a particular gift automatically gives them an office or position of authority.

Jesus Christ remains the Head of the Church. He gives gifts to His people and appoints different areas of service according to His purpose. Neither a spiritual gift nor an office gives a person independent authority apart from Him.

Different Gifts and Different Functions

Paul speaks of gifts and functions when describing the members of the body. Paul wrote in **Romans 12:4-6**:

> *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;"*

Paul first explains that the members do not all have the same function. He then says that they have *"gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."* The body therefore contains differing functions and differing gifts.

These two ideas are related, but they should not automatically be treated as identical. A gift may enable a believer to serve in a particular way, but possessing that gift does not by itself establish an office.

For example, a believer may teach effectively without holding a recognised office of teaching or oversight. Another may exercise mercy, exhortation, giving or helps without occupying a formal ministry position. The gift describes the Spirit's operation through the member.

A Gift Does Not Create an Office

The presence of a spiritual gift should never be used by a person to appoint themselves to an office. Paul repeatedly teaches that God establishes order within His body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:18**:

> *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."*

The placement of the members belongs to God. Ministry is therefore not something a person should seize because they believe they possess a particular ability.

A spiritual gift may become important in fulfilling a ministry responsibility, but the gift itself is not the office. The Church must recognise the work God is doing, while the person exercising the gift remains humble and subject to Christ.

This guards against spiritual ambition. A believer should not reason, *"I can teach, therefore I must hold authority,"* or, *"I have exercised a spiritual gift, therefore I should be recognised as a leader."* Gifts are given for service rather than personal advancement.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What is the difference between a spiritual gift and a ministry office?

Personal Reflection

Have you wanted the recognition of a position more than the opportunity to serve?

Action Step

Name that motive and choose one helpful responsibility you can fulfil without seeking an office or recognition.

Offices Involve Ministry Responsibility

The New Testament also speaks of recognised ministries within the Church. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:11-12**:

> *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"*

These ministries have responsibilities connected with the edification and functioning of the Church. They are not simply names for individual spiritual experiences.

The detailed nature of these offices will be examined later in this module. At this stage, the important point is that an office involves an area of responsibility and service that Christ has appointed within His body.

The office does not make the person more important than other believers, nor does it place that person above the Head. Jesus Christ remains the source of authority and the One whom every ministry serves.

Gifts May Operate Outside an Office

Many spiritual gifts can operate through believers who do not hold a recognised office. Paul's teaching in Romans chapter 12 includes prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling and mercy. These operations are distributed throughout the body according to grace.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:6-8**:

> *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."*

These verses show a variety of service throughout the body. Not every act of teaching makes a person an appointed teacher in the sense of an established ministry office. Not every act of exhortation establishes an office of exhortation, and the gift of giving does not create a religious position.

The gifts operate wherever God chooses to work through His people. This is important because the body would be weakened if believers believed that only those holding recognised offices could be used by the Spirit. Christ works through the members of His body according to His will.

An Office Does Not Replace Spiritual Dependence

Holding an office does not mean that a person can serve independently of the Spirit. A title cannot produce spiritual life, wisdom or ability.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 3:5-6**:

> *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."*

Paul did not claim sufficiency from himself because he had a ministry. He said, *"our sufficiency is of God."*

This principle applies to every office. Recognition by the Church does not make a person spiritually self-sufficient. Ministry remains dependent upon Jesus Christ working within. An office without the operation of Christ becomes a title without spiritual life.

Both Are Given for the Body

Although gifts and offices must be distinguished, their purpose brings them together. Both exist for service and for the edification of the body.

A gift is not given so that a believer can build personal importance. An office is not given so that a person can exercise human control over others. Both must remain under the headship of Jesus Christ.

The gifts show the varied ways in which the one Spirit works through His people. Offices describe recognised responsibilities through which certain members serve the body in particular areas of ministry.

Later Study Guides will examine those offices in detail. For now, the distinction must remain clear:

A spiritual gift does not automatically create an office, and an office does not make a person the source of spiritual power. Jesus Christ remains the Head, and every gift and ministry depends upon His life working within His people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does having a gift not automatically place someone in an office?

Personal Reflection

Do you give a gifted leader credit for work that rightly belongs to Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Examine how you speak about that leader and explain how you will thank God while respecting the person as a fellow servant.

GRACE, LOVE AND THE OPERATION OF GIFTS

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Spiritual gifts are given by the grace of God and must operate through the love of Christ within the believer. Grace removes every reason for boasting because the gift is received rather than earned. Love governs the way the gift is exercised so that it serves others rather than drawing attention to the individual.

These two truths belong together. A believer who understands grace recognises that the gift came from God, while a believer governed by love uses what has been received for the good of others. Spiritual gifts therefore find their proper expression through humble service.

Gifts Are Given According to Grace

Paul directly connects spiritual gifts with the grace God gives. Paul wrote in **Romans 12:6-8**:

> *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."*

The gifts differ, but they are received *"according to the grace that is given to us."* The believer does not earn a spiritual gift by becoming worthy of it. God gives according to His purpose.

This agrees with the meaning of CHARISMA. The word carries the thought of a gracious gift rather than something obtained through human achievement. A spiritual gift therefore remains an expression of God's grace throughout its operation.

The believer cannot rightly say, *"I produced this ability through my own spiritual strength."* The gift came from God, and its continuing usefulness depends upon Him. Grace therefore produces humility.

The Grace of God at Work

Paul understood this principle in his own ministry. Although he laboured greatly, he refused to treat his labour as independent human achievement.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 15:10**:

> *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."*

Paul did not deny that he laboured. He said, *"I laboured more abundantly than they all."* Yet he immediately added, *"yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."*

This gives us an important pattern for understanding spiritual gifts. The believer is not passive. Gifts are to be exercised faithfully, responsibly and diligently, yet the source remains God.

The believer serves, but serves from what God supplies. Whatever is accomplished through a genuine spiritual gift is evidence of the grace of God at work.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do God's grace and Christ's love shape the use of a gift?

Personal Reflection

Where have pride, pressure or a desire to impress affected your way of serving?

Action Step

Identify the motive that needs to change, and explain how Christ's love within you will govern the next service you offer.

Humility Must Govern the Gift

Because spiritual gifts are received by grace, they should be exercised with humility. No believer has reason to exalt themselves above another member of the body.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:3-5**:

> *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:"*

The words *"strife"* and *"vainglory"* have no proper place in the exercise of spiritual gifts. A gift should not become a means of competing with another believer or seeking recognition.

The life of Jesus Christ within produces a different attitude. The believer looks towards the needs of others rather than towards personal importance. This is especially necessary when a gift is public or highly visible. Visibility can attract human praise, but the servant of Christ must remember that the gift was received by grace and exists for the benefit of the body.

The Love of God in Operation

The gifts of the Spirit must also operate through love. The New Testament word AGAPE is commonly used for the self-giving love demonstrated by God towards us.

Paul wrote in **Romans 5:8**:

> *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

God's love was demonstrated through action. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us when we could not earn or deserve salvation.

That same Christ now dwells within the born-again believer. Therefore, the exercise of spiritual gifts should express His life and love rather than selfish ambition. Love is not added to spiritual gifts as an optional quality. It governs their proper operation.

A More Excellent Way

At the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 12, after discussing spiritual gifts and the members of the body, Paul makes an important transition. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:31**:

> *"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."*

Paul did not reject spiritual gifts. He had just told the believers to *"covet earnestly the best gifts."* Yet he immediately directed them towards *"a more excellent way."* The following chapter explains that way through charity.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**:

> *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."*

Paul names remarkable spiritual abilities, including tongues, prophecy, understanding mysteries, knowledge and faith. Yet he repeatedly shows that without charity these things fail to accomplish their proper purpose.

The problem is not the gift. The problem is the absence of love governing its use. Spiritual ability without love can become noise, pride or self-display.

Gifts Are Expressions of Love and Service

Spiritual gifts are given so that believers may serve one another. When governed by the love of Christ, a gift becomes an expression of His care for the body.

A believer who teaches serves others by helping them understand truth. One who exhorts strengthens and encourages. One who gives meets needs, while one who shows mercy expresses compassion. Different gifts operate in different ways, but love gives them a common direction.

The purpose is outward towards the body rather than inward towards self-importance. Paul described the growth of the body in **Ephesians 4:15-16**:

> *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

The whole body receives from Christ the Head. Every joint supplies, every part works according to its measure, and the result is *"the edifying of itself in love."*

Love does not remove diversity. It enables the different members to work together for the good of the whole body.

Christ's Love Within Governs the Gift

The believer is not called to manufacture the love necessary for spiritual service through human effort. Jesus Christ dwells within His people, and His life within governs the way they serve.

This keeps the operation of spiritual gifts consistent with the indwelling life of Christ. The believer does not receive a gift from Christ and then operate it independently from Him. The same Christ who gives the gift must govern its use.

Grace reminds us where the gift came from, and love determines how it should be exercised. Where grace is understood, boasting loses its place. Where the love of Christ governs, self-promotion loses its place. The believer becomes concerned with how the gift can strengthen, encourage and edify others.

Spiritual gifts operate properly when the grace of God provides the gift, the life of Christ supplies the love, and the body receives the benefit.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do grace, love and benefit to the body belong together when gifts operate?

Personal Reflection

Have you experienced or witnessed an impressive gift being used without kindness or concern for others?

Action Step

Consider whether your own service is marked by Christ's love, and choose one way to meet someone's need without seeking attention.

GIFTS ARE GIVEN FOR THE COMMON GOOD

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Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of the body of Christ. Their purpose is not personal recognition, spiritual status or self-promotion. God works through different members so that the whole Church may be strengthened, encouraged and edified. Paul stated this purpose plainly when he introduced the gifts of the Spirit.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:7**:

> *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

The words *"to profit withal"* direct attention away from the individual and towards the benefit of others. A spiritual gift is not given simply so that the believer may possess an unusual ability. It is given so that Christ can work through that believer for the good of His body.

The Manifestation Is for the Body

Paul describes a spiritual gift as *"the manifestation of the Spirit."* Something of the Spirit's operation becomes evident through the believer, but the purpose remains larger than the individual.

The value of a gift should therefore not be measured by how dramatic, visible or unusual it appears. Some gifts may operate publicly, while others may be exercised quietly through personal ministry, practical service or faithful support. The outward visibility differs, but the governing question remains the same: does the gift profit the body? The focus is not prominence but usefulness.

Edification Is the Purpose

Paul repeatedly connects spiritual gifts with the edification of the Church. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:12**:

> *"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."*

The Corinthians were zealous for spiritual gifts, but zeal alone was not enough. Paul directed their zeal towards a particular purpose: *"the edifying of the church."*

To edify is to build up. Spiritual gifts should therefore strengthen the body rather than create confusion, division or competition. This gives us an important test when considering the use of a gift: is it building up the Church according to truth and love? A gift that draws attention only to the individual has lost sight of its purpose.

Gifts Are Stewardship

Peter also describes spiritual gifts as something entrusted to believers for service. Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:10**:

> *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

The believer is called a *"steward."* A steward manages something entrusted by another. The believer is therefore not the owner or independent source of the gift. The gift belongs to God's purpose.

Peter also says, *"minister the same one to another."* The direction of the gift is towards others. God gives so that His people may serve.

This removes the idea that spiritual gifts exist chiefly for personal fulfilment. A gift may bring joy to the believer who exercises it, but its biblical purpose is service.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why are spiritual gifts given for the common good rather than personal fulfilment?

Personal Reflection

What kind of service makes you most concerned about receiving appreciation or praise?

Action Step

Explain what needs to change in your attitude, and carry out an act of service whose benefit to another person matters more than recognition.

The Body Receives the Benefit

The body of Christ is strengthened when each member supplies what God has given. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:15-16**:

> *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

Paul describes *"every joint"* supplying and *"every part"* working according to its measure. The result is growth and edification.

This is the opposite of a Church in which only a few members are expected to contribute while the rest remain passive. Christ works through the members of His body in different ways so that the whole body receives what is needed.

The source remains Christ the Head. The members supply because they first receive from Him.

Gifts Are Not Given for Competition

Where spiritual gifts are misunderstood, competition can arise. One believer may compare their gift with another's, or people may begin to rank gifts according to visibility and public recognition. Paul's teaching does not encourage such comparisons.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:21-25**:

> *"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."*

God's purpose is not competition but care *"one for another."* The body is designed for mutual dependence.

A highly visible gift does not remove the need for quieter forms of service. Neither does a less visible gift make its recipient less necessary. The body needs what God has placed within each member.

Gifts Must Not Create Spiritual Status

Because gifts come from God, they cannot rightly become a basis for spiritual rank. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:7**:

> *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"*

Whatever a believer has received came from God. The question *"why dost thou glory?"* exposes the contradiction of boasting about a gift that was given by grace.

Spiritual gifts should therefore produce gratitude and responsibility rather than pride. The believer who understands the source of the gift will ask how it can best serve Christ and His people.

The Purpose Is Love and Service

The common good is not achieved through ability alone. Gifts must operate through love. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 to 14 repeatedly brings the subject back to edification, order and care for others.

The gift is never meant to function independently of the life of Christ within. The believer therefore does not simply ask whether a gift is genuine, but whether it is being exercised in a way that expresses the love of Christ and strengthens His body.

Jesus Christ is the Head, and every spiritual gift serves His purpose. The manifestation of the Spirit is given *"to profit withal."* Gifts are entrusted to believers so that they may minister one to another, strengthen the Church and contribute to the edification of the whole body.

The gift is given to the member, but its purpose belongs to the body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does it mean that a member receives a gift but the body receives its benefit?

Personal Reflection

Whose need have you left unmet even though you had something useful to offer?

Action Step

Identify the hesitation or selfishness involved and describe the help you will offer from a willingness to serve through Christ's life.

THE SPIRIT DISTRIBUTES THE GIFTS

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Spiritual gifts do not originate in the choice or ability of the believer. The one Spirit determines how He will work through the members of Christ's body according to the purpose of God. Believers do not manufacture spiritual gifts, assign gifts to themselves or determine their spiritual importance by the gift through which they serve.

The gifts differ because the members have different functions, but the Spirit working through them is the same. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, distributes and operates the gifts according to His will.

Dividing to Every Man Severally as He Will

Paul explains the distribution of spiritual gifts after naming several of their operations. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:8-11**:

> *"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

Paul repeatedly uses the expression *"the same Spirit."* The gifts differ, but they do not come from different spiritual sources. They are all operations of *"that one and the selfsame Spirit."*

Paul then explains how the gifts are distributed: *"dividing to every man severally as he will."* The final decision belongs to the Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, this is Jesus Christ working through His body according to His own will. The believer therefore receives a place of service from Him rather than creating one independently.

The Spirit Determines the Distribution

The words *"as he will"* are important. They show that spiritual gifts are distributed according to the will of God rather than according to human preference.

A believer may recognise a particular need within the Church and desire to be useful in meeting it. Scripture also encourages believers to desire spiritual gifts. Yet desire does not mean that a person can demand a particular gift or determine how the Spirit must work through them. God knows the needs of His body and the place of each member within it.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:18**:

> *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."*

The placement of the members and the distribution of spiritual operation belong to God. This protects the Church from competition over gifts. A believer does not need to possess the gift of another member in order to be useful. Faithfulness means serving according to what God has given rather than trying to reproduce another person's function.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should a believer serve faithfully where Christ has placed them instead of seeking another member's gift?

Personal Reflection

Have you resented a quiet assignment because you would rather serve in a visible role?

Action Step

Explain what that preference reveals about your motives, then serve faithfully where help is needed, leaving the gifting and recognition to Christ.

Different Gifts Do Not Mean Different Spirits

The variety of spiritual gifts must never create the impression that believers possess different portions or kinds of the Holy Spirit. Every born-again believer receives the Spirit of Christ. There is one Spirit dwelling within the body, although His operations through the members differ.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-6**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."*

The diversity is in the gifts, administrations and operations. The unity is in the One who works.

A believer with a highly visible gift does not possess more of Jesus Christ than another born-again believer. Neither does the absence of a particular gift mean that someone has received less of the Holy Spirit.

All who belong to Christ possess His Spirit. The difference lies in how He chooses to work through them.

God Works According to the Need of the Body

The distribution of gifts must also be understood in relation to the purpose of the body. Gifts are not given simply to satisfy the personal desires of individuals. They serve the work Christ is accomplishing through His Church.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:6-8**:

> *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."*

The gifts differ *"according to the grace that is given to us."* Paul does not tell every believer to perform every function. He directs each one to serve faithfully according to what God has supplied.

One member may teach, another exhort, another give, another show mercy, and another serve through a different operation of the Spirit. The body benefits because the members do

not all perform the same function. God supplies what His body needs through the members He has placed within it.

The Believer Must Remain Dependent Upon Christ

Receiving a gift does not make the believer spiritually independent. The gift continues to depend upon the operation of Christ.

Jesus said in **John 15:4-5**:

> *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*

The branch does not become an independent source of life because it bears fruit. It continues to depend upon the vine. The same principle governs spiritual gifts.

The believer never reaches a point where the gift can operate properly apart from Jesus Christ. The source remains Christ within.

This dependence also protects the believer from assuming that past usefulness guarantees present spiritual operation. A gift must never become a substitute for abiding in Christ.

Different Measures of Service

Paul teaches that believers should serve with humility according to what God has given. Paul wrote in **Romans 12:3**:

> *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."*

The context immediately moves into the many members of one body and the gifts that differ according to grace. The believer is therefore told to think soberly rather than compare, boast or seek importance.

God determines the sphere and measure of service. Faithfulness is not measured by having the most visible gift, but by responding rightly to what God has given. A member who serves faithfully in a quieter capacity may be fulfilling the will of Christ just as surely as someone whose ministry is seen by many people.

The Spirit Continues to Work Through His Church

The gifts of the Spirit were not given simply for a brief period at the beginning of the Gospel Day. Jesus Christ continues to dwell within His Church as the Holy Spirit, and He continues to work through the members of His body according to His purpose. The Church still requires spiritual wisdom, knowledge, faith, ministry, teaching, exhortation, mercy and the other operations through which Christ strengthens and edifies His people.

Paul wrote in **Romans 11:29**:

> *"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."*

God does not change His purpose concerning the gifts and callings He has established. The gifts belong to His provision for His people, and His Church continues to depend upon His Spirit working within and through its members.

Paul also described gifts and ministries as part of God's order within the Church. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:28**:

> *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."*

Notice the words *"God hath set."* These ministries and gifts were not human inventions, but were placed within the Church by God according to His purpose.

The need for the edification of the body has not ended. Believers still need truth to be understood, wisdom to be applied, encouragement to be given, needs to be met and the Gospel to be proclaimed. The Spirit of Christ therefore continues to work through His people so that the body receives what is necessary.

Paul described this continuing life of the body in **Ephesians 4:15-16**:

> *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

The body continues to receive from Christ the Head. Every joint supplies and every part works according to the measure God has given. This is not a picture of a Church from which the Spirit's operation has disappeared. It is a living body receiving from its living Head.

The gifts therefore belong to the continuing life of the Church throughout the Gospel Day. Their operation may differ according to the needs of the body, but the source remains unchanged. Jesus Christ still dwells within His born-again people as the Holy Spirit, and He still directs, equips and works through the members of His body.

The gifts and callings of God remain part of His provision for the Church, and the Spirit of Christ continues to work through His people for the edification of His body.

The Gifts Remain Under the Will of the Giver

The words *"as he will"* keep every spiritual gift under the authority of God. The believer is a steward rather than an owner.

This does not make believers passive. Scripture encourages faithfulness, diligence and a genuine desire to serve, but those desires remain submitted to Jesus Christ. The believer's responsibility is to remain yielded to Him, recognise the grace He has given and faithfully serve the body according to His direction.

Spiritual gifts therefore should never produce competition. The one Spirit knows the whole body, understands every need and works through the different members according to His wisdom.

The gifts differ because the functions differ, but the Person who distributes and operates them is one. Jesus Christ works within His body as the Holy Spirit, dividing to every member according to His will.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why can gifts differ while the Spirit who gives and works through them is one?

Personal Reflection

Have you dismissed a believer's service simply because it is different from the gift you value?

Action Step

Identify that judgement and correct it by considering how the service benefits the body and honours Christ.

DESIRE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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The fact that the Spirit distributes gifts according to His own will does not mean that believers should be indifferent towards spiritual usefulness. Scripture encourages the Church to desire spiritual gifts, but that desire must remain submitted to Jesus Christ and governed by love.

The believer should not desire a gift in order to appear important, powerful or unusually spiritual. The proper desire is to be useful to Christ and to contribute to the edification of His body.

Covet Earnestly the Best Gifts

After describing the many members of the body and the different gifts God has placed within it, Paul gives a direct instruction. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:28-31**:

> *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."*

Paul has just established that not everyone has the same gift. His questions make that clear, yet he then says, *"covet earnestly the best gifts."*

The word *"covet"* in this context speaks of earnest desire. Paul is not encouraging jealousy or competition. He is telling believers to have a genuine desire for the Spirit to work through them in ways that will benefit the Church.

That desire must remain connected with the purpose of the gifts. We desire to be useful to Christ and to serve His body.

Desire Spiritual Gifts

Paul repeats the instruction after his teaching on charity. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:1**:

> *"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."*

The order is important. Paul first says, *"Follow after charity,"* and then, *"desire spiritual gifts."* Love must therefore govern the desire for spiritual usefulness.

A person may sincerely desire to be used by God, but that desire can become distorted if it turns towards personal recognition. The believer must therefore examine the motive: is the desire to serve, strengthen others and build up the Church, or is the desire to be noticed? The same gift can be desired with very different motives.

The Best Gifts Serve the Need of the Body

The expression *"the best gifts"* should be understood within Paul's wider teaching concerning edification. His emphasis is not upon creating spiritual pride, but upon seeking what will most effectively build up the Church.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:12**:

> *"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."*

The believer should therefore desire the gifts that will best serve the needs of the body according to the will of God. What is most useful in one situation may differ from what is needed in another, and the Spirit knows the needs of the Church.

The believer's desire must therefore remain flexible and submitted to Christ. We do not seek the gift that will make us most visible. We desire that the Lord work through us in whatever way will best serve His body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can believers desire spiritual gifts while remaining submitted to Christ?

Personal Reflection

Is your desire for a particular gift motivated more by usefulness or by personal importance?

Action Step

Examine that motive before Christ and explain how your desire will now be governed by His will and the needs of His people.

Desire Does Not Control the Spirit

There must be a clear distinction between desiring spiritual gifts and deciding which gift the Spirit must give. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:11**:

> *"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

Believers are encouraged to desire spiritual gifts, but the final distribution belongs to God. The words *"as he will"* keep the believer's desire under the authority of the Giver.

This protects us from frustration and comparison. A person may desire to be useful in one particular way, while Christ may choose to work through that person differently. Submission means allowing Him to decide how He will use each member.

Because Jesus Christ works within His people as the Holy Spirit, the believer does not need to force spiritual operation. Christ knows both the member and the needs of the body, and He distributes according to His will.

Desire Must Produce Service

A genuine desire for spiritual gifts should lead to a greater willingness to serve. If someone claims to desire spiritual gifts but is unwilling to perform ordinary acts of service, the motive should be examined. Spiritual gifts are not given as an escape from humble responsibility.

Jesus Christ works through His people in both visible and quiet ways. A believer may desire greater usefulness while remaining faithful in the opportunities already present. Service begins with obedience to what God has already placed before us.

Faithfulness and spiritual desire therefore belong together. The person who wants to be used by Christ should also be willing to serve without recognition.

Love Remains the More Excellent Way

Paul's command to desire spiritual gifts must always be read together with his statement *"and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."* That way is charity.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 13:4-5**:

> *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;"*

These qualities directly confront wrong motives in the pursuit of spiritual gifts. Charity *"envieth not,"* so we do not envy another person's gift. Charity *"vaunteth not itself"* and *"is not puffed up,"* so spiritual usefulness should never become self-display or pride.

Charity also *"seeketh not her own."* The believer's concern therefore remains the good of others. The love of Jesus Christ within must govern the desire for spiritual gifts.

Desire to Be Useful to Christ

There is nothing wrong with earnestly desiring that Christ work through our lives. Scripture encourages that desire, but it must remain centred upon His purpose rather than our importance.

The believer should desire to be useful, faithful and available. We should desire whatever operation of the Spirit will strengthen the body and glorify Jesus Christ, while remaining content for Him to determine the form that service takes.

Spiritual desire and spiritual submission therefore belong together. We desire the gifts, remain governed by love, submit the distribution to the Spirit and use what is given for the edification of the Church.

The right desire is not to become spiritually prominent, but to become increasingly useful to Jesus Christ and His body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What is the difference between seeking prominence and seeking usefulness to Christ?

Personal Reflection

When serving, do you look for opportunities to be noticed, or for needs that Christ would have you meet?

Action Step

Choose a useful but unnoticed act of service and explain how it responds to any pride or ambition you have identified.

THE WORD OF WISDOM

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The first spiritual gift named by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 is the word of wisdom. Wisdom is necessary when believers must understand how the truth of God should be applied to a particular situation. The word of wisdom is therefore more than natural intelligence or accumulated experience. It is wisdom supplied through the operation of the Spirit of Christ.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:8**:

> *"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;"*

Paul says that the word of wisdom is *"given by the Spirit."* Its source is not human reasoning alone. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, gives wisdom that enables believers to understand and act according to the purpose of God.

The Meaning of Wisdom

The Greek word translated *"wisdom"* is SOPHIA. It carries the thought of wisdom, insight and understanding that enables a person to perceive a matter correctly and respond appropriately.

Wisdom involves more than knowing facts. A person may possess considerable knowledge and still lack wisdom in applying what they know. Wisdom recognises what should be done, how it should be done and when it should be done.

The word of wisdom therefore has a practical dimension. It enables the truth of God to be applied faithfully in circumstances that require spiritual understanding.

This distinction becomes important when we consider the word of knowledge. Knowledge concerns understanding or knowing truth, while wisdom enables that truth to be applied properly.

Wisdom Comes From God

The Old Testament repeatedly shows that genuine wisdom comes from God. Solomon recognised this when he was given responsibility for leading Israel.

Solomon prayed in **2 Chronicles 1:10**:

> *"Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?"*

Solomon understood that the responsibility before him required more than natural ability. He needed wisdom from God in order to lead the people rightly. Daniel and his companions provide another example.

Daniel wrote in **Daniel 1:17**:

> *"As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."*

Scripture specifically says that *"God gave them"* knowledge, skill and wisdom. Their abilities were not presented as independent human achievements. God supplied what they needed in order to serve faithfully in difficult circumstances.

These examples establish an important principle for the New Testament Church. Spiritual wisdom is received from God and must remain dependent upon Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must wisdom given by Christ serve His people rather than display the wisdom of a person?

Personal Reflection

When facing a difficult decision, have you relied more on your experience or another person's confidence than on God?

Action Step

Identify a real decision and explain how you will seek wisdom consistent with God's Word, trusting Christ instead of appearances.

Seeking Wisdom

Scripture encourages God's people to value and seek wisdom. Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 4:5**:

> *"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth."*

Wisdom should not be treated casually. Believers need wisdom in relationships, ministry, decisions, correction, teaching and service. The book of Proverbs also pictures wisdom as calling people to receive understanding.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 8:1**:

> *"Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?"*

The believer should therefore desire wisdom, but the source must remain clear. Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ dwells within His people as Spirit. The wisdom necessary for spiritual service is not produced by becoming clever enough for the work of God. Christ supplies what His people need as they remain dependent upon Him and His Word.

Wisdom in the Early Church

Wisdom had an important place in the Church from the beginning of the Gospel Day. When a practical problem arose concerning the daily care of widows, the apostles instructed the believers to choose men whose spiritual character and wisdom were recognised.

Luke wrote in **Acts 6:3**:

> *"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."*

The responsibility involved the practical distribution of support, yet wisdom was considered essential. Spiritual wisdom is therefore not confined to preaching or public ministry. It is necessary wherever the work of the Church requires sound judgement. Stephen was one of the men chosen, and Scripture later records the wisdom with which he spoke.

Luke wrote in **Acts 6:9-10**:

> *"Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake."*

The wisdom evident in Stephen was connected with the Spirit by which he spoke. This was not simply skilled argument. Jesus Christ was working through him as the Holy Spirit.

Paul as a Wise Masterbuilder

Paul also described the wisdom God had given him in establishing the Church. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 3:10**:

> *"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."*

Paul connects his wisdom with *"the grace of God which is given unto me."* He did not claim that he had established congregations through personal brilliance. The ability came through grace. The picture of building is also used in Proverbs.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 9:1**:

> *"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:"*

Wisdom builds carefully and according to sound order. Paul likewise needed wisdom to establish, teach and guide congregations so that they remained centred upon Jesus Christ.

Wisdom in Difficult Situations

Paul's ministry also illustrates the practical nature of wisdom. He regularly faced situations in which truth had to be applied carefully. When standing before a council divided between Pharisees and Sadducees, Paul recognised the issue that divided them.

Luke wrote in **Acts 23:6**:

> *"But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."*

Paul understood the situation and responded in a way that brought the disputed doctrine of the resurrection into view. Wisdom enabled him to recognise how truth should be applied within a difficult circumstance.

Wisdom was also necessary when serious sin appeared within the Corinthian congregation. Paul instructed the Church to deal with the matter rather than ignore it.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 5:13**:

> *"But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."*

Later, when the punishment had accomplished its purpose, wisdom required a different response. Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 2:6-8**:

> *"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."*

The truth had not changed, but the situation had. At one point the Church needed firmness in dealing with sin. Later it needed mercy and restoration towards the repentant person. This demonstrates an important aspect of wisdom: knowing how the unchanging truth of God should be applied faithfully in changing circumstances.

Wisdom in Ministry

The word of wisdom is especially valuable wherever believers carry responsibility for others. Teaching, pastoral care, evangelism, correction, establishing congregations and resolving difficulties all require more than information. A person may know what Scripture says yet still need wisdom concerning how to address a particular situation without weakening truth or acting without love. Wisdom helps believers:

- Make sound decisions in difficult circumstances;
- Apply Scripture faithfully;
- Resolve problems without compromising truth;
- Recognise the needs of people and congregations;
- Combine firmness with mercy;
- Serve according to God's purpose.

This wisdom must never become confidence in human judgement. Jesus Christ remains the source.

Christ Is Our Wisdom

The word of wisdom must ultimately direct us back to Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:30**:

> *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:"*

Jesus Christ is *"made unto us wisdom."* Spiritual wisdom cannot therefore be separated from Him.

The believer does not receive wisdom as an independent possession and then proceed without Christ. Jesus Christ dwells within as the Holy Spirit and supplies wisdom according to the needs of His body.

The word of wisdom enables God's truth to be understood and applied faithfully in practical situations. It protects the Church from depending upon natural intelligence alone and helps believers respond according to the purpose of God.

True spiritual wisdom comes from Jesus Christ, operates through His Spirit within His people, and applies His truth for the edification of His body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does a word of wisdom apply Christ's truth for the good of His body?

Personal Reflection

When have you tried to sound wise instead of helping someone understand what is true and useful?

Action Step

Identify that attitude and prepare a clear, thoughtful response to someone who needs help with a decision, without seeking to impress them.

THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

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The word of knowledge is the second spiritual gift named by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Knowledge and wisdom are closely related, but they are not the same. Knowledge concerns understanding truth, while wisdom concerns the faithful application of that truth.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:8**:

> *"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;"*

Paul identifies both gifts as operations of *"the same Spirit."* The source remains Jesus Christ working within His people as the Holy Spirit. The word of knowledge is therefore not simply the result of study, education or natural intelligence. It is spiritual understanding supplied by God for the benefit of His body.

The Meaning of Knowledge

The Greek word translated *"knowledge"* is GNOSIS. It refers to knowledge, understanding or recognition. In Scripture, knowledge may concern facts, truth, spiritual understanding or the knowledge of God.

Knowledge has an important place in the Christian life. God does not call His people to serve Him through ignorance. Believers are to know the truth, understand His Word and grow in spiritual understanding.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:9-10**:

> *"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;"*

Paul connects knowledge with wisdom and spiritual understanding. Knowledge of God's will affects the believer's walk and service. The word of knowledge must therefore be understood within this wider biblical emphasis upon spiritual understanding.

Knowledge Is Not the Same as Education

A person may possess considerable education without possessing spiritual understanding. Human learning can be valuable, but learning alone does not produce the knowledge that comes through the Spirit of God.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:12-13**:

> *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."*

Paul did not reject learning or careful thought. His point was that spiritual truth cannot be understood fully through human wisdom alone. The Holy Ghost teaches.

This is especially important when considering the word of knowledge. A believer may study faithfully and increase greatly in biblical understanding, but the spiritual gift concerns God enabling truth to be understood and communicated according to His purpose.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must a word of knowledge remain grounded in Christ's truth rather than personal display?

Personal Reflection

Are you easily impressed when someone claims to possess special knowledge? Why?

Action Step

Examine one such claim in the light of the Bible and explain what will change in how you listen to claims of spiritual knowledge.

The Key of Knowledge

Jesus spoke strongly to the lawyers of His day concerning knowledge. Jesus said in **Luke 11:52**:

> *"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."*

The expression *"the key of knowledge"* shows that truth can open understanding, while false teaching can hinder it. The religious leaders possessed access to the Scriptures, yet their interpretation prevented people from recognising what God was revealing.

Knowledge therefore involves more than possessing words or information. The truth must be understood correctly. This remains important in the Church because a person may quote Scripture extensively and still misunderstand what it teaches.

Spiritual knowledge requires the Word to be understood according to its context, harmony and fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The Spirit of truth opens understanding rather than leading away from Scripture.

Jesus Opened Their Understanding

After His resurrection, Jesus helped His disciples understand the Scriptures concerning Himself. Luke wrote in **Luke 24:44-45**:

> *"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,"*

The disciples already possessed the Scriptures, but Jesus opened their understanding so that they could see how those Scriptures pointed to Him. The written Word remained the authority, while Jesus gave understanding concerning what the Word revealed.

The word of knowledge should therefore never be treated as revelation that competes with Scripture. It belongs to the Spirit of truth enabling His people to understand and communicate what God has revealed.

Knowledge Must Centre Upon Jesus Christ

Spiritual knowledge reaches its proper purpose when it leads believers towards Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:2-3**:

> *"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."*

Paul connects wisdom and knowledge directly with Christ. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are not found in spiritual information separated from Him.

The Church should therefore not become impressed with knowledge simply because it is unusual, complex or difficult. Knowledge must serve the truth of Jesus Christ. If spiritual

knowledge leads away from Christ, contradicts Scripture or produces pride, it has departed from its proper purpose.

Knowledge and Teaching

The word of knowledge can be particularly valuable in teaching because a teacher must understand truth before that truth can be communicated clearly. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:6**:

> *"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?"*

Paul connects knowledge with communication that profits the Church. Knowledge becomes useful when it is shared in a way that gives understanding.

This does not mean that everyone who teaches necessarily possesses the particular gift of the word of knowledge. Teaching is an area of ministry, while the word of knowledge is a spiritual operation that may contribute to teaching. A gift may support a ministry without becoming identical to an office.

Knowledge Must Not Produce Pride

Paul gives an important warning concerning knowledge. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 8:1**:

> *"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."*

Paul does not condemn knowledge itself. Throughout his letters he encourages spiritual understanding. His warning concerns knowledge operating without love.

Knowledge can become a source of pride when a person begins to think that understanding makes them superior to others. The proper purpose is edification.

Spiritual knowledge should produce humility because the believer recognises that understanding has been received from God. The more clearly a person sees the truth, the more reason there is to glorify Jesus Christ rather than themselves.

Increasing Knowledge in the Gospel Day

God has always desired His people to grow in understanding. As the Gospel has gone throughout the world, believers have continued to study the Scriptures and recover truths that had been obscured through religious tradition. Daniel was told of a time when knowledge would increase.

Daniel wrote in **Daniel 12:4**:

> *"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."*

Within the Gospel Day, greater understanding must never be viewed as new truth outside Scripture. The Word of God has not changed. What increases is understanding of the truth already contained within it.

Greater light must therefore reveal Jesus Christ more clearly. The word of knowledge serves this purpose when Christ gives understanding that helps His people recognise and communicate biblical truth.

Wisdom and Knowledge Work Together

The word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are distinct, yet they often work closely together. Knowledge helps the believer understand what is true, while wisdom helps the believer know how that truth should be applied.

A person may understand a doctrinal truth clearly yet still need wisdom concerning how to teach it, when to speak, how to correct misunderstanding or how to apply it within a particular situation. Both gifts remain dependent upon the same Spirit.

Paul deliberately names *"the word of wisdom"* and *"the word of knowledge"* together in **1 Corinthians 12:8**. They complement one another within the body.

The Source of True Knowledge

The word of knowledge must never become detached from Jesus Christ. He dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit, He is the Spirit of truth, and He is the One who opens understanding.

The gift does not make the believer an independent source of revelation, nor does it place personal impressions above Scripture. Its purpose is to help the body understand truth. The believer who exercises this gift should therefore remain humble, prayerful and grounded in the Word of God.

The word of knowledge is a spiritual operation through which Jesus Christ gives understanding of truth for the benefit of His body. Knowledge finds its proper purpose when it reveals Christ, agrees with Scripture and edifies His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How should a word of knowledge help Christ's body rather than impress its hearers?

Personal Reflection

Have you valued unusual information more than the truth of Jesus Christ that helps people live faithfully?

Action Step

Identify the misplaced priority and share one clear truth from God's Word in a way that genuinely strengthens another believer.

ONE SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH MANY GIFTS

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The gifts of the Spirit differ greatly in their operation, but their source remains one. Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, helps, mercy and other spiritual operations do not come from different divine sources. They are different ways in which Jesus Christ works through the members of His body as the Holy Spirit.

This truth keeps spiritual gifts in their proper place. The Church must never become centred upon the gifts themselves. Jesus Christ remains the Head, the source of spiritual life and the One working through His people.

The Same Spirit Works Through Every Gift

Paul repeatedly emphasises the unity behind the diversity of spiritual gifts. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:8-11**:

> *"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

Paul repeatedly says *"the same Spirit."* He then brings the whole list together with the words *"that one and the selfsame Spirit."* The gifts differ, but the Spirit does not.

Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, the different gifts are varied operations of Jesus Christ through His body. The believer through whom a gift operates does not receive another spiritual source separate from Christ.

The Person remains one.

Different Gifts Serve Different Needs

The body of Christ has many needs, and no single gift is designed to meet all of them. The Spirit works through different members so that the body receives what is necessary.

The word of wisdom may help apply truth within a difficult situation. The word of knowledge may give understanding that enables truth to be recognised and communicated. Other gifts, which will be examined in the next Study Guide, serve the body in different ways. The differences are therefore purposeful.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:4-6**:

> *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;"*

The gifts differ because the members serve in different ways, yet they remain *"one body in Christ."* Diversity is therefore not a weakness in the body. When governed by Christ, it is part of God's design.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can different gifts strengthen one body in Christ?

Personal Reflection

Have you thanked only the public members of the body while overlooking those whose work is quiet?

Action Step

Identify two different forms of service and express genuine appreciation for each, recognising Christ as the source of their usefulness.

No Gift Stands Alone

A spiritual gift should never lead a believer into independence from other members of the body. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:20-21**:

> *"But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."*

No member possesses everything the body needs. God has arranged the Church so that believers serve one another.

This produces dependence in two directions. Every believer depends upon Christ as the source of spiritual life, and the members also receive benefit from the service Christ supplies through one another. A gift should therefore strengthen fellowship rather than produce isolation or superiority.

The Gift Must Remain Under Christ's Headship

Every spiritual gift operates under the headship of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:19**:

> *"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."*

The body receives nourishment from the Head. Gifts do not replace that relationship.

A person may become known for teaching, wisdom, knowledge or another spiritual operation, but the believer must never become the source of spiritual dependence for others. Ministry should direct the body towards Christ rather than towards the personality through whom He works. The gift remains useful only as the believer remains dependent upon the Head.

Gifts Must Operate Through Love

Paul's teaching concerning spiritual gifts continually returns to love. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 16:14**:

> *"Let all your things be done with charity."*

This simple instruction applies fully to spiritual gifts. The gift may differ, but the love governing its use should remain the same.

The life of Christ within produces concern for others, humility in service and a desire to strengthen rather than impress. Knowledge without love can produce pride, wisdom without love can become harsh, and public gifts without love can become displays of personality. The life of Jesus Christ within must govern every operation.

Gifts Serve the Edification of the Body

The purpose of the gifts remains the edification of the Church. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:26**:

> *"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."*

The final instruction governs everything listed before it: *"Let all things be done unto edifying."* Spiritual activity is not an end in itself. The question is whether Christ is using it to strengthen His body.

A gift that attracts attention but does not edify has missed its proper purpose. A quieter gift that faithfully strengthens others may be accomplishing exactly what Christ intends.

The Person Is Greater Than the Gift

Spiritual gifts are valuable, but Jesus Christ is greater than every gift He gives. The believer does not need to build their identity around a particular spiritual ability because their identity is found in Christ.

The gift may change in its operation, the area of service may change, and the needs of the body may change. Jesus Christ does not change. This keeps the believer centred upon the Person rather than the manifestation.

The same Jesus Christ who saves, indwells and gives spiritual life also works through His people in different ways according to His will. The gifts reveal His operation, but they must never take His place. There are many gifts, many members and many areas of service, but there is one body and one Spirit.

The gifts differ, but the Person working through them is one. Jesus Christ dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit and works through every member according to His will for the edification of His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the one Spirit enable believers with different gifts to serve together?

Personal Reflection

What difference between your own gift and another believer's has caused tension or reluctance to cooperate?

Action Step

Examine the attitude behind that reluctance and take a specific step towards working together for the good of Christ's body.

CONCLUSION: MANY GIFTS, BUT THE SAME SPIRIT

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Spiritual gifts belong to the operation of Jesus Christ within His body. They are not independent powers possessed by individuals, nor do they make one believer more important, more complete or more spiritual than another. Every born-again believer possesses the same Spirit of Christ, while the one Spirit works through different members according to His will.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**:

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

The gifts differ, but the source does not. Jesus Christ dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit and works through the members of His body in different ways. The diversity is found in the gifts, functions and operations, while the unity is found in the one Spirit.

Spiritual gifts are given by grace. They are not earned through education, personality, natural ability or religious achievement. Whatever a believer receives comes from God and must therefore be exercised with humility.

The gifts are also given for service. Scripture describes believers as stewards of what God has entrusted to them. A gift is not given chiefly for the personal fulfilment of the person through whom it operates, but so that others may be strengthened and the Church may be edified.

For this reason, love must govern every spiritual gift. Paul did not separate his teaching on gifts from charity. Knowledge, prophecy, faith and other spiritual operations can all lose their proper purpose when love is absent. The indwelling life of Jesus Christ must govern both the motive and the manner in which every gift is exercised.

The body of Christ also needs different gifts. Not every believer performs the same function, and Scripture does not teach that every believer must possess the same gift. God has arranged the members according to His purpose and works through them in different ways.

This removes the basis for comparison. A believer should not feel inferior because another person has a more visible gift, nor should anyone become proud because their ministry receives public recognition. Every member remains dependent upon Jesus Christ and also receives benefit from the service He supplies through other members of the body.

The Spirit distributes gifts *"severally as he will."* Believers are encouraged to desire spiritual gifts, but the final distribution belongs to God. The proper desire is not to become spiritually prominent, but to become increasingly useful to Christ and His people.

This Study Guide has also begun examining particular gifts. The word of wisdom enables truth to be applied faithfully in situations requiring spiritual understanding, while the word of knowledge enables truth to be understood and communicated for the benefit of the Church. Both gifts come from the same Spirit and remain dependent upon Jesus Christ.

The next Study Guide will continue examining the gifts named in Scripture, including faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation. These gifts differ

greatly in their operation, but the governing truth remains unchanged. There is one body, one Spirit and one Head.

The gifts are many, but the Person working through them is one. Jesus Christ dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit and works through the members of His body according to His will for the edification of His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How should the one Spirit change the way believers value gifts that differ from their own?

Personal Reflection

Which attitude towards another believer's gift most needs correction: envy, doubt, pride or indifference?

Action Step

Name the attitude honestly and show, through a specific response, that you now value the place Christ has given that member.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

Explain why different spiritual gifts are works of the one Spirit for the good of Christ's body. What does this mean for the way believers value one another?

2. Understanding

How is a spiritual gift different from natural ability and from a ministry office? Explain why confusing these things can lead people to seek personal standing instead of serving the body.

3. Personal Reflection

Has the teaching about the worth of every member corrected the way you view a visible gift or quiet service? Explain what you now see differently and why it matters to you.

4. Response to Truth

How should grace and love change your reason for using a gift or receiving help from someone with a different gift? Describe a response you need to make, and explain why.

5. Action Step

Identify one need in Christ's body you have overlooked or one kind of service you have undervalued. What needs to change in your attitude, and how will you serve or encourage someone without seeking recognition?

6. Early Response

Have you begun the response you identified in Question 5? If so, describe what you did, how it helped and what changed in your attitude. If not, explain what has made it difficult to begin.

7. Ongoing Practice

What will help you continue to desire gifts for the body's good while accepting the work Christ has given you? Explain how you will resist comparison with other members.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

How do a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge differ in their service to the Church? Explain why both must remain grounded in Christ's truth and governed by love rather than personal display.

9. Living the Truth

When a member's gift is less visible than yours, or yours is less visible than theirs, how should you respond? Describe one way you can help the whole body receive the benefit of that member's service.

10. Final Response

Bring together the one Spirit, the distribution of different gifts, and their purpose in building the body. What has changed in your understanding, and how will you serve alongside believers whose gifts differ from yours?