

Spiritually Gifted Church 1 Corinthians 12v1-11

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[0 : 00] Well, let's pray and ask for the Holy Spirit's help as we look at this together.

Father, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you for this letter of 1 Corinthians and all that it teaches us about the gathering of your people.

We pray that we today, as a local church here, as believers meeting together, we would know your help so that we may better become the church that you call us to be.

That we would be a people who serve one another, filled with the power of your Spirit, all for the glory and all for the honour of the Lord Jesus.

So please help us now, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not so good and 10 being excellent, how spiritual would you say you are between 1 and 10?

[1 : 37] What would you rate yourself? Well, let's put it another way. What is the sign of a spiritual church?

Is Carigoline Baptist Church a spiritual church? Well, the church in Corinth thought themselves to be very spiritual.

And it seems that the way to decide who is more spiritual than another, or which church was more spiritual than another, was by their particular gift. So the more spectacular the gift, well, the more spiritual that you are.

So if I have the gift of healing, well, then I'm far more spiritual than you if you just welcome at the door. Or if you have the gift of miraculous powers, then you're more spiritual than the person who's just served tea or coffee.

You see, the church in Corinth had confused spiritual gifts with true spirituality.

[2 : 47] And the particular issue, it seems, over chapters 12 and 14, is the issue of speaking in tongues. And if you could speak in tongues, you were super spiritual.

Speaking in tongues, as we see in chapter 13. Verse 1, if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, is it the gift of an unlearned language or another kind of language, like French or Spanish or Japanese or something like that?

Well, if you could speak in tongues, you were part of the spiritual elite. And obviously, if you couldn't, well, then you were spiritually inferior.

You were a second-class kind of citizen. And all of this was causing great confusion and division as the church in Corinth gathered together.

And I'm sure if we were to ask each one of us here, there would be a variety of opinions and no doubt confusion about gifts.

[3 : 53] And it seems, therefore, that this all needs to be corrected. So, in chapter 12, verse 1, starting, if you like, a new topic in his letter, chapter 12, verse 1, he says, Now, about spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters.

Now, some of your Bibles, if you're using an ESV, you might have a little small letter beside spiritual gift, and at the bottom of the page it might say spiritual persons.

So, it can actually be translated both ways. So, about spiritual gifts, or about those who think themselves to be spiritual people. Or we could group it all together and say, Now, about spiritual matters, brothers and sisters.

I do not want you to be ignorant. So, let me show you, he goes on to say, let me show you then what true spirituality is all about.

It's not how spectacular your gifts are, but how you are using your gifts. So, chapter 13, verse 1, as he deals with this issue of speaking in tongues, he says, If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but if I don't have the gift of love, well, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

[5 : 21] I'm just making a whole lot of noise, and nobody understands what I'm saying. Or chapter 14, verse 2, For if anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God, indeed no one understands him, he utters mysteries with his spirit.

Verse 4, But he who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. Verse 18, I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you, but in the church, so when the church gathers together, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

So you see, true spirituality isn't so much about the particular gift, or how spectacular it may seem to other people, it's about how you use your gift to build up the church.

That's the measure of true spirituality. So chapters 12 to 14 are not so much about gifts, and how do I figure out what my particular gift is, but how we use our gifts in the context of the local church.

[6 : 53] So this morning we're going to look at three marks of a spiritual church, as chapter 12 through verses 1 to 11 are like a foundation to the remaining verses up to chapter 14 and the end.

So here's the first mark. A spiritual church submits to Jesus as Lord. Verse 1 of chapter 12.

Now about spiritual matters, spiritual things, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant. For you know that when you were pagans, when you were not believers in Christ, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.

You were off down at the pagan temple, worshipping other gods. Rather than Jesus being your Lord and Saviour, you had turned entrusted to idols.

Idols, mute idols, those that couldn't even talk or do anything for you. They can't even save you, but yet he says you followed them. Of course we today mightn't go to our pagan temple, but we've all got our idols and our gods that we follow.

[8 : 09] We look to our work, we look to our children or our family, we look to money as things that are most important, as things that can save us. But in reality, they are like a mute idol.

They can do nothing for us. But then, for these people, everything changed, didn't it? Look at verse 3. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, Jesus be cursed.

And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. In other words, these pagan people, who had been down at the local temple, who perhaps as part of their so-called worship, used to curse Jesus, have now been radically changed, and now rather than saying, Jesus be cursed, they can now say, Jesus is Lord.

We submit to Jesus. And how did that change all come about? Well, look at the end of verse 3. No one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

Do you remember how Paul described his visit when he first came to Corinth? Have a look back to chapter 2, verses 4 to 5. Chapter 2, verses 4 to 5.

[9 : 43] He describes here how it was when he first arrived in the city of Corinth, chapter 2, verse 4. And he tells us there, he says, my message, and my preaching, so as he explained the cross of Jesus Christ, he says, we're not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

You see, it is the Holy Spirit that enables people and causes people to turn and accept Jesus Christ as Lord. And if you accept Jesus Christ as Lord, the only reason you can is because of the Spirit's work in your life.

So look at chapter 2, verse 14. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

You see, it is the work of the Spirit that causes us to cry out and submit to Jesus as Lord.

Go back with me to chapter 12. So you see, if you are a Christian here this morning, you are a spiritual person.

[11 : 12] The Holy Spirit has changed you. So your spirituality is not dependent on the gift you might have, but that the fact that you have been changed and you are now convinced that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life, that he now rules your life.

So true spirituality isn't about your ability to speak in tongues or give a message of wisdom or heal the sick. It is about Christ being Lord of your life.

Now, if Jesus is Lord of our lives and if Jesus is Lord of this church, then we will bow in humble submission to the authority of the Lord's Word.

So have a look at chapter 14, verse 37. Chapter 14, verse 37. This is as he comes to a conclusion of his whole argument and his whole correcting of what had been going on in the church.

So verse 37, he says, if anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, if any of you think you are a super spiritual person, well then let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

[12:39] If he ignores this, in other words, if he ignores the Lord's word, he himself will be ignored. So you see, to say the words, Jesus is Lord, is not just a verbal consent.

It is to live your life under the authority of the Lord's command to live under his word, under scripture. So that means as we step into this whole subject and topic of spiritual gifts, well we need to submit our own personal experience and our own church traditions, whatever they may be, we must submit them to the authority of the Lord's command, scripture itself.

We are to let God's word shape our understanding and practice of God's gifts to us. It's not what I think or what you think, but what does God say?

So first, a spiritual church will submit to Jesus as Lord. Second mark of a spiritual church is that the spiritual church will celebrate a diversity of gifts.

So chapter 12, verse 4. Chapter 12, verse 4. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit.

[14:11] There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people.

God in his goodness has given to his church gifts, services, workings. In other words, we're not all clones sitting here together doing the same thing.

there is a vast variety within the body of the church. And an example is provided for us, isn't it, in verses 8 to 10.

And we can get very fixated with this list and look at all these various gifts and wonder, well, what do they all mean? Well, as I've been reading and thinking afresh about this through the week, it seems that we don't know what all of them actually do mean because some of them only appear here and they're not even explained and we're not even told what they are.

So it's sometimes hard to discern exactly what each gift is. However, having said that, let me just go through the list and look at each of these gifts and suggest a few things with caution.

[15:33] So, verse 8, to one there is given the Spirit, sorry, verse 8, to one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom. So what's the message of wisdom?

Is it a word about the wisdom of the cross which saves people that he was talking about back in chapter 1? The wisdom, the power of God to save people?

To another, verse 8, there is the message of knowledge. Is it a word of knowledge whereby someone can give us an understanding from the Word of God as to who God is and how he works?

Verse 9, to another faith by the same Spirit. Is it the conviction or the confidence that God's purposes are going to be worked out in a certain way and so in faith we step out trusting God?

To another, gifts of healing by that one Spirit. I think that is straightforward to some extent, healing those who are sick.

[16:50] But let me make just one comment on that. The emphasis here is on the person who does the healing. Not the person who is receiving the healing.

So sometimes we say, oh well the reason you're not healed is because of your faith. You don't have enough faith. Well no, actually the emphasis is on the healer. So if you're not healed it's not your fault, it's the person, well they don't have the gift.

Working on. Verse 10, to another, miraculous powers. Supernatural events or workings to fulfill the purposes of God.

Perhaps to provide something or to change a certain circumstance. To another, prophecy. We'll come across this more so in chapter 14 which I think is clear.

It's speaking God's word into the context of our lives to build up and encourage. To another, verse 10, distinguishing between the spirits.

[17:54] Is it the ability to discern what is from God so that it protects the church family from those who do not speak the truth? And then to another, speaking in different kinds of tongues.

Well, what is tongues? Is it, chapter 13, verse 1, if I speak in the tongues of men? Is that a known language, as we said earlier, like French or Spanish or sign language?

Or is it the language of angels? So something that is unlearned and something we just don't know what it is. And then finally, to still another, the interpretation interpretation of tongues.

Interpreting what somebody has spoken in tongues to encourage and build up the church. Now, having gone through that, part of it is just an exercise to think about these gifts.

But I think the reason why they're listed here is not so much to get us bogged down into what is the meaning of each one, but to help us see that, look, look at the gifts here.

[19:12] There is a huge diversity of gifts within the church. In fact, some of you may know that within the New Testament there are four other places where we have a list of different gifts.

One of them being 1 Corinthians 12 verse 28. We have a few more gifts. Or in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4.

And if we had time to compare all of these, we would see that, well, they're actually all generally different. Each list is somewhat different. Let's have a look at one of these lists.

Go back to Romans 12. It's the book just before 1 Corinthians. Romans chapter 12 verses 6 to 8. Romans 12 6 to 8.

1 Corinthians 12 1 Corinthians 12 1 Corinthians 12 Same author, but writing to a different church. Here's what he says.

[20:18] Verse 6, We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a person's gift is prophesying, well, let him use it in proportion to his faith or according to the faith.

If it is serving, let him serve. If it is teaching, let him teach. If it is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously.

If it's leadership, well, let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

prophecy. Now, I wonder if you noticed what was common between the list in 1 Corinthians and the list in Romans.

Did you see anything that was common? There's actually only one. That is the gift of prophecy. The rest are all different. So what are we to say when we compare the two?

Does that mean to say that the church in Corinth is far more spiritual than the church in Rome? Or is the church in Rome more spiritual than the church in Corinth?

[21:31] Does that mean to say that the church in Corinth didn't have the gift of healing? Or that the church in Corinth didn't have the gift of leadership? In fact, as we go through Scripture and look at all these lists, some gifts are not even mentioned.

So in all of the lists when we compare them, there isn't the gift of music. Is music a gift? Is singing a gift? Quite clearly, I know some are better than others.

We know that. What about DIY? Fixing the wheels on the screens. Can you all do that? What about art? What about IT when it comes to computers?

Are these not all different kinds of gifts? gifts? So I think when we're looking at 1 Corinthians 12, if we go back there, this is not an exhaustive list of the gifts.

This is not the one master list that we shape our whole life and our whole church by. It's representative of the kinds of gifts that there are within the church.

[22:35] Does each church have every gift? I don't think it does. Does each person have the same gift? I don't think they do. Does each church have the same gift all of the time? No, they don't.

I think it changes. The point is, there is a diversity of gifts.

Even when we look at 1 Peter 4, he doesn't even go into a big list. He just says, gifts of speaking, gifts of serving. Now, this diversity of gifts is all part of God's good design for the local church.

Have a look at 1 Corinthians 12, verse 11. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 11. All these, all these gifts, these diversity of gifts, are the work of the one and the same spirit.

And he gives them to each one just as God determines. Or just as God wills.

[23:46] So you see, within this diversity of gifts, I don't get to decide what gift I might have. It's not like we all go walking into the sweetie shop and we're all there to pick out our favourite sweeties down in Antinelli's.

That we kind of go into the gift shop and we come before God and we go, mmm, healing. I think I'd like that one. But you know what? Hold off on the gift of financial giving.

I don't really like that one. Gift of miraculous powers. I'll take that, but don't want the gift of cleaning the loose.

Hold on that one too. You see, it's not up to us to decide what gift I have or what gifts this church should have.

It's not for me to determine or for you to determine. God gives to his church different kind of gifts, end of verse 11, as he determines.

[24 : 48] We can't manipulate God into getting what we want. It doesn't matter how hard I pray or what I do. This is God's church and he is Lord over the church.

So that means as a church we should not be thinking, you know, am I lacking some spiritual gift? Is there something wrong with me? We should never think that God gets it wrong.

Do you think God has designed his church wrong? Just as he has given us the gift of salvation, God determines and gives the gift of these diverse gifts.

So second, the spiritual church celebrates a diversity of gifts as God chooses to give. The third mark, a spiritual church builds up the church body.

Now while we have a diversity of gifts, they all come from the same source. Look at verses four and five again. Diversity but yet unity all from the same source.

[26 : 04] Let's read verse four again. There's different kinds of gifts but the same spirit. there are different kinds of service but it's the same Lord.

There are different kinds of working but the same God works all of them in all men. So do you see there?

Same spirit, same Lord, same God. Father, Son and Spirit. Spirit. It's the Trinity.

There's a diversity within the Trinity. Isn't there Father, Son and Spirit? But yet they're united together in one's purpose.

They are of the one source. So the same point is underlined as we go through verses eight through to ten. It's about the same spirit, the one spirit.

[27 : 03] All gifts come from the one Godhead. Now if our gifts all come from the one source, then they must also have the one purpose.

For God is united in his one purpose. Verse seven. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

So the purpose of our gifts is not to gain promotion or popularity. They are for the common good. They are for the building up of God's church.

And he gets on to this again in chapter 14. Just have a sneak look ahead. Chapter 14, verse 12. In the middle of verse 12, he says, since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that what?

Build up the church. Or verse 26, as he gets to the conclusion of talking all about it. What shall we say then, brothers and sisters, when we come together, everyone has a hymn, one word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.

[28 : 18] All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. So the purpose of these diverse gifts, which come from the one source, God himself, is so that we would serve one another for the common good, for the building up and the growing of his church.

And there's no escape in this work either. This isn't just for a select few. Back at verse 7 of chapter 12, to each one, the Spirit is given for the common good.

Down at verse 11, all these are the work of the one and the same Spirit, and he gives to each one, just as he determines.

So there's no exclusion or no discrimination. Each one has been given a gift, or gifts from God by his Spirit, for the common good, for the building up and the growing of his church.

So it seems that as he sets out his argument, he's saying to the church, and we're learning for ourselves here, there should be no arguing and no fighting over gifts, but there should be a celebration of the diversity of gifts, and together working for the building up of his church.

[29 : 52] church. So let me ask the question that we started with at the beginning. Are you a spiritual person? Well, if you have the Holy Spirit within you, you are a spiritual person.

And what's most important is that we can cry from our heart, Jesus is Lord, he is Lord over our lives, and I am submitting to his authority.

That is the sign. of a spiritual person. Are we a spiritual church? Do we recognize amongst each other the variety and the diversity of gifts that God has given?

Or do we look down in inferiority and in superiority over one another and go, hmm, mine is better than yours? Or do we recognize that God is determined to give just as he planned to one another for the building up and the growing up of each one of us and for the growing of his church?

What's all these gifts going to look like in practice as we seek to gather together as church and live out as church? Well, you'll need to come next week and discover what Ralph has to say.

[31 : 18] well, let's pray. Let's pray. God, we will be together as the Lord.

Our Father God, we come before you as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we submit ourselves afresh before you, acknowledging that you