

1 Corinthians 12:4–11

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[0 : 00] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.! And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord.

! And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all and everyone.! To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit of the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.

To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the same Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy. To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues. To another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Father, we praise you for who you are and what you do.

Father, you are awesome, holy, mighty. You deliver and you provide.

[1 : 35] And in these next moments, we pray that you will provide sustenance to your people through your living word. For those who need encouragement, would you lift up their hearts. For those who need strength, would you strengthen their feeble hands and their weak knees. For those who need joy, would they receive the joy that comes from the Lord. Those who need help, may they be reminded that the Lord is with them. And so be all that we require, we pray. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well, last week, we commenced a series titled, The Spirit-Filled Church. A series that will span 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14. We saw that the Spirit-Filled Church was a church that shared in a common deliverance. The deliverance from the wages of our sin, the penalty of death, the torment of Satan. We saw that the Spirit-Filled Church that is a Spirit-Filled Church shared in a common declaration in that Jesus is Lord.

These are commonalities that bind the church together. We've been commonly delivered and we are commonly declaring Christ's Lordship. We are a delivered people declaring Jesus as Lord. And this is how the Spirit shows up in the normal, basic Christian life.

Yet, it's not the only way He shows up, as we find out this morning. We find that this morning, the Spirit of God displays God's work in the Christian life also through the bestowing of gifts, gifts, particularly spiritual gifts. This morning, I want to argue that we will see the Spirit-Filled Church is a gifted church. And a gifted church serves one another. Christ Church Chicago will demonstrate that she is a Spirit-Filled Church as we use our gifts to serve one another. I'll put it shortly and succinctly in this way. A gifted church serves one another. The title I chose to take for the sermon revolves around this. I've tagged our time, Gifted for the Good of Others. Gifted for the Good of Others.

The text unfolds in two primary, with two primary emphases. We have and we'll see one generous God. Verses 4-6 and also verse 11, we have one generous God and secondly, we will see that we are one gifted, extremely gifted people. And these are the two hooks we'll hang our time together. We are, we have one generous God. We are one gifted people. Well, Paul continues, beginning in verse 6, continues his letter and asserts that following this common profession that Jesus is Lord is accompanied by a spiritual provision, namely a spiritual gift. The Spirit not only enables us to confess Christ's Lordship, but also outfits us with some spiritual equipment. There are a variety of gifts, according to verse 4. There are varieties of service. There are a variety of manifestations.

[5 : 45] And Paul will develop them more fully later in the passage, but he wants to make clear that they all come out from a single source, namely God himself. There are many gifts given, but they come from a single giver.

There are many spiritual manifestations, but there is one sole source, which is God himself. The text belabors this emphasis. There are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are a variety of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all and everyone.

So that we don't miss the point, it actually reemphasizes it in verse 11. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit. Paul does not want the Corinthians to overlook the singularity of the giver.

You and I might be careful readers and see that, hey, there's some Trinitarian undertones in this passage, and Paul doesn't develop that fully or the doctrine of the Trinity, but he mentions it. He experienced God as a triune God. The Spirit, the Lord Jesus, and God the Father. He notes them as three persons, but they are the single source of spiritual activity in the life of the believer. God, three in one, one in three, they are collectively, cooperatively bestowing gifts upon the people of God. All of God, you can say, was united in endowing the church with gifts, enabling her for service. Now it's important for Paul to establish the singularity of the source of all Corinthian gifts in order to continue to mend this church that was unraveling. Corinth was a status-driven congregation like we had mentioned last week.

They segmented the rich from the poor, the wise from the foolish, the gifted from the less gifted. Within the church, they sought to establish this hierarchy, distinguishing the highly esteemed from the common. They were so obsessed that they would even pit the early church leaders against one another.

[8 : 08] I follow Peter. I follow Apollos. I follow Paul. And it was this divisive heart that Paul had to bring together to mend and correct. It's as if two premier athletes on the same team would compete against one another to establish dominance or superiority over the other at the detriment of their own team.

When they were supposed to be competing against others, they are busy undercutting and undermining and demeaning one another. When they are supposed to focus on outside rivals, instead they have fostered this internal rivalry against their own teammate. It's a dysfunctional team. Why? Because they wear the same uniform and they share a common goal. But somehow they're opposed to one another. And in the same way, Paul has to help the Corinthians see that they are wearing the same uniform. They share a common profession. And they derive all their spiritual life from the same source, God himself. You see, the heart of the Corinthian dysfunction is this, and I'll name it. It is spiritual pride. It is spiritual pride. It's the spiritual snobbery that thinks or that acts in a way that looks down upon others, that judges others and say, well, God's grace is actually for the deserving and you don't deserve it. Or God's, God, the Spirit only works in particular lives. Maybe my own life, setting me apart from you and overlooking your life because somehow your life is deficient or inadequate as a Christian. This comparison game that the world plays, this one upmanship that the world values, this I'm better than you mindset has no place in the church.

It is destructive, divisive, even demonic. And we need to be delivered from such an attitude. And to combat this spiritual pride, Paul holds out the extent of the gift. Did you notice who received the gift?

Everyone. To each is given. Spiritual pride comes from this errant thought that I have something that you don't. And God says, well, let me give you something or give everyone something so that you and I are never entitled to say, I have it and you don't, or ever to think that you have it and I can't.

This worldly thought, I have this yacht and you don't. I'm so superior. I have these degrees and you don't, so I'm more clever. None of these apply in the church. This attitude is dismantled because as Christians, we live with an understanding that all that we have, particularly our spiritual lives and well-being, are spirit-given. The fact that you're a Christian is a gift, for by grace you have been saved. Your ability to make the profession Jesus is Lord, according to verse three, is a gift. It's a grace gift. Your very spiritual ability is a gift. It is the same God who empowers them all and everyone. He is sovereign in how in how he dispenses these gifts. According to his own free will, your gifts were not earned, achieved, or somehow accomplished. They were given, bestowed, and therefore boasting and bragging is intolerable before the Lord. He gives gifts according to his divine sovereign choice. And to further undermine human pride, what does he do? He gives gifts to everyone. A grace is given to every believer. It's not given when you hit two years of faithfulness. It's not given when you complete the confirmation course. It's not given when you hit a financial giving threshold. It is given when you profess Jesus as Lord. Irrespective of you, the gift is given because of God's generosity. Christianity is not a corporate ladder you climb.

[13 : 01] No, from the outset, it's striking, but you're given the bonus right at the beginning, before you've accomplished anything. Therefore, in the kingdom, there are no haves and have-nots when it comes to spiritual gifts. We are all haves and therefore brought together under the generosity of God.

God's free gift delivers us from spiritual pride, but it also pulls us from the other extreme, because the opposite of spiritual pride of saying, I actually deserve it and you don't. I'm better than you.

I'm a have and you're a have-not. The opposite of it is this self-loathing. This, I'm not good enough.

I don't measure up. And perhaps you live in a world where that's what you've been told. You haven't accomplished much. You haven't achieved much. You haven't earned much. You don't deserve much. And you fold in on yourself and you begin to loathe upon yourself. You may feel that you don't have anything to give, but in the kingdom, but in the kingdom, everyone is given a gift.

I'm reminded of the story of Moses. When God appears to Moses, which should be enough, and says, hey, I need you to go confront the most powerful individual in the known world at that time, Pharaoh, and summon my people out. Moses, his first thought might be some of our first thoughts. Well, who am I? I'm pretty incapable, incapable. I'm under-resourced. I'm not eloquent. I'm slow of speech and of tongue. God, here is my excuse. Why I can't measure up in your kingdom. I'm a nobody.

[15 : 15] And this text confronts you, confronts that attitude, and says, a gift was given. A gift was bestowed. A bonus was already handed out. You get a jersey, and you're expected to play.

Well, we're to see one another as teammates because we share a common coach, so to say. And Paul had to make it clear that the Corinthian experience came from the single source and had a single aim. The gifts that they exercised were not given so that they could assert themselves or exalt themselves over one another, but they were ultimately given, you see it in verse 7, for the common good, ultimately for the building up of the church. We have a generous God, one generous God, God. And as a result, he has bestowed upon us many gifts. We have many gifts, verses 7 to 10.

We are one gifted people. It's worth reading again in verse 7. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For one is given through the Spirit of the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. Listed are nine gifts. It's not a comprehensive list at all.

If you're a student of the Bible, you'll find additional gifts added in Romans chapter 12. You'll actually see more gifts added in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 later on. You'll see it in Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, and you could go look those up for your homework. But Paul is careful to do a few things.

He's careful to show us that no one has all the gifts. There is no superstar on your team. And as we've already discussed, he is also very clear that every individual has at least one gift.

[17 : 42] Out of God's generosity, he has not left anyone without a jersey. And the natural question that emerges, there's probably a lot of questions that emerge in your mind. What are these gifts? Explain them to me. Do these gifts still happen today? How do I identify my own gift? And I won't, I cannot answer all those given my time. But the natural question we ask is what are these? How can they be defined? Can they somehow be organized or categorized? In one sense, they're pretty hard to pinpoint and define with precision. Some of them feel like they're overlapping wisdom and knowledge or the gift of faith and healing and miracles. They seem almost clumped together. There's immense dialogue in the commentaries regarding these gifts. And in the one sense, they're difficult to get a solid grasp on because I think partly because of the nature of the spirit. He does what he pleases. He's like the wind and he can't be put in a box. But he is not a spirit of chaos or complete randomness. There is orderliness and because there is orderliness, we can make a few observations. And so I'll make them here.

Some have said one way to think about the gifts are to categorize them into two. One way is to say that I'm going to separate the spoken gifts from the unspoken gifts. You might observe that in verses 8.

There is this utterance of wisdom and utterance of knowledge at the toward the end of the passage. The the gift of speaking in tongues. The gift of interpreting aloud what those tongues have said.

There are non-spoken gifts. Maybe we can call them service gifts. Gifts that directly aid others. Healing and the working of miracles for the benefit of others. Some have proposed it's a mixture of what's natural and supernatural. They're the ordinary gifts and the spectacular gifts. But Paul doesn't make that distinction. To be honest, if they are all spiritual gifts, they are all supernatural. They require the spirit to operate. Rather, Paul writes in a way that these are just everyday occurrences in the church of Corinth. This was the Corinthian church. They experienced all of these. There appears to be the exercise of spiritual wisdom or knowledge that somehow brought about the edification of the church. It came not from human means but with spirit and doubt. There was the gift of faith. It's different from saving faith because every believer receives the gift of saving faith. But there's this special faith. Perhaps for a circumstance or difficult situation. It's this gift of faith that seems to flow into healings and miracles.

That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. That's for a circumstance. demons were excised and even the dead were raised. There's the practicing of prophecy, which is declaring the will of God, making clear the Word of God for the people of God. This was Paul's preferred gift that we'll find later on. But prophecy is closely related, there needs discernment which follows that gift. You need to be able to discern, individuals need to be able to discern what is true from what is false. Tongues and its interpretations are closely related. This speaking of whether it be a humanly understandable language or this indecipherable angelic language, the early church practiced it. And we'll hear more in the latter chapters of this series. But we cannot miss that Paul's purpose is not to carefully define every gift. I've already said it's not a comprehensive list. It's not a dictionary on how to define which gift you actually have. No, he wants rather he wants to emphasize that each has received a gift. And as a result, the church, the faith community is a diversely and abundantly gifted community.

[22 : 57] He wants us to know that we all serve and bow to a single God. And this one God has distributed gifts, diverse gifts. The Spirit has ensured that there is a diversity of gifts. The differences between members are not only natural, one writer puts it, but have been in fact divinely ordained and sanctioned.

The church was intended to get all sorts of gifts, an assortment of gifts, a box of chocolate type of gifts, not the the mint Andes kinds, but the the cease candies with the nuts and the fruits and the the caramel inside and the dark chocolate. We are an assortment. And while the Corinthians seem to give preference to tongues, that is not God's intention. God determined that the church would be most beautiful when it is comprised of the widest assortment of gifts. And this would be for the church's well-being.

This is important. God has saw it fit to endow the church with diversely gifted members for her welfare.

A former professor of mine, Dr. Carson, he, while commenting on this creative act, he says, you know, God is in the business of making snowflakes. You and I make ice cubes. God designed all of us to be different. We desire everyone to be the same. The assortment of gifts that we receive are not intended for spiritual self-promotion or for puffing ourselves up. In Corinth, individuals are marking themselves out for special status. How can I take what God has given and leverage it for my own personal gain? That's another sermon. But that's what the Corinthians were doing. How can I take God's gift intended to serve God's people and make myself important? No, that's not how we do it. The diverse gifts flowing from God himself are to be used for a central shared purpose. And it's found in verse 7. We cannot overlook this verse. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit or the gift of the Spirit for the common, a spiritual gift for the common good.

Our generous God has gifted his people with spiritual gifts for the common good. Interestingly, what is translated as the common good, *symphero*, shares the same Greek prefix from where we derive our English word *symphony*, *symphonia*, *symphero*. You hear it. It's literally, *symphony* is literally translated, a common shared sound. And it's an appropriate image to consider in this instance. An orchestra is comprised of individual musicians.

[26 : 10] These individual musicians all have their particular instrument. You have the strings that make up the orchestra. You have the wind instruments. You have the brass instruments. You have the percussions.

Each instrument, each section is distinct and they can play an effective solo. It can make a sound, but its potential is only realized when it joins the orchestra and plays the fullness of the symphony.

The force of the instrument, its effectiveness, its grandeur, the spirit of the spirit, its full of the spirit. It's fully realized only when it serves the whole.

We witness this in a similar way when we engage in corporate worship. There is something very different when I am walking down the street or sitting in my office.

My God is awesome. I could sing it myself. But it is entirely different. When the choir of Christ Church Chicago fills my ears and the breath fills my lungs and the musicians bang away tenderly, professionally, and the singers lead us.

[27 : 34] It is entirely different. Why? A solo acknowledges God individually. The choir acknowledges God corporately.

See, we understand the fullness of the church when we engage corporately and together. And this was God's purpose.

This was his aim. This was his plan. The diversification of gifts was in his mind so that as we exercise our gifts in concert and in service to one another, the grandeur, the beauty, the effectiveness, the health of the church would be realized and experienced.

A spirit-filled church uses her gifts in service to one another. And so it begs the question. You know the question.

What gift are you employing in service to this faith family? It's been established that you've been given a gift. An orchestra is deficient if the strings decide not to play.

[28 : 45] A rowing team is short-changed if a rower decides not to pick up an oar. A church is weakened when an individual, when it's her members, withhold a gift that is supposed to be employed for the building up of the saints.

You see, we are an interdependent family as we'll find out next week. And I'll put it this way. You have something I need.

I cannot make it without you. and vice versa. I have something you need. We collectively need one another. We are deficient without one another. And so the question that lingers is what gift are you employing in service to your neighbor here in this room or to the well-being and the health of this congregation?

And you're probably asking, well, what is my gift? I'm not sure. But you have one. And you need to discover it. Oftentimes it seems things that you are naturally drawn to, that you're naturally good at. This is not a comprehensive list. There's a gift of generosity that you'll find out in Romans. There's a gift of administration that you'll find out later in 1 Corinthians. But there's an assortment of gifts. And it's up to us to help one another figure it out. Because Christ Church Chicago will remain weak if her members choose to withhold their gift from one another. We will only demonstrate that we are a Spirit-filled church as we use our gifts in service to one another. A gifted church serves one another.

Let's pray. Father, we want to acknowledge that we are gifted by you spiritually for the well-being, for the good of others, for the common good.

[31 : 34] And so, Lord, would you help us to identify the very gifts that you've given us in order that we may unleash them in the lives of those around us.

Forgive us if we've been selfish with them. Forgive us if we have been self-promoting with them. Forgive us if we've been self-aggrandizing with them. Help us, rather help us, to willingly, openly, sacrificially serve those in which you have set us in a room with.

Lord, we pray that it is really for the glory of the church. You have given your Spirit to the church and you have given gifts for your church, not only for her effectiveness, but for her well-being. And so, may we grow in health because we are all doing the work. Strengthen us to do so, we pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.