

SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:

A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today

III. MAINTAINING PROPER DIET & EXERCISE

D.) ROLES & EQUIPMENT (Source of Spiritual Gifts)

“THE TRAINER” (1 Cor. 12:1-11)

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INTRODUCTION:

Spiritual trainer, Wesley Tracy, laments: *“Some people have the notion that following your spiritual gifts is spending the days and years of your life doing only those things which come naturally, easily, with no effort, discipline, or practice.”*

Most of us are sensitive against that kind of attitude when it comes to our participation in sports, our work and our hobbies. But what about when it comes to serving the Most High God?

In this next section of the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, he addresses the culmination of their differences – in particular what it means to be 'spiritual.' The Corinthians took it upon themselves to see 'life in the Spirit' as transforming them into something super-human and 'above' the world. Paul, on the other hand, understood that true “life in the Spirit” means a life that is supernaturally empowered to live in this sin-infected world as weak people of flesh and yet victorious through the Spirit!

I.) SPIRITUAL = JESUS IS LORD (vv. 1-3)

“About matters of the spirit”

- This is the key issue and foundation of dispute and error.

“... not ... unaware ... dumb idols ... led astray ... Therefore I am informing you ...”

- Clearly, the church in Corinth has this all wrong. They have permitted themselves to be both ignorant of the truth and deceived by the ideas and influences of others.
- Idolatry – anything that takes our faith, devotion, obedience, thinking, or time away from God – is both stupidity and the mark of error.
- In other words, God's Holy Word has not been their absolute or even primary standard!

“... 'Jesus is cursed' ... 'Jesus is Lord' ...”

- The purpose, nature and power of the Spirit is to exalt Jesus as Lord. Nobody empowered by the Spirit of God can do any different.
- By contrast, anything – even that which appears, sounds or feels 'spiritual' – that does not directly and clearly exalt Christ cannot be of God's Spirit!
- The true Spirit of God, and all that comes from and is empowered by Him points to Jesus and glorifies Christ. All else demeans Him.

II.) DIVERSITY BALANCED WITH UNITY (vv. 4-11)

A.) Many Under One (vv. 4-6)

- This principle of diversity balanced with unity is exemplified and lived out by the nature and character of our Triune God, Himself!
- ***Different gifts . . . same Spirit
different ministries . . . same Lord
different activities . . . same God***
- The Spirit empowers us with supernatural gifts, Jesus directs us with His calling and opportunities, and God the Father is the 'mover and shaker' who sovereignly makes it all come together and happen.
- Both diversity AND unity are necessary in the Body of God!

... active in everyone and everything.

- Every person and everything (abilities, gifts, organizations, resources, opportunities) depend on the person and activity of Almighty God.
- **It's not about what each of us can't do, but what are we doing with how God has enabled us?**
- Illustration: In 1932, an aspiring young man made the rounds of Hollywood's talent judges looking for his 'break.' On one of his early screen tests, one talent judge wrote: "Can't act. Can't sing. Can dance a little." Rather than get discouraged about his weakness and failures, this young man focused on what he was given and went from there. Oh, his name was Fred Astaire.
- **It's not about what each of us can't do, but what are we doing with how God has enabled us?**

B.) Spiritual Empowerment For Kingdom Benefit (vv. 7-10)

- These spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit in order to empower us to serve Christ according to His Will and opportunities in the power of God and for His glory!
- When ***each one*** of us allow Him to empower and lead us, and in response apply ourselves in this way, the results will always be good and beneficial – as God Himself judges such.
- Illustration: It was reported some years ago that, each week, people in the US generate 4 million tons of trash and 5 million tons between Thanksgiving & Christmas. To give just one example of how and what we really waste: if each person in America throws away just one bite of edible turkey, that comes out to 8.1 million pounds of edible turkey in the trash can. Each New Year's Day, the NY City sanitation Department cleans up 42 tons of *extra* garbage. Environmentalists and advocates for world hunger are not the only ones who detest waste. God, too, hates waste. Most of all, He hates to see valuable resources that He bestows on His people – such as spiritual gifts, time, money, ability, opportunity, and energy – lost and/or unused. The LORD commands that we bear fruit, not let it rot.
- **It takes each and every one of us, functioning by His gifting, under His direction and in a unified effort and purpose to truly function as His Church!**

1.) Wisdom

- This is the supernatural ability to apply our God-given knowledge in practical ways that honor Him.
- Only those who have first the Spirit, then the Mind of Christ may have genuine wisdom (2:10-13).

2.) **Knowledge**

- The supernatural ability to receive, search and know God's revealed Truth with great understanding and insight.

3.) **Faith**

- An especially great faith and sensitivity to God's sovereignty and faithfulness that directs and carries one through in special service to God.

4.) **Healing**

- The supernatural ability of being used by God as a tool for His supernatural healing in a specific, directed place and manner.

5.) **Miracles**

- Literally, the “*energizing of powers.*”
- The ability to release the power of God in miraculous ways.

6.) **Prophecy**

- The supernatural ability to clearly speak/communicate God's Word according to God's purposeful and preserved direction.
- For us, today, with God's full revelation in Scripture this means the speaking, teaching and applying of Scripture.

7.) **Discernment**

- The supernatural ability to distinguish between true and false and what is of the Spirit of God versus other spirits.

8.) **Languages**

- In our time, this seems to be the most controversial and misunderstood of the spiritual gifts. It is also, in some circles, made out to be the most important and glamorous gift.
- Yet, it receives scant attention in Scripture. Other than this letter, the only other references to this gift are three historic occurrences in Acts (2; 10:46; 19:6). Other than one brief reference in the disputed closing verses of Mark (which most scholars consider a human addition to the original), there is no mention at all in any of the 4 Gospels.
- Jesus, Peter, John and Jude never mention it all.
- It has become popular to refer to this gift as “tongues” and that has helped to seem to give it some greater and more mysterious meaning. However, the Greek word used in Scripture (*glossalia*) literally refers to “languages.” “Tongues” comes from the Old English translations, in which that was the English word most used to refer to languages. There is no other greater, special, or exotic meaning in Scripture than “human languages.”

a.) **Speaking**

- This refers to the supernatural ability to preach the gospel in a human language that you have never learned so that those who speak other languages but not your own may understand God's

Word.

b.) Interpreting

- This is the supernatural ability to interpret for another what was preached from God's Word in a language that neither you nor he or she has ever learned. It is a gift of supernatural *hearing*.
- + **The important thing is not what gifts the Spirit has given us, but that we use whatever He has graciously given us for His purpose and the community's benefit.**
 - Illustration: A famous author was autographing copies of his new novel in a department store. One gentleman pleased him by bringing up not only his new book for signature, but two of his previous ones as well. "My wife likes your stuff," he remarked apologetically, "So I thought I'd give her these signed copies for a birthday present." "A surprise, eh?" hazarded the author. "I'll say," agreed the customer. "She's expecting a Mercedes."
 - We need to accept, appreciate, develop and use whatever gift(s) that God has given to each of us, and not worry or get distracted by what we didn't get or someone else did!

IV.) ACCORDING TO THE MASTER'S PLAN (v. 11)

- The source and purpose of the Gifts of the Spirit are once again summarized in order to ensure that there is NO misunderstanding.
- **Even though the gifts are given to each person to be individually applied, they are ultimately to be a unified activity of God Himself through His people exercising their God-given diversity in a unified community with purpose and direction according to His Sovereign Will**
- This is also why it is said that not all of these gifts are still normative today. For example, God used gave the gifts of healing, miracles and languages in a few very specific historical occasions during the birth of His Church in order to make abundantly clear that this new covenant that was being established was absolutely of and from Him. Having established that at each relevant point of transition, God has shown His will to be leaving such further confirmations to faith rather than undeniable displays of His power.

CONCLUSION: HOW IS GOD *YOUR* TRAINER?

Are YOU aware of His Desire & Ability to empower you?

Have YOU identified & accepted His Gift(s)?

Are YOU following His plan to develop and use these Gifts for His purposes?

Are YOU incorporating your God-given diversity into the community of His Church in such a way as to be used in a unity with the whole for His glory?