

The Spirit, The Gifts, And You – 1 Cor 12:8-10

1 Cor 12:8-10 (p.959)

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 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. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

7 times in 8 verses, the HS is mentioned; And several more by implication in v10
None of which means a single thing, if u don't know who he is, what he does, and why
Crucial not only to your understanding of spiritual gifts, but to your life in Christ – is your knowledge of the Spirit
So that's the first point I want to emphasize before we move on in this passage

Know the Spirit

It's not the *main* point of these verses, but it's certainly one of the assumptions behind it
That we know the Spirit

And all the more so, when you consider that he plays a part in virtually every single aspect of our life and faith
From the inspiration of Scripture, to leading us in prayer, the regeneration of our souls, sanctification, perseverance, comfort, and guidance . . .
There's hardly anything he *doesn't* play a part in

All of which begs, even demands, that we understand and know him better
Otherwise, you may miss his work, miss out on his best, and miss *him* – the active presence of God in your life

And there are 3 foundational aspects to knowing the Spirit; The first of which, is . . .

• That he's a person

The HS is not just a force, Star Wars style – he's a person
That's the implication of verses where the masculine pronoun “he” is used when referring to him
Like **John 16:13-14**, where Jesus says – *When the Spirit of truth comes, **he** will guide you into all the truth, for **he** will not speak on his own authority, but whatever **he** hears **he** will speak, and **he** will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 **He** will glorify me, for **he** will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

Jesus could have used “it” as a pronoun, but didn't; Implying that the HS is person
And all the more so in Greek, b/c the word for spirit, is neuter – it's neither masculine or feminine; And based on the customary rules of grammar in Greek . . .
A neuter word would ordinarily be referred to with a neuter *pronoun* as well – like “it”
But that's not what Jesus said; 7 times in 2 verses, he used a masculine pronoun for a neuter word, drawing *attention* to the personhood of the HS *****

In addition to that, the biblical writers ascribe multiple *activities* to the HS, that are normally associated with personhood
Like teaching, and bearing witness; Or speaking, praying, and being grieved, an emotion

All of which indicates that though he's spiritual in nature, he's a person – and therefore able to relate to us on a personal level

Know that he's a person, and . . .

• That he's fully God

It's a concept both implicit and explicit in the Scriptures

Implicit as the attributes of *God* are applied to him

Like in **Ps 139:7-8** where King David says, speaking to God – *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol [the grave], you are there!*

David applies the attribute of omni-presence here, to the Holy Spirit, implying that he's God; B/c omni-presence is an *attribute* of God, and God alone

But it's also explicit; Like in **Act 5:3-4** where the apostle Peter *calls* the HS God
*Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the **Holy Spirit** . . .? You have not lied to man but to **God**.”*
He equates the Spirit, with God

All of which is critical; Otherwise we can't have complete confidence in his work *****
Like his work to perfectly inspire Scripture, or regenerate our souls . . .
Or guide us into truth; And so on

But since he *is* fully God, we *can* trust him fully
And all the more so, b/c he's part of the *godhead*, the Trinity
Which is the 3rd foundational aspect of knowing him; Know . . .

• That he's part of the Trinity

Consisting of God the Father, God the Son, and God the HS

3 persons; Each person fully God – in and of themselves; And yet one God

Like Moses says in Deut 6 – *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.* (4)
And Paul in 1 Tim 2 – *There is one God* (5)
And earlier in 1 Cor 8 – *For us there is one God* (6)

And yet, our one God is comprised of 3 distinct persons, with the same divine nature and attributes, and different only in their roles
Which you might depict like this (**Trinity Graphic**) – the circle is God; comprised of 3 persons; separated by dotted lines b/c they all share the same attributes and essence . . .
And any one is fully God, while all are fully one *****
Know the Spirit

Second . . .

Know the gifts

The Apostle Paul lists 22 different spiritual gifts in the NT, scattered across 5 different passages – **1 Cor 12:8-10; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 7:7-9**

None of which are intended to be *exhaustive* lists – b/c no list contains every gift, and musical gifts aren't mentioned at all

But it's obvious he thinks the identification of the ones that *are* listed, is important
Otherwise he wouldn't have wasted the space *****

And you can't identify them in yourself or others, if u don't know what you're looking for
Knowing the kinds of things God uses to build his church and advance his kingdom – helps you find them in the first place

- When I was growing up, I couldn't wait to get Saturday morning breakfast over with, so I could get out to the garage, and help Dad work on the car
Not only that, but sometimes I got out of dusting all the Avon bottles for Mom

And I'll never forget the first time Dad asked for a "9/16 box-end wrench" when he was under the car – I had no idea what he was talking about
I didn't know what *9/16ths* meant, I didn't know what a *box* had to do with an *end*, and I certainly didn't know what any of it had to do with a *wrench*
And when he finally got out from under the car to get it himself, I was even more confused to see that there was a *circle* on the end (*wrench*)
So until I figured all that out, I was virtually *useless* in helping him fix the car and accomplish his work

And the same is true when it comes to spiritual gifts
If you don't know what *wrench* you're looking for, you'll never use it and maximize it to accomplish the work of ministry
It's important to know the gifts – all 22 of them (**Gifts list**)
9 of which Paul lists here, and I want to briefly define, so that unlike me, you know a box-end wrench from a hole in the ground

- Starting in v8 he says – *To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit*
This is the only place in the Bible these two gifts are mentioned
And while some people make much of them – saying they depict a supernatural insight into things the speaker doesn't know ahead of time . . .
There's no biblical evidence to back it up

More likely, based on the *meanings* of the words *wisdom* and *knowledge*, and their use in 1st century Roman culture . . .

The utterance of wisdom is simply the heightened ability to speak a wise word . . .
And the utterance of knowledge is the ability to speak intelligently about something
The result of wisdom and knowledge, acquired and cultivated over the course of a person's life
The kinds of gifts you would find, and should find, in Bible teachers, elders, or pastors

Next, is **faith** – which is simply the heightened ability to trust God, despite the risk of failure; Or, act on a conviction, when others are paralyzed by doubt
And I say heightened ability, b/c without *any* faith, it's impossible to please God at all
All believers have some measure of faith; But some have the gift

- To another, v9, are given **gifts of healing** Paul says; Plural

Referring to the ability to bring about physical healing in people, through various means
For Jesus, it was laying on of hands and pronouncing them healed
For the apostles, it was that and anointing them with oil
For Luke, doctor that *he* was, it was a heightened ability to diagnose and apply appropriate medicines and cures; For us, it could include *all* those means
Scripture doesn't rule any of them out, even though the frequency of the more miraculous healings diminishes through the book of Acts

But most often, for most people, healing comes through prayer – like **James 5:14-15** says *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord* [oil being a symbol of the HS's presence and power]. *15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick [save them physically], and the Lord will raise him up.*
And then, James expands it *beyond* just elders (**James 5:16**), saying in the next verse – *Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.*

IOW healing is not just for elders; But whoever it is, *prayer* is the primary means
And those with a *gift* of healing, will see their prayers answered more often and more thoroughly, than those without it *****
That doesn't mean their prayers will *always* be answered – it's not healing on demand
Even the apostles experienced that from time to time
Rather, prayers for healing will be answered according to God's *will*
If we ask anything according to his will he hears us. (1 John 5:14)

- Next, from v10, and closely related to healing, is the **working of miracles** – i.e. bringing God's supernatural power to bear in a situation, in an uncommon way
Which would obviously include a miraculous healing, but since Paul lists it separately, he probably has something more broad in mind

Including things like *deliverance from danger* – like when Paul was bit by a snake, but didn't suffer
Or a supernatural *meeting of physical needs* – like when Elijah told the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), that her jug of oil and jar of flour wouldn't run out
Or, a *supernatural intervention* by God at *our* request, to thwart those who oppose the gospel
All of those things would qualify as miracles – signs and wonders meant to aid those in distress, confirm the truth of the gospel, and awe people at God's amazing power

But similar to healings, this gift is not available on demand
We can and should pray for miracles, but it *must* be God's will for them to happen

- Then, following miracles in v10, is **prophecy** – a gift exercised all the time around here
From me preaching at times, and people in Small Groups; To students in Breakout Groups, and informal conversations over coffee
B/c NT prophecy is simply the verbalizing of a thought that God has spontaneously brought to mind, with respect to a specific person or situation at hand

But just b/c it's from God, doesn't mean it's equal to or on par with Scripture
Nor can it be in opposition to Scripture
Nor is a prophetic comment infallible or error-free; We might be wrong

We might have “heard” from God wrong, or we might be clouded in our judgment, or unduly biased, or just plain wrong; We’re not perfect

Which is why we must hold loosely to our prophecies, whether we think of them that way or not

And especially drop the “I have a word from the Lord” preface if you’re inclined to that You may or may not have a “word”

But if you *don’t* and say you do, you just misrepresented God

In which case you’re probably wrong about your prophecy as well

And if you *do* have a legitimate word from the Lord, saying so is unnecessary – the HS will use it no matter how you preface it; Just say it

- The 7th gift here, is **the ability to distinguish between spirits**

And once again, b/c this is the only place Paul mentions it, the exact nature of this gift is hard to nail down

Which should serve as a warning to be careful about making too much of it

On the other hand, when you put the descriptive *label*, together with Scriptures that talk about various types of spirits – like the spirit of error (1 Jn 4:6) . . .

Or divination (Acts 16:16); Or infirmity (Luke 13:11; Mk 9:25) . . .

Most likely, this gift is the heightened ability to recognize different types of *demonic* influence in people, as opposed to the HS’s influence

That doesn’t mean you have to *name* the type of spirit or spirits, as some are want to do . . . Just be able to perceive that something is awry, and take whatever action is necessary to protect the church

Whether it’s speaking to the person directly, or having nothing to do with them, or watching them closely, or whatever

And we’ve *had* people like that around here – people who at the very least were demonically *influenced* b/c of sin in their life

And early on I think there was at least one person who was demonically *possessed* – not a true believer, and indwelt by a demonic spirit

And over the course of time we had to take action to protect our church – b/c they were not only *self*-destructive, but destructive of our body

- And then finally, are the gifts of **various kinds of tongues** . . .

And the **interpretation of tongues**

Tongues being an ability to speak in syllables not understood by the speaker, when praying or giving praise to God . . .

While the gift of *interpreting* tongues, is *understanding* what is said, and verbalizing it to the church

Both of which are highly subjective, frequently abused, and often divisive

Even the issue, not even the practice, just the issue – is often damaging and destructive

Which is why we choose to refrain from *public* expressions here at Harvest, while in no way trying to control your *personal*, *individual* expressions with the Lord

That’s 9 of the 22 gifts listed in the Bible (**Summary**)

And while we’ll pick up a few more at the end of ch12, the rest are pretty self-explanatory, and can be found in the passages to which I referred at the start In addition to that, I’ll post some resources on our website in the next few weeks – including a listing and description of all 22 gifts . . .

To help you fill in the gaps, dig deeper if you’d like, and most importantly . . .

Know your gifts

That’s the last thing I want to leave you with – know *your* gifts

Certainly that’s one of the peripheral implications of listing them out

He wants us to identify the ones *we* have, so we can use them *more*, and more effectively

So, very briefly, let me give you 5 ways to discover your spiritual gifts

1. Ask God for insight – “Lord, where are my strengths? Point me in the right direction; Give me the impulse or opportunity to do something I’m good at”

2. Ask godly people around you – find people who know *you*, *and* know the gifts; and ask them what they think you’re gifted in

3. Pay attention to areas of fruitfulness – aspects of ministry that seem to prosper with your participation and involvement; fruitfulness is a good indicator of your giftedness

And so is fulfillment; Which is why you need to . . .

4. Serve in a variety of ministries – and see what fulfills you; see what fuels you versus what depletes you

Which might mean that you have to try *multiple* things or a *variety* of ministries – over the course of several years

If so, that’s okay; Be patient; B/c hands down, it’s the best way to know your gifts

5. Take a Spiritual Gift Inventory – a link to which you can find on our website (<http://www.churchgrowth.org/analysis/index.html>)

It’s free, it’s done for you, and it’s fairly comprehensive

But it’s not a panacea – a be-all-end-all

In fact, more often than not it reflects the gifts you *wish* you had, instead of the ones you *do* have

But when you combine it w/ the other means of discovering your gifts, it can be helpful

In any case (**Summary**), know the Spirit – so he can help *you* . . .

Know the gifts – so you know what wrench to look for . . .

And know *your* gifts – so you can fan them into flame

Pray – HS, fall fresh on us – we want to know you

And help us to know and understand the gifts you give – seeing them in ourselves, identifying them in others, and using them in our church

Melt us, mold us, fill us, use us