

## Serve God . . . With The Gifts He Provides (Part 1 of 2)

### 1 Corinthians 12

#### Video – *Who Do You Serve?*

If you've just joined us, we're in a short mini-series entitled, "Serve God" working our way through the book of Titus in order to Spread the Word

Not only to spread a knowledge and increased application of the Word among ourselves, but also among those in our circle of influence who have never heard it or embraced it for themselves

Having looked last week at Serving God *for the sake of others*, we turn this week to serving God with the gifts he provides

Start talking about spiritual gifts in this day and age, you get a variety of reactions

From puzzlement and curiosity to nervousness and fear

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a dramatic increase in the focus on spiritual gifts

The result for many was confusion – that's where we are today

Which is why **1 Cor 12** is so helpful

Enables us to determine what a spiritual gift is, and then distinguish between *true* spiritual gifts and man-made look-alikes

Start with a definition of a spiritual gift – What is a spiritual gift?

Spiritual Gift – Any ability empowered by the HS and used in the ministry of the church

One of the first indicators of true spiritual gifts in this passage, is that they . . .

#### **True spiritual gifts exalt only Jesus (1-3)**

Not yourself, not your talent/gift, not your ministry, not someone else, not some event

That's why not all acts of service, good deeds, or expressions of kindness are spiritual gifts at work – because they don't exalt Jesus

Jesus is exalted when what is done is done in His name (he's the reason), for his glory (looks good), and for his fame (better known)

Recently out with some friends the other night; Truck that ran out of gas

Went to gas station, came back, gave it to them

Can we pay you for it? No – this is a gift and we give it to you in the name of Jesus, because he has given us the greatest gift we could ever want

That act of giving exalted Jesus

Read v1-3 – I want you to know what's up with spiritual gifts (1)

You did all kinds of religious things in the past (2), but they weren't true expressions of spiritual gifts because they didn't exalt Jesus (3)

There are lots of people doing all kinds of good things with all kinds of gifts and abilities

But those gifts/abilities aren't being exercised as *spiritual* gifts until they are used to exalt Jesus

They may be accomplishing much that is good, and God uses that, but they're not accomplishing the *greatest* good, which is the exaltation of Christ

#### **True spiritual gifts are given and empowered by the HS (4-6, 11)**

V11 (after citing several gifts) – *HS apportions* [gives] *to each one individually as he wills*

- True spiritual gifts are given by the HS

The word *apportions* translates a word that indicates a continuing activity over time

The HS is *always continuing* to distribute or apportion gifts to each person as he wills

Which means, if the HS gives us spiritual gifts, you and I can't manufacture them

You can *desire* them (31), but you can't make it happen yourself

You can *develop* the gifts you have, and you should, but . . .

Your giftedness comes from God and God alone, through the power and presence of the HS within you

*Self-made* is not a label for true spiritual gifts given by the HS

- And the gifts that he gives, are many

*There are varieties of gifts/service/activities* (4-6)

Just because you were led astray to serve your pagan gods in a wide variety of *wrong* ways, doesn't mean that there's only *one right way* to serve the true, living God

Just because you served your self, stuff, relationships, career in a multitude of wrong ways, doesn't mean that there's only one right way to serve God

God didn't design a cookie cutter approach to serving him with the gifts he provides,

Instead, he gave us a wide *variety* of gifts, talents, desires

Don't be confused, Paul is not distinguishing between gifts, service, and activities

Neither is he distinguishing between the 3 persons of the trinity as relating to each of them

- He is simply driving home the point in 3 different ways that there are all kinds of ways to serve, and the *same* God empowers them all

We know that because v11 is explicit . . .

*All these* [spiritual gifts] *are empowered by one and the same Spirit* (11)

What does it mean that the HS *empowers* our gifts? One commentator said it this way . . .

- "When seemingly natural gifts such as teaching, helping others, administration, or singing are empowered by the HS (used in the strength God provides – 1 Pet 4:10-11), they will generally show increased effectiveness and power in their use"

That's the point Paul makes in 1 Cor 1:5-7 when he says that the Corinthian believers were *enriched* in all their speech and knowledge (all their giftedness) due to their relationship with Jesus and fellowship of the HS

True spiritual gifts are given and empowered by the HS

#### **True spiritual gifts benefit others (7, 17-19)**

*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* (7)

- To each is given a spiritual gift(s) that reveals the person and work of the HS within you  
And they are given to benefit others (*for the common good*) – It's not about you!

1 Cor 14:26 – *When you come together . . . let all things be done for building up.*

True spiritual gifts are to be used to build up and benefit the church

That happens because . . .

- God perfectly arranges the gifts and people in our church (v17-19)

*God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose* (18)

If we all had the same gift, our benefit to one another would be greatly diminished

And our effectiveness at building up the church as a whole would be severely limited

But that's not the case because God arranges us in the body of Christ, to be the most effective as a whole

That's why your lack of serving is a bad thing – not only because it's flat out

disobedience, but because it adversely affects our church, and the arrangement that

God intends

It's like putting a patch over your left eye – you limit your body's effectiveness  
Same is true of our church – when you withhold your giftedness, you resist God's  
intended arrangement, and limit our ability to disciple others  
And if you do it for long, God will bypass you  
True spiritual gifts benefit others because God perfectly arranges them

- That motive – to benefit others and glorify God – maximizes your spiritual gift  
But let me warn you about a couple of wrong motives  
Sometimes we serve to *pay God back* for his service/gift to us – that's dangerous  
You serve because you think you're in debt to God for all he did, and you need to  
somehow pay him back  
That's called a *debtor's ethic*, and it's hopeless and powerless and . . .  
A dead-end that eventually leads to frustration and disillusionment . . .  
Why? Because price paid for your sin was infinite; *never* be able to pay God back  
The whole point of the cross is that Jesus appeased the wrath of God toward you,  
and satisfied the just punishment he required, so that there's nothing *left* to pay  
Stop trying to pay God back – it's finished

Another wrong motive is serving God with the hope that he'll bless you  
That's a *self-serving ethic*  
If I serve God maybe he'll give me that promotion I want  
If I serve God maybe he'll re-unite me with my spouse  
To the extent that you serve for your own benefit, you deprive others of theirs  
True spiritual gifts benefit others

### **True spiritual gifts unify the body (v12-16, 20-27)**

12 – My physical body is one body, comprised of many parts/members  
So it is with the church, the *body* of Christ has many members, but one body  
13 – Why are we *many* different people yet *one* body, one church?  
Because *we were all made to drink of the one Spirit* – we have the same Spirit, the Holy  
Spirit of God, within each one of us; which means we have a common bond  
And he has unified us – *baptized us into one body* – under his care, influence, and  
protection; no matter what our background is

14-16 – Every person who has embraced Jesus as their Savior and Lord, no matter what  
their gift, is a part of the body of Christ, whether you think so or not  
Which means that Christian individualism is a contradiction of terms  
A person who says they follow Christ, yet don't have anything to do with his church, is  
off their rocker at best; and not a believer at worst  
Like your ear suddenly deciding that it's not really a part of your body, and trying to  
detach itself – it's ludicrous because it can't be done, and it wouldn't *want* to  
Which is a lot smarter than some Christians who say they don't want to be a part of  
the church, the people to whom they belong, their life-blood  
Hello – you *are* a part of the church; start acting like it; stop fighting it

20 – picks the argument up again after talking about the benefit to others of spiritual gifts  
21-22 – every spiritual gift/person is *needed*; even those that seem to be of lesser  
importance  
23 – we compensate for and protect the less noticeable and potentially weaker members of  
the body

24-26 – switches from the physical body to the church  
God has designed the church the same way as our physical bodies so that there is no  
division, but unity  
He considers us all equal, no matter what our gifts  
And the result is a community or body of believers predisposed to loving one another,  
sharing in the ups and downs of life, and caring for each other

When we . . .  
Recognize that as individuals our spiritual gifts are part of a beautiful mosaic that the  
HS has put together – unity will grow  
Recognize we're not islands unto ourselves, but need each other – unity will increase  
Use/exercise our spiritual gifts to exalt Christ and benefit others – unity will flourish  
The exercise of true spiritual gifts always unify the body

There's a lot of that going on around here, which is one of the reasons I'm able to give  
you such an encouraging Harvest Update  
With serving God with the gifts he provides in mind – bring you up to speed on 8 areas

### **Close**

Part 2 of Serving God With The Gifts He Provides – FAQ's