

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

### 1 Cor 13-14 and Other Various Scriptures

If you've just joined us, we're in the middle of a series on serving God as we work our way through the book of Titus and Spread the Word  
Part 2 of Serving God . . . With The Gifts He Provides  
Trying to increase our understanding, dispel confusion, de-mystify, encourage app

Last week . . .

Indicators of true spiritual gifts from 1 Cor 12 . . .

True spiritual gifts exalt only Jesus (1-3)

True spiritual gifts are given and empowered by the HS

True spiritual gifts benefit others

True spiritual gifts unify the body

This morning . . .

Looking at some of the different gifts, starting with the facts

Then answer some FAQ's

End with some application

1 Cor 13-14 will be our base, so go ahead and turn there as we consider . . .

### The facts about spiritual gifts

#### • Number of spiritual gifts

22 gifts listed in 5 passages – List of spiritual gifts or the titles of people who have them

**1 Cor 12:28** – apostleship, prophecy, teaching, miracles, healings, helps, administration, tongues

**1 Cor 12:8-10** – speaking wisdom, speaking knowledge, faith, distinguishing between spirits, interpretation of tongues

**Eph 4:11** – evangelism, pastor-teacher (shepherding)

**Romans 12:6-8** – serving, encouraging, giving, leadership, mercy

**1 Cor 7:7-9** – marriage, celibacy

Paul wasn't trying to list them all, as evidenced by the fact that no list contains every gift, and obvious ones like musical gifts aren't listed at all

But, it's clear enough from those listed that God does give an amazing variety of gifts due to his *varied grace* (multi-faceted, richly diverse grace) – 1 Pet 4:10

#### • Types of spiritual gifts (1 Pet 4:10-11)

Only a few biblical categories – Speaking gifts, Serving gifts – **1 Pet 4:10-11**

Higher gifts (1 Cor 12:31); Implying lower gifts

Higher gifts are those that build up the church and bring more benefit to others (1 Cor 14:5, 12, 26)

But it's helpful for our thinking to also consider that there are . . .

Natural/Miraculous gifts – both of which are from God (1 Cor 4:7)

Sign gifts – outwardly miraculous gifts

#### • Purpose of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 13:9-12)

To equip the church to carry out its ministry until Christ returns

1 Cor 1:7 – We are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ

To give a foretaste of the age to come (1 Cor 13:9-12)

The intimacy with God that we experience now in our serving, is just a taste of what it will be when we're in God's presence, face to face (12)

#### • Definitions of spiritual gifts

##### Spiritual Gifts Definitions (9 of them) – The ability to . . .

*Prophecy* – verbalize a thought that God has spontaneously brought to mind

Always in agreement with Scripture; Never new revelation from God on par with Scripture; could be fallible (in error)

*Teaching* – explain Scripture and apply it to people's lives

*Miracles* – bring God's supernatural power to bear in a situation

*Healing* – effect frequent or thorough healing in others through prayer

*Tongues* – speak prayers or praises in syllables not understood by the speaker

*Interpretation of tongues* – report the general meaning of something spoken in tongues

*Wisdom and Knowledge* – apply godly wisdom or biblical knowledge in various situations

*Distinguishing between spirits* – recognize influence of HS, or demonic spirits, in a person

##### Some questions about spiritual gifts

#### • Are spiritual gifts permanent or temporary? (1 Cor 12:12-26)

Implication from Scripture is that they are permanent – an abiding/continuing possession

Body analogy from 1 Cor 12:12-26

Titles associated with some gifts (apostles, prophets, and teachers)

Language of Scripture indicates a possession of gifts

1 Cor 13:2 – If I *have* certain gifts

Rom 12:6 – *Having* gifts . . . let us use them

1 Tim 4:14 – Do not neglect the gift you *have*

#### • Is there one gift that everyone should have? (1 Cor 12:29-30)

No – there is no Scripture passage that says so

And the one gift (usually speaking in tongues) that is singled out in some circles as a definite must, is explicitly referred to in 1 Cor 12:29-30 as not being possessed by all believers – turn there

Not all believers have all of the gifts, and though the list is not exhaustive, the implication is that there's no one gift that everyone should have

Greek participle/form of the verb (*me*) before each question requires a “no” answer

There's no spiritual gift that all believers have, nor is there one gift everyone should have

#### • Have some spiritual gifts ceased? (1 Cor 13:8-12)

Some would say yes; Some say no; Others say we can't know

8 – As opposed to love, the spiritual gifts will pass away

They're not going to be needed at some point in time

10 – And we know when that is – *when the perfect comes*

9, 11 – Until then, we have a limited understanding of God and his ways just like we did as kids in the matters of life

12 – *Now*, we have a fuzzy view of God as we serve him with our gifts, just like a first century mirror gave only a dim view of what was in front of it

But *then* (when the perfect comes) we will see *face to face* (we will see God personally; common OT phrase)

*The perfect* is seeing God *face to face*, and that happens when Christ returns

Until then, all of the gifts are operative; None of them have ceased

#### • Should we speak in tongues? (1 Cor 14)

I believe Paul is using prophecy as an example of the higher gifts, in order to point out the weaknesses of speaking in tongues

1 Cor 14:1-5 – Prophecy is better than tongues; Desire prophecy more than tongues  
5 – I’m not diminishing speaking in tongues, but there’s a far better gift for the church  
Unless someone interprets, no one is built up

1 Cor 14:6-12 – Proves his point that prophecy is better than tongues  
6 – Because unintelligible syllables are of no use to anyone  
7-9 – Just like instruments that make random notes – when you hear tongues, you have no idea what’s being played or what they signal  
10-11 – Tongues are like a foreign language – create a barrier (taxi driver in Chicago)  
Tongues are the same way – without an interpretation, they separate us  
12 – Use, cultivate, grow in those gifts that most build up the church; don’t obsess on those that don’t

1 Cor 14:13-19 – For those who have gift, uninterpreted it doesn’t do anyone any good  
15-17 – If you have the gift of tongues, use it in private for the benefit of your spirit, but in public, use gifts that require your mind so as to benefit the church  
13 – And pray for the ability to interpret so you can build up the church  
14 – Because though your spirit is *fruitful* in blessing the Lord, your mind is *fruitless* in blessing others  
18-19 – It’s preferable to speak in words rather than tongues, even if you can

1 Cor 14:20-25 – Speaking in words results in conviction, confession, conversion among unbelievers; but speaking in tongues is a disservice to them  
20 – Do what’s right here; when you speak in tongues without concern for its effect on yourself or others, it’s childish; it’s an abuse of freedom, it’s not mature  
21 – He quotes Is 28:11-12  
Context of these verses is that God’s message was *rejected* by the immature and unbelieving Israelites, even though it was delivered through fantastic phenomenon like strange tongues from foreign people  
22 – *Thus* (conclusion) . . . Just like the rejected gibberish of a foreign language brought about judgment to the unbelieving Israelites, so does the rejected gibberish of tongues bring about judgment on unbelievers today  
That’s what he means when he says *tongues are a sign* – they bring about or result in judgment for the unbeliever . . .  
23 – Why? Because the message through tongues will be heard and rejected because it’s not understood, *and* because it’s thought to be the product of insane babblers . . .  
That rejection will result in further judgment and condemnation for the hearer because they will remain unbelievers  
24-25 – However, when we prophesy – when we speak God’s message in the language of our culture – unbelievers and outsiders will hear, be convicted, confess their sin, and worship God (24-25)

*Preliminary conclusions* – Tongues are no good because they:

Don’t benefit anyone except the speaker  
Separate us from one another  
They don’t benefit our minds  
They alienate unbelievers

Those are preliminary conclusions that are certainly true of *uninterpreted* tongues

If we stopped there, we might think that tongues should never be used  
But Paul continues in the next section to help us draw some *final* conclusions

## 1 Cor 14:26-33, 39-40 – **Conclusions**

*What then?* (What conclusions should we come to in all this – 26)

#1 – Make sure your spiritual gift is used to build up the church (26, 31b)

Not to make yourself feel good, or get a spiritual high

#2 – Tongues don’t *have* to be expressed publicly (*if* – 27)

Especially when they are not *preferable* (19)

#3 – If they *are* expressed publicly, it should be done in an orderly manner (33, 40)

Only 2 or 3 in any given setting; One at a time (27-28)

*With* an interpretation by someone else that’s in agreement with Scripture

Weighed and measured by those with gifts of discernment and in positions of authority

#4 – Emphasize the higher gifts in church, rather than tongues (29-33)

*Let* – means should (examples in 26-30)

The higher gifts should also be used in an orderly way

What is said should be considered and *weighed* for its truthfulness (29b, 32)

All for the sake of learning and encouragement (31b, 3)

#5 – Don’t forbid speaking in tongues, but don’t pursue it either (39, 18-19)

Desire the higher gifts more, like prophecy; They are preferable

In addition to those conclusions/guidelines, there are 3 other very **relevant issues** . . .

1. We have no *objective* way of determining what a legitimate expression of tongues sounds like (no interactive CD with the manuscripts)
2. We don’t know for sure what the word “tongues” *means* – foreign languages, unintelligible syllables, both, ecstatic utterances (left field)
3. The vast majority of tongues in our culture are a *distraction* from worship  
They focus on the gift or the person using it, instead of the *giver* of the gift

What’s more, **the pattern of Scripture** seems to indicate tongues were most used where –

The Scriptures were not readily accessible

The language barrier was a problem

The testimony of those living for Christ was weak or minimal

Does that mean that all expressions of tongues these days are illegitimate? No

But, when you combine all those factors (subjective nature, linguistic uncertainty, rampant abuse, accessibility of Scriptures in our culture, common language, and our strong witness for Christ), it gives us great pause to encourage anything but the *private* use of tongues

If you have the gift of tongues, use it as you wish in your *private* prayer life, but *publicly* use and cultivate those gifts that better edify and build the church up – there’s not only less risk, but more potential

## **Using your spiritual gifts**

### • **Discover the gifts you have**

5 ways to do so

1. Ask God for wisdom and insight into your gifts
2. Ask godly people around you, who know you
3. Pay attention to increased blessing in a particular area of ministry
4. Try serving in different areas and see what fuels you vs depletes you
5. Spiritual Gift Inventory as a guide – not a panacea

<http://www.churchgrowth.org/analysis/index.html>

- **Use them**

We are responsible to use and develop our Spiritual gifts in proportion to what we've been given (Rom 12:6-8)

Just like muscles, spiritual gifts strengthen with use, or weaken with neglect

Which is why Paul said repeatedly . . .

Rom 12:6 – *Having gifts . . . let us use them*

1 Tim 4:14 – *Do not neglect the gift you have*

2 Tim 1:6 – *Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you*

Develop them (gain experience and training); Work at it (be diligent)

Don't lapse in using them

Remember that some of the miraculous gifts are not available on demand

They depend on God's sovereign will and action for the situation at hand

- **Seek more**

1 Cor 12:31 – *Eagerly desire the higher gifts*

1 Cor 14:1 – *Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts*

Ask God for more gifts to use for his glory and the sake of others

Seek them with a pure motive

Guard your heart against the desire for significance in eyes of men

Make your desires known to those closest to you – Small Group, Service Team

They can pray and keep their eyes open for you as well

Be content with what you have

- **Serve in love (1 Cor 13:1-3)**

One of the things Paul argues here is that *love is superior* to all the gifts and therefore it is more important to act in love than to have any of the gifts in the first place

It's so important and so much more valuable than any gift, because it is one of only 3 attributes that will last forever (8, 13)

However you serve, serve in love, because it's the *more excellent way* (1 Cor 12:31)

Serve in love because *love will never cease* to be expressed, while everything else will

Give of yourself, whatever you have, for the sake of others and the glory of God, because without love, serving God with the gifts he provides, is *useless* (1-3)

## **Conclusion**

You never know the impact that your spiritual gifts, exercised in *love*, will have

**Story** of woman on bus – (Illustrations, p. 322)

Serve God with the gifts he provides, for his glory, and the sake of others – in love

**Close** – Next week's service – shorter; back to Titus – Church Leadership