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GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

People are amazing creations. Think of the different skills, talents, and interests of those around you. It takes the unique contributions of everyone working together to make a thriving business, organization, or family. Same is true for the church. And God gives "spiritual gifts" for its unity and growth.

Following the easy-to-grasp metaphor of "members" of the one "body" of Christ which is the church, 1 Corinthians 12 continues the theme of "*koinonia*" community from chapter 11. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer to bring them into "union with Christ" both individually and corporately. And by the Spirit, each person uses their spiritual gifts to glorify the Lord, build up His "body," and serve one another.

1- Whoever has the Holy Spirit has a SPIRITUAL gift. In 1 Corinthians 1:4 the apostle Paul writes, "*I give thanks for you, because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus...so you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.*" Grace in Greek is "*charis*" and the word behind spiritual gift is "*charisma*." Basically it means "grace-gift." It's given by God, not earned. It's a divine operation emphasizing an end result accomplishing God's purposes. Examples are listed in 1 Peter 4, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Corinthians 12. The gifts include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, miracles, healing, helping, administering, tongues, interpreting, faith, mercy, etc. *Koinonia* is always key.

Some lead, some help, all serve. The apostle explains various gifts as the work of the one Holy Spirit, apportioned to individuals as He wills, as "*the same God empowers them all in everyone.*" The focus is not you or your gifts, but you using your gifts for the good of the whole church. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, by the strength God supplies, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.*" Our focus is never to be on the Spirit, but on Jesus.

2- How does using your spiritual gift GLORIFY Christ? Gifts of the Spirit can be counterfeit. That's why John says *test the spirits*. Jesus says *examine the fruit*. Paul says "*I will show you a still more excellent way*" which is magnificently expressed in chapter 13. "Love" is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and in all its expressions, love reflects and magnifies the character and attributes of Jesus.

Chapter 13 beautifully portrays what it looks like to use your spiritual gifts in the power of the Spirit: in love, producing "*fruit that endures*" because Jesus said the Holy Spirit "*will glorify Me*" (John 15:8-10, 16:14). Ephesians 4 echoes, "*for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith... when each part is working properly...makes the body grow up in love.*" Romans 12 agrees. As different members of the same body, all believers have gifts, but not the same gifts. However, we are all commanded and empowered to express the same fruit of the Holy Spirit, to glorify Christ.

3- How does your spiritual gift BUILD UP the body of Christ? Chapter 14 discusses "speaking gifts" in the church, with major emphasis on *koinonia* community, and building up the body through spiritual gifts. For zealous Corinthians and for us, verse 12 is key: "*since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.*" The Spirit empowers your gifts for God's purposes.

Sadly, some people are more interested in external than internal. They would rather display esoteric demonstrations of spiritual phenomena, than simply use their gifts to serve others. The apostle speaks directly to this: we are not to be enamored with ecstatic experience, we are to excel in serving. "*Strive to excel in building up the church.*" This also speaks to anyone confused, negative, or negligent about the gifts. He says "*earnestly desire spiritual gifts,*" especially prophesying, which does not mean "fore-telling" but rather "forth-telling" God's Word. He says, "*one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding, encouragement, consolation*" and "*builds up the church.*" Serve the Savior, not self.

God intends spiritual gifts for the unity and edification of His church. But some become divisive. If your use of spiritual gifts detracts from Christ, or glorifies self, how is the Holy Spirit in that? He gives gifts so you give them back to the church, to glorify Christ, and build up His body. Strive to excel in this!

Paul says, "*do not be children in your thinking*" (v20), not selfish, but mature. He says "*let all things be done for building up*" (v26) and gives explicit instructions for using spiritual gifts, "*for God is not a God of confusion but of peace*" (v33). God grows unity, not division. "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (v40). Not with confusion but peace. By the Spirit's power. To the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!