

CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS**1 Corinthians 12:1-11****(Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11)**

Intro: In 1997, Kathy and I became the pastors of Conoy BIC. We moved from our little tenet farmer's house on 3/4 of an acre to a new home we had built about 16 miles away. The new house sat on a little over four acres and we proceeded to put in a large garden and a fairly sizable orchard. About a year later, Sheila bought a beautiful paint colt whose registered name was Tommy's Little Secret, but he had always gone by the much better name of Bucky. At the time we had no barn, but we had very gracious neighbors who were, and continue to be, very good friends as well, and we boarded Bucky in their barn for free. However, after about a year it was past time to build our own barn and we set about to do just that.

Our barn would be a pole barn as we decided the dimensions for it to be 30 feet by 31 feet. I paid the money, and on a beautiful morning, probably around 8:00 a.m., three guys who were probably Amish or former Amish showed up and began the construction process. I thought that a barn of that size would take days to build. Instead, about 8 hours later, those three young men left and the barn was complete and it was beautiful.

What made the construction of our barn so wonderful is how each of the men knew their part in the process and then executed their job perfectly. It was a beautiful process to behold with each utilizing his skills with barely any kind of communication. Now I'm not saying that no communication is a good thing. Instead I'm saying they didn't have to tell each other what to do, each knew exactly what to do and when to do it. In the end, after just a few short hours, we had a beautiful new barn.

The church is like that. At least it's supposed to be like that. Bill Hybels gave me many good insights over the years, and one of them is "*There is nothing like the local church when the local church is working right.*" Something else he would often say is "*The local church is the hope of the world.*", and it is. I would add that the local church is the hope of the world when the people who make up the local church, know what their spiritual gifts are and utilize them to the full extent of the Holy Spirit's gifting.

Knowing what your spiritual gifting is, is a gift to the church, and a gift to the kingdom, and a gift to the world. To that end, let's look again at the scripture before I get into the rest of the message. This time I'm going to read it from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, which will help bring some more clarity to the text as we proceed.

What I want to talk about now is the various ways God's Spirit gets worked into our lives. This is complex and often misunderstood, but I want you to be informed and knowledgeable. Remember how you were when you didn't know God, led from one phony god to another, never knowing what you were doing, just doing it because everybody else did it? It's different in this life. God wants us to use our intelligence, to seek to understand as well as we can. For instance, by using your heads, you know perfectly well that the Spirit of God would never prompt anyone to say "Jesus be damned!" Nor would anyone be inclined to say "Jesus is Master!" without the insight of the Holy Spirit.

God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

wise counsel

clear understanding

simple trust

healing the sick

miraculous acts

proclamation

distinguishing between spirits

tongues

interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when. 1 Corinthians 12:1-12 (The Message)

The first thing we need to see is that. . .

It's good to be informed

- Apparently the Corinthians had questioned Paul about spiritual gifting. It seems that the actual word “gift” is not used in the original language, but the implication is unmistakable. What he says literally is “*Now concerning spirituals* and here is a place where Peterson assists us, listen, *What I want to talk about now is the various ways God’s Spirit gets worked into our lives.* Our spiritual gifts and God working through us. In in this Paul does not want us to be uninformed. We need to know what this is about. Being a part of the family of God in Jesus Christ will never be complete unless you know your gifts and are utilizing them.
- So Paul answers the question. What are gifts? And the answer is, lots of things!
- In this passage here there are nine gifts listed. There are other passages throughout Paul's writings that list other spiritual gifts. Our spiritual gifts inventory that Karen will be describing to us and introducing when I'm finished this message lists a total of 19 spiritual gifts. The interesting thing about that is, that's not even exhaustive list. God’s gifting is not limited.
- And here is what you must know, you have at least one of those gifts. Every Single One Of You. If you are a Christ follower, you have a spiritual gift or two or three or four. Here is one thing that's true about spiritual gifts, if you are a Christ Follower, there's not a single one of you who does not have a spiritual gift.
- In fact . . .

The Holy Spirit in you shows your allegiance

- If you call Jesus Lord, you have a gift. Paul points out that the Corinthians were once pagans who were easily led astray by empty and lifeless idols. Now they have life in the Holy Spirit. He points something else out, no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit. Your allegiance shows up in who you proclaim. When people see Jesus in you, they know with whom your allegiance belongs.
- And here’s something awesome . . .

Variety is beautiful

- Last week Karen gave us a little children's story that was aimed in both directions. She looked at the children as she taught, but she was hoping that us big people were listening in too. She took Mr. Potato Head and tried to imagine what it was like if everybody was a potato. And then she added ears, and face, and feet, and showed how a potato became Mr. Potato Head by the additions of necessary items. You might remember that William had Mr. Potato Head’s hair and Karen rightly wondered what purpose hair actually serves? And I agree – who needs hair anyway. But I digress . . .
- Variety is the spice of life. I love variety in what I have for breakfast. I love to take my morning walk using a different route every day. I like to read a mix of fiction, non-fiction, biographies and inspirational books. Different things make life very interesting. Now, we will talk a lot more about this next week, but Paul points out the need for different giftings in the church. There are different gifts, but they’re all from the same Spirit. It's all the same service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of activities but the same God empowers us by the Holy Spirit. Each person, let me say it again, has a gift and there is no one who has no gift – I simply cannot say it enough. Each person is given a gift for the common good of the kingdom of God.
- Paul proceeds to give examples of the gift of wisdom, the gift of knowledge, the gift of faith in healing and miracles and prophecy, and the gift of discernment, or tongues or the interpretation of tongues. These are just a few of the many important gifts that are given to the people of God for the carrying out of ministry. All of those gifts are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Like those young men that built my barn, everyone knows their place and their purpose and their job, and they do it with enthusiasm and skill.
- And here's the important thing...

God decided what your gift is and it's all good

- In fact, it's real good. So you're gifting might not be as upfront or glamorous, but it's still good, and it's still crucial.
- Spiritual gifts aren't about miraculous signs. They are about the body of Christ functioning the way God created it to work. Concerning spiritual gifts, you have one. Some of you already know what they are, some of you need to find out. Some of us who already took spiritual gift profiles multiple times over our time as

followers of Jesus Christ have found that our gifting has adjusted – that happened for me. In my opinion, this brings new excitement to the Christian walk. . .

Conclusion: That's enough from me for this morning. Karen is going to come and describe what our emphasis is going to be over the next couple of weeks as we look further into this subject of the gifts of the Spirit and how that makes us into a well-oiled and holy machine for the Kingdom so that we can be the local church that's working right. Amen

Karen will now come and talk to us concerning spiritual gifts.