

## 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

### **Discovering and Activating our Gifts**

#### *Spiritual gifts put to use in the community of faith*

There are not likely too many of us sitting here today who do not have at least one credit card in our wallets. It is pretty much impossible to book a hotel room, vehicle rental, or a flight without using a credit card. It is just a given that if you want to reserve something you will need a credit card. But credit cards are no good to you if you haven't activated it either with a telephone call, online, or by taking it out of and using it for a purchase. It takes a response on your part for the issuing company to release the privilege of using the card.

Now having faith and using spiritual gifts is not the same as a credit card, but in order for a person and a community to experience the benefits of spiritual gifts, you actually have to know that you have them, and then use them.

Spiritual gifts are just that, gifts. They are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us when we claim our identity as God's beloved and brothers and sisters in Christ. It is belief in God, as Father or Creator, Son, and the Holy Spirit that activates the gifts in us. Just like how the toys operate with and without batteries you saw in the children's moment, we receive spiritual energy to activate the gifts that are particularly ours for use within the community of faith for the good of the world. Without the Holy Spirit these gifts are not activated and these gifts and our belief in Jesus are strongly connected. As Paul wrote, it is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to say "Jesus is Lord" (12:3).

Paul lists a number of gifts in this passage, but it is certainly not to be taken as exhaustive. The list is there to get us thinking and looking for what God has gifted us with. The common denominator is that each gift, service, or activity is from the same God and is "To each...given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (12:7). The variety and diversity of the gifts that Christians are given is a reflection of the diversity that dwells within the Trinity of the Godhead. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit each have their work, but they are so connected to each other that they are one.

It should be so for us as well. We should be so connected in our unity through Christ that our gifts actually make us even more one body, needing one another to fully live out our lives as Christians in community.

But how can one know what gifts you have been given? For some it is very easy to determine what their gift is. They know it and we know it because it is so evident. Other people might have a more difficult time figuring out what gift or gifts they have for the

use by God and the community. It is also true that we may find that our gifts have changed or matured.

Sometimes it takes listening to the observations of others to get a grasp on our own gifts. And sharing our observations is important. When I finally shared with my home congregation that I felt I had been called into a preaching ministry, one of the men that had been a part of our lives in the church looked at me and said, “I have been thinking that for ten years!” It is important to share with each other the gifts we see in one another. Don’t be shy. It may be the affirmation that a person needs to offer their gifts and service in the community of faith.

A spiritual assessment tool can be helpful as well. I have shared with you one that comes from Discipleship Ministries. It is a booklet from [See all the People Resources](#) called *Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts*.<sup>1</sup> There are instructions on the front and in the inside a tool to help you. Again, this is not an exhaustive list of Spiritual gifts, but it may get you started on a path to discovering how God has specifically gifted you for the work of the church in the world.

Paul spoke about the gifts of wisdom and sharing knowledge. There are gifts of healing which may be the obvious ones as someone who heals through healing professions; nurses, doctors, therapists, but many people are given the gift of being able to listen and guide as a friend or mentor and that may be healing as well. Some of the gifts Paul writes about may seem foreign to us or a little out there, but he was writing to a people who lived in a culture that worshiped idols and experienced the world somewhat differently than we do.

We may think that we do not experience miracles, and yet maybe it is how we experience something that may help us to understand it as a miracle. It may not be Jesus changing water into wine, but it may be a harsh personality is softened, or a church deficit budget that seemed unmanageable becomes a small surplus.

This is not a time to be humble or quiet in the church. If you see ways in which you can be a part of the church, or serve in a way you never have before, say something! If you see something in another that is a gift say something! It does not matter your age. You are never too young, and God is never done with you. Your service may change, but God’s desire to equip you and have you live out your calling in the world never changes.

It may be through you that God has given an idea for mission that is the perfect fit for our congregation. We are searching to know how God is calling this congregation to live out our mission. We know it has to do with responding, restoring, and rejoicing, but we don’t have the specifics. Maybe it is through hospitality – a gift that many of you have, or that and a combination of listening ministries. Could we be a gathering place for worship and fellowship, not just on Sunday morning but at other times in the week or year?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.seeallthepeople.org/resources-downloads/>

Maybe we have the expertise to help with building a home for habitat for humanity. It is for us as a community to discern our gifts given to the individuals and then encourage each other in our use of them. And just because you work in finances does not mean you only can serve in the capacity of finances in the church. You may be just who we need to support and teach in the Sunday School. And just because you teach does not mean you do not have the gifts to greet and welcome others at the door on Sunday morning.

Maybe you are someone who whisks in and out of church on a Sunday morning. It may be that you are the friendliest person we have in the congregation you are just shy and need encouragement. We know how to encourage!

In worship we can discover who we are and whose we are. We can also use tools to dig deeper into who God has created us to be. I encourage you to take time to seriously consider how the Holy Spirit has uniquely equipped you for service. The gift doesn't have to be fully developed, there is time for that. Just being willing to discover or rediscover your gifts is a great start. From that starting place we can work together to develop it. As one saying goes, God does not call the equipped, but equips the called.

Discover your gifts, share your gifts, equip the church for its mission in the world. The sharing of our gifts for the work of God in the world is why faith may be personal, but is never private. Our gifts are given to each for the common good. Don't hide your gift or shy away from using it. We are stronger and more equipped with you. Each of us needs you to use your gifts so that our own may be even more enhanced and useful.

This is exciting and wonderful and amazing. You are needed. You are valuable. You are a beloved child of God. God delights in you, and you are gifted through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.