

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Everyone Benefits

Here we are, not even a full month out from Christmas. By now most everyone has packed away any remnants of the Christmas Season. Gifts given are being enjoyed or have been returned for various reasons. The unwrapping and excitement pretty much given way to the everydayness of life. Some gifts were given to bring joy in the moment, other gifts will be used daily. Gifts given to children and adults alike. For some exchanging gifts, buying or receiving a gift, doesn't happen, or it feels like an obligation, for others it is pure joy. Gift giving between humans can be complicated even if one enjoys it as you have to figure out what will be appreciated by the person receiving the gift.

Yet, most often these gifts are temporary. They don't last. Given today's capitalistic and throw away markets, most things are not made to last anymore. Having said that, I think of the gift of an afghan Ken and I received that was handmade by his grandmother when we were married. We still have it some forty-two years later. Although I will say I have pretty much preserved it rather than used it much, knowing that it would likely be the only things of her we would ever have.

Basically, gifts are a way we can show our gratitude, respect, and concern for others. Gifts can be physical gifts, like we tend to exchange for Christmas and birthday or even the financial offerings we give in worship. Gifts can also be things like sharing knowledge, expertise, and time.

Then there are gifts of life. We talk about the gifts of the earth, the food that we can grow from fields of wheat to garden plots in the back yard. The gift of creation and the gift of relationships. The gifts of love or sorrow shared.

In this reading of the first letter of Paul to the church in Corinth, Paul speaks about gifts of the Spirit, but first he grounds the Corinthians and us in the fact that Jesus is Lord and that God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, work as one. Then he gets into this dialogue about spiritual gifts with the continued reminder that these gifts all originate in God's Spirit.

The specific words used in *The Message* are, "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.”¹ These are gifts of God for the people of God to be used to benefit everyone.

These gifts of the Spirit are not squandered or hoarded or dismissed, though it is easy to want to do so for various reasons. For starters we may not have paid attention to the gifts of the Spirit we have been given, or ignored that these are something that every Christian is given for the good of church and community. We may think that our gift of art, craft, woodworking, singing, dance, computing, organization, imagination, companionship, or encouragement is not worth sharing or that it is only to be used to get us ahead in the world. Yet, when our gifts are used to benefit others the blessings overflow in the lives of those we touch and our own lives.

Again, taking words from *The Message*, “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.”² (v4-10)

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. The variety of gifts would take pages to cover. This is meant to be a sampling of the many and different gifts of the Spirit, but note they are given to each person so that through those gifts we can show others who God is. Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. And we don't all get the same gift or gifts, and not all of our gifts are necessarily needed every time, but they will be needed.

You and I might be given the same gifts, but because we are unique individuals, the way that gift is manifest in me will be different from the way God gets you to use the same type of gift. We both may be encouragers, but I may be called to encourage one person or group and you another. “All these gifts have a common origin but are handed out one by one by the one spirit of God. The Spirit decides who gets what, and when.”³ (12:11)

I find this truly exciting, but it is also challenging when we are called to use these gifts in the community of faith and to benefit not only ourselves but our broader community. Which is exactly what we are supposed to be doing... using our gifts to make God's love, grace, and forgiveness known to others so that they may come to experience the abundant life that God offers. And do not think of abundance as material possessions, though it may include that. The abundance of God is about grace, passion for life, love, hope and so much more.

¹ [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

² Ibid

³ Ibid.

And let's consider more about why these gifts are given to us. To do so, I would like to share a piece by retired Professor Frank Crouch as he writes concerning this passage from the letter to the Corinthians.

First, from the beginning, Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that they exist, not just as a group of people who come together once a week, but as a "church of God," and not just any church of God, but "the church of God that is in Corinth." God has called them together in Christ to live and serve in a specific city, with its own historical and cultural context that generally pays little attention to God, the call of Christ, or the richness of life in the Spirit. Paul calls on them to bring their distinctive identity and purpose to full expression right there where they meet together and live.⁴

Let me revamp that a little, Paul reminds the church of St. Andrew's that we exist, not just as a group of people who come together once a week, but as a "church of God," and not just any church of God, but "the church of God that is in Thunder Bay at the corner of Donald and Brodie, across from city hall." God has called us together in Christ to live and serve in this specific city, with our own historical and cultural context that generally pays little attention to God, the call of Christ, or the richness of life in the Spirit. Paul calls on us to bring our distinctive identity and purpose to full expression right here where we meet together and live.

Specifically, since Covid and through the New Beginnings program, we have been looking at how to be the church of God from this place, and that work is not done. It will never be done. We have the gifts of the Spirit given to each one of us for our own time and for the church and for the community that are meant to benefit everyone.

Today and in the coming weeks, may you be encouraged to reflect, learn, and even test through conversation and works how you are specifically gifted through the work of the Holy Spirit to help us be the people of God right now in this moment from this place, for each other and for the community. **You** are gifted. Everyone has at least one gift of the Spirit, I say that knowing that all of us are given gifts in multiple for the work of God, because for some amazing reason God chooses to work through ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Praise and thanks be to God for these gifts of the Spirit and for the gift of you as part of our body called to be the church. Amen.

⁴ Frank L. Crouch [Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)
Accessed January 17, 2025.