

An Introduction to Spiritual Gifts¹

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 is one of three passages that focus on spiritual gifts in the Pauline epistles. The others are found in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. There are approximately 28 spiritual gifts as outlined in scripture and everyone has at least one spiritual gift. Understanding the function of spiritual gifts and the individual specificity of those gifts helps us to reject ideas that are contrary to the function of the Christian community, namely that ministry is reserved for the church leadership alone, the clergy ministers on behalf of or in lieu of the ministry of those in the congregation, and that faithful discipleship is regular church attendance. Everyone has a role to play and operating in our spiritual gifts help to define that role.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 - The Message (MSG)

1-3 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.

4-11 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 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. The Spirit decides who gets what, and when.

Key Points

1. Spiritual gifts point to the fact that God has diagnosed a need within the community of faith. These needs are met by specific gifts placed in specific believers within the community.

¹ This study is compiled from the books *Every-Member Ministry* by Kevin Earley and *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts* by C. Peter Wagner.

