





TRUE SPIRITUALITY DEFINED

1 Corinthians 12:1-11



WEEK 06

True Spirituality Defined

Continuing his discussion of proper worship, Paul now turns to the use of spiritual gifts in the church. It appears that Paul is continuing to answer questions posed to him in the letter sent to him by believers at Corinth (see 7:1). They had asked Paul about “spiritual gifts,” but something very interesting happens here. Each time Paul addresses a topic, he reframes it using terms they could understand. In this case, the literal rendering of the topic is “spiritual things.” We can almost imagine the question: “Paul, tell us about spiritual things, like speaking in tongues and giving prophecies! We want to be spiritual!” The competitive Corinthians want to have spiritual abilities.

We can also imagine Paul's answer: “Sure I'll tell you about spiritual things...” He then goes in a surprising direction. He defines the evidence of the Spirit as being able to confess that “Jesus is Lord” (verse 3). The real mark of spirituality is our trust in and obedience to Jesus. Then in verse 4, Paul chooses an entirely different word. Instead of “spiritual things,” Paul talks about “gifts.” Paul says there are many different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit; different kinds of service but the same Lord; different kinds of work but the same God—all existing for the common good of the church.

What is Paul doing? He is reframing the Corinthians' understanding of spiritual gifts. Gifts and abilities alone do not make one “spiritual;” that is the work of the Holy Spirit. The gifts and abilities the believer receives from the Holy Spirit are truly just gifts—acts of grace. Their purpose is to serve Christ and others, not to elevate one's self or standing in the church.

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 12:1-6
- 02 1 Corinthians 12:7-11
- 03 John 14:16-17
- 04 Acts 1:8
- 05 Acts 16:5-15
- 06 Romans 8:5-11
- 07 1 Peter 4:10-11



CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

WARM UP

Think about gifts for a moment. What are some of the most meaningful gifts you have ever received?

Gift-giving is a talent. Who is one of the best gift-givers you know?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

Paul continues to instruct the Corinthian church on how to conduct orderly worship services. According to verse 1, what is Paul's intent in this section?

How might their former ways of worship (verse 2) have influenced their current worship practices? (Remember that these cultures recognized pagan idols and emperors as deities.) How does verse 3 tell us that some may have been rejecting the divinity or humanity of Christ?

Verses 4-6 introduce the idea that there is variety in the kinds of gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit to those in the church. What is the important statement Paul is making in these verses?

According to verse 7, what is the purpose of these gifts?

We are uncertain as to how some of the gifts mentioned in verse 10 may have been understood in the 1st century. With that in mind, discuss the gifts at work in the body of Christ mentioned in verses 8-10. According to Paul, do they serve the common good?

APPLICATION

Verse 11 indicates that the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to *each* one in the body. What is your primary spiritual gift? (If you are uncertain, visit fellowshipnwa.org/spiritualgifts.) Are you maximizing its use in the church?

THINK

Spiritual Leader: a maturing disciple with a ministry focus.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

- Source of Spiritual Power (John 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 16:5-15).
- Bonds us to Christ and each other (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- Enables us to know God's will and control our sinful nature (Romans 8:5-11).
- Transforms our character and makes us more Christ-like (Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Equips us for ministry, distributing spiritual gifts that enable us to aid in the salvation and growth of others.

PRAYER

Pray for a deeper awareness of the Holy Spirit and His gifts in your life.

