

**Adult Bible Institute
Fall Semester, 2003
Topic: Spiritual Gifts, Session #1
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INTRODUCTION MATERIAL

1 Corinthians 12:1: “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.”

It is God’s will that every believer have a clear grasp on the matter of spiritual gifts. Paul wrote 1 Cor. 12-14 for the express purpose of educating the people of God about spiritual gifts.

I. A WORKING DEFINITION OF “SPIRITUAL GIFTS.”

A. “A spiritual gift is an ability supernaturally given to a Christian by the Holy Spirit so that the Christian may utilize that ability to minister beyond his/her normal human capacity.”
(Pastor Rowe, Sermon series on Spiritual Gifts, 1995).

B. Talents are not the same thing as spiritual gifts.

1. People can be born with and/or learn talents. Unbelievers have talents. Unbelievers DO NOT have spiritual gifts.
2. No one has a spiritual gift until conversion to Christ.
3. The Holy Spirit may choose to gift someone in a way that plays into the area of a talent, elevating that to a level of effectiveness not possible apart from the Spirit’s bestowal.
4. But the Spirit may also choose to gift a believer in new areas totally apart from human talents.
5. Talents can be used in the energy of the flesh. A spiritual gift can only truly be exercised in the power of the Spirit.

C. Spiritual gifts, by their very definition, are “divine favors.”

1. The greek word for “gifts” is *charismata*. This word literally means “grace-gift.” The root word is *charis*, which is translated “grace” in our Bibles.

2. Since spiritual gifts are “grace-gifts,” the word implies that nothing is done or can be done to receive these gifts from God.
3. This implies that you do not choose which gift you have. God chooses. You cannot seek a particular gift. God makes the sovereign choice how He will gift you.
 - a. This has serious implications for the charismatics who have a major emphasis on seeking the gift of tongues. You may desire a particular spiritual gift and plead with God for it, but God will be unmoved. There is no recorded instance in Scripture where the early Christians had prayer meetings to seek particular gifts or where they held seminars on how to obtain certain gifts.
 - b. Note 1 Corinthians 12:11---“All these [gifts] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.”
 - c. Paul then goes on in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 to condemn the Corinthians for elevating certain gifts over other gifts and causing division in the Body.
4. Spiritual gifts are accompanied by desire, but desire is not a sure indication of the presence of a particular gift.
 - a. When God gives a spiritual gift, He gives the desire to minister in the avenue of that gift.
 - b. On the other hand, a person may have a desire to minister in a particular area, but not be spiritually gifted to do so.
 - 1) You may want to preach. However, if you have not been spiritually gifted to do so, you will only bore others to tears and frustrate yourself. Desire to preach you may, plead with God you may, but God has made the sovereign choice how to gift you. He will be unmoved by your pleas.

II. A POOR UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS CAN LEAD A PERSON INTO IDOLATRY.

- A. The study of this subject is accompanied by a reminder and warning of idolatry in 1 Corinthians 12:2-3.
- B. In other words, you might overemphasize certain gifts in such a way that they can become an idol to you. You might not understand how and when they are to be used, and through insisting that they be used a certain way, you can be led away into idolatry. A wrong understanding of spiritual gifts can lead to an abuse of them which Paul says is nothing less than idolatry.

III. THE APPEARANCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND ABILITIES ARE NOT A TRUE TEST OF A PERSON'S SALVATION.

- A. There is proof of this in several New Testament passages.
 - 1. Matthew 7:22; Matthew 24:24-25; 2 Thess. 2:1-4,9.
 - 2. The true test of salvation is a person's attitude toward Jesus Christ.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 12:3.
 - b. 1 John 2:22-23; 4:1-3,13-14.