

1st Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

The Scripture was written by the Apostle Paul. His major concern was to correct the view that some of the people had in regards to speaking in tongues. Some of the people thought that the ability somehow demonstrated a higher spiritual status. Trying to be above others, or thinking of yourself as being better than others is a matter of pride and it goes against the lessons that Jesus taught on humility.

The lesson reinforces the necessity to have a holistic understanding of Jesus. You need to know who Jesus is, what Jesus is all about, and what Jesus stands for. When you have a holistic understanding of Jesus then you don't pick and choose which aspects of religion works for you, or which scriptures work for you and which ones to ignore, because they are all applicable. You also don't value some spiritual gifts above other spiritual gifts because we all have some and they are all given to us by the Holy Spirit. We are all called to serve. We are all called to serve in different capacities according to our skill, ability, and talent. All spiritual gifts are inspired by the Spirit and given to everyone for the common good of everyone. It is a sin to have pride and to claim a higher spiritual status. Pride is a matter of self-satisfaction and leads to disunity in the church by creating a hierarchy. The gift of tongues created an attitude of superiority by representing a possession by the Holy Spirit which means some go without the indwelling of the Spirit. This cultivated a higher status of some individuals as their ability reinforced their social status.

Paul proposed that the gift must be tested by its effects. It is your attitude toward Christ, and your response to faith that indicates whether or not one is moved by the Spirit. There is a similar lesson from Jesus that teaches you will know a tree by its fruit. You know the validity of something by the results that it produces. The value is in the result. The goal of any gift, skill, or talent is to build up the body of Christ. If the gift, skill, or talent does not build up the body, then it is not valid. The spiritual gifts are distributed within the body of Christ and we are all parts of that body - individual parts within the one body. No one gift is regarded as more important than another, or played off against others. Each gift is traced to the source; it comes from the Spirit, the Lord, our God. It is

the Spirit that distributes the gifts to every believer. No one can boast of any one gift because they are not given for the pride of the individual but for the common good of all. Every member of the church has a rightful place within the body. Each person is of crucial significance to the rest of the body.

God's design is the cross. God's design is the opposite of human design. Human power, pride, and honor are overturned as the least becomes the greatest. There is only one gift that is the greatest, that gift is love. With love, the individual person is concerned for the welfare of the rest of the people. Love is the best gift God has given to us. Love is the best gift that God had to offer. Love is the gift that you can give back to God. It is love that motivates us to respond. It is love that provides attraction to ministry. It is love that builds up our appreciation of God. There are many talents, virtues, gifts listed, but the greatest of these is love.

Today is installation Sunday where we install new officers and leaders for the ministry. Each person is blessed with different gifts given by the Holy Spirit. The church is not the place for superior people. We expect to find imperfect people in the life of the church, people who make mistakes, fail to be the best they can be, and sometimes forget the lessons that were taught. You are challenged to present your gifts to the Lord. The greatest gift is love. There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service but the same Lord. There are varieties of worship but the same God. It is God that is the source and giver. What we have is from God.