

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

Today's message is on disciple leadership and the skill and talent needed for the Lord's business here on earth. I like to remind all spiritual leaders to focus on pleasing the Lord not the people. Whenever people are not pleased with something, instead trying to appease them, get them to also focus on pleasing the Lord. It is when we try to please ourselves that we pull away from the Lord. The Apostle Paul finished some lessons on examining yourselves. This lesson was followed by a lesson on the Lord's Supper. The significance is to examine yourself in order to make sure you are of the right heart and attitude before coming to the table. It is not about refraining from the sacrament; it's about getting right with the Lord first.

Paul's comments about spiritual gifts continue further into following chapters. Of particular concern to the Apostle Paul is the issue of speaking in tongues. The problem is that they think that this spiritual gift demonstrates a higher spiritual status. However, which skill set you possess is of little concern. The gifts of the Spirit come from the one body of Christ. The body is made up of different feet, hands, ears, and eyes, etc. They are all equally important to the body and one spirit. We are all of the same spirit and all of our talents, skills, and gifts, are from the same spirit. There is no competition because the different spiritual gifts are all from one source. Everyone for the common good as the diversity of spiritual gifts are all inspired by the one Holy Spirit

We do not have details of what was going on in Corinth. However, it is apparent that some people in Corinth were putting a priority on speaking in tongues. This creates a hierarchy and a sense of superiority. As it represents possession by the Spirit of God it reinforces a perceived higher status. But there is no one gift that is of more importance than any other. All gifts and services are from the one spirit, it is the same source, the one Lord, one God, and one Holy Spirit. It is the spirit that distributes the gifts. No one can boast because it is not an achievement. The gifts are given not for satisfaction and pride but for the common good. All members of the church have a rightful place in the body of Christ with mutual care for one another.

Faith is a matter of trust in God who made the self known through Jesus. The gift of faith is stronger than the other gifts. For some it is a contagious inspiration, for others a

living spring of inspiration, or some flickering flame, or a beacon of light in the darkness of the world. The cross reveals a conviction of faith as the dying lips of Jesus proclaim unfaltering trust in God. Hold to that kind of faith. Cling to that faith at all times. Your gifts, whatever they are, contribute to the common good. All of Christianity should be focused on love and unity. Make sure God is foremost in your life and Jesus is the model to live your life by.

When faith is absent we are governed by the wrong motives. We put our values on the things of human desires and preferences. This creates cultural conflicts, societal neglect, evil contagion, and corruption. The cure is faith in God and Jesus. Human made problems are resolved in a healthy Christian community as the members bring inspiration to all members through the strength of their faith.

There is a story in an older Secret Place devotional about a woman named Doris. The story goes something like this. We were young poor newlyweds when Doris offered us a low rent apartment. She would even fix the repairs herself. Years later she had sold the house and offered us a low rent to own contract. When my husband was in the hospital, she visited and prayed. When he died she told me not to worry about house payments for a while. When I visited her small home there was a world map displayed of the missionaries that she had supported. When they came through on furlough, she provided living quarters for them. She was Christ personified. That is what others should see when they look at us; Christ personified.

Throughout the business of life, I hope and pray that you take the time to reflect on your relationship with the Lord and fix any disparity between the life you live and the life the Lord calls you to live. Live your life focused on being right with the Lord. We should all live our lives focused on pleasing the Lord and church leaders should not only focus on pleasing the Lord but guide others to do the same.