

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Discerning Spiritual Gifts I Corinthians 12:7-11

When we think of the church, what do we conceive it to be? Undoubtedly most people think of the church as a human organization (a little more spiritual than the Rotary or Kiwanis Club) which is formed mainly to run meetings for its membership. The big meeting of the church is on Sunday morning. All energies, all planning, all leadership is directed toward what most people call the worship service. When this Sunday meeting is over, then it starts all over for the next Sunday. By this kind of thinking, the "work of the church" is reduced to ushering, singing in the choir, maintaining the sound room and the pastor preaching a rousing sermon. And if the church is really on fire, there is a booming Sunday school program, active youth groups, some kind of a missionary thrust and a fund to help the poor. And to top it all off, we determine our spirituality by the endless meetings we attend. Yet, this is not the New Testament concept of a local church. The Bible teaches that the saints are to do the work of the ministry, and God has gifted every Christian with at least one spiritual gift in order that God's ministry may be accomplished in the church and in the world. The church consists of equipped saints who are using their spiritual gifts to build the Christians and reach a lost world for Christ. The Bible teaches that every Christian is in the work of the ministry.

The Corinthian Church was gifted with every kind of spiritual gift. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed (1 Cor. 1:7). They were a multi-gifted church. Apparently all the twenty spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament were evident at the church in Corinth. Yet, they exalted the spectacular gifts over the less spectacular ordinary gifts so that those who spoke in tongues were considered more spiritual in the group. Apparently, there were those in the Corinthian Church who were not using their gifts. They were a carnal church and some had become indifferent, lazy or rebellious about using their gifts in the local church. This undoubtedly meant that the Corinthian Church was unhealthy and unbalanced because the majority of the people were not using their gifts effectively, leaving a minority of the people to do the majority of the work.

When studying spiritual gifts, especially the spectacular gifts, one moves into the area of subjective experience. There are four ways to view experience. First, one says that he has had an experience and everything about that experience is true and nothing about it should ever be challenged. Second, one says that he has not had an experience; therefore, it cannot be true. This position says there are no experiences outside of my own limited sphere of experience. Third, the Bible speaks of experiences and they are true whether one has experienced them or not. All experiences are to be tested by the Scriptures. Fourth, there are some experiences, good and bad, that people have which are outside the spectrum of the Bible. These are religious and psychological experiences that happen in the providence of God but they are not necessarily Biblical or Christian. These experiences are to be approached very cautiously and if they do not

make a person more Christ-like and aid in progressive growth in Christ they are to be rejected and considered to be from an alien source.

You are probably wondering where I stand on the spectacular gifts such as healing, miracles, tongues and prophecy. My position is essentially the same as the article written and adopted in 1974 by the Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) by Jack Scott. It is entitled "A Pastoral Letter Concerning the Experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church Today?" While the PCA General Assembly has never made a complete statement on spiritual gifts for today, this article still seems to be the position of the PCA in general.

Spiritual gifts are granted to every believer by the Holy Spirit who apportions to each Christian "individually as he wills." Christians are to use these gifts to serve Christ in the work of His kingdom and for the edification of the body of Christ. All true believers receive some spiritual gift or gifts. No spiritual gift is to be despised, nor is it to be misused to bring glory to any other than to Christ. Specific spiritual gifts noted in Scripture are found in the following passages: Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:8-10 I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11-16.

Some spiritual gifts plainly have ceased, such as the founding office of apostle. Others are obscure and cannot be clearly defined such as "helps." Others have received undue prominence in recent days, such as "tongues," "working of miracles," and "healing" (Jack Scott, "A Pastoral Letter Concerning the Experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church Today" Second General Assembly).

While I believe all the twenty or so spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament could be in the church today, there are five fundamental points which qualify my position: (1) the canon of scripture of the Old and New Testaments is closed and scriptural revelation is full, complete, supreme and final; therefore, scripture alone may bind the conscience; (2) there are no more Apostles or Prophets who speak or write inspired, infallible communication; (3) all spiritual gifts are to be tested by and submitted to the infallible inspired scripture; (4) no person with the gift of prophecy can inerrantly predict the future and (5) much of the modern day charismatic movement abuses and misuses spiritual gifts as did the Church of Corinth.

My position on spiritual gifts has not essentially changed since I came into the Central Florida Presbytery in 1986. While it would be much easier for me to be a cessationist and say all spectacular gifts passed out of existence after the first century, I cannot for myself honestly do this on an exegetical basis. If I was a cessationist, I could say that I Corinthians 12 and 14 do not apply today and essentially cut them out of the Bible as far as any practical use for the church. Yet, to be fair, a good argument can be made theologically and deductively for the cessation position, however exegetically it is very difficult to prove that certain gifts have passed out of existence since the first century. Therefore, I have chosen to call myself a "continuationist," believing that the spiritual gifts do continue on today at some level but they must always meet the biblical criteria for existence. My position is somewhere in the middle between a strict cessationist and a full blown charismatic. While the majority of the PCA are not cessationists or are tolerant cessationists, there is a growing contention in our denomination to make the PCA a strict cessation church. Hopefully this will not happen,

for if it does, there will surely be a denominational split, and no one will win and the cause of Christ will suffer a damaging blow.

DESIGNATION FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS 12:7

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given. Each Christian has been given at least one spiritual gift. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms (1 Pet. 4:10). Man starts by forming an organization, but God starts by saving a person and equipping him or her with a spiritual gift.

This is foundational to a proper functioning of the church. Therefore, every Christian ought to be asking, "What is my spiritual gift? How can I function in my local church? What ministry has God equipped me to do?"

These spiritual gifts are referred to as "the manifestation of the Spirit" so a gift is a supernatural function which can be seen. What then is a spiritual gift? A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given by God to Christians for the purpose of service. All gifts are supernaturally given not just the spectacular gifts like tongues, healing and miracles. Even the gift of helps and administration are supernaturally given. A gift (charisma) is a spiritual gift supernaturally bestowed which functions beyond the normal and natural talents and skills of people. It is more proper to classify the gifts as ordinary and spectacular than natural and supernatural.

For the common good. While the Christian will enjoy using his spiritual gift and will never be happy until he is using it, the purpose of spiritual gifts is not to edify ourselves but to build up and edify others, if a person uses his gift for his own glorification and to build up his own ego, God will simply turn off the Holy Spirit power and that person will become ineffective in the use of his gift. When a Christian fails to use his gift to serve others and to glorify God, he becomes filled with pride, causing dissatisfaction, division and dissension in the church. Spiritual gifts used in the power of the flesh can create havoc, but gifts used in the power of the Holy Spirit release God's power in the church in a unique and wonderful way. When one speaks of "my gifts" or "my church" or "my ministry" this has definite carnal Corinthian overtones.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECTACULAR GIFTS 12:8-10

In this section Paul lists nine spiritual gifts and the New Testament lists twenty in all. Some scholars think all nine in this context are spectacular gifts because of the problems at Corinth but still others think that only six are spectacular gifts and three are ordinary gifts: word of wisdom, word of knowledge and faith. If Paul had only spectacular gifts in mind, this would easily lead to a kind of elitism in the Corinthian congregation, marking the people with these gifts as special. Because Paul is stressing the point that each Christian has at least one spiritual gift, it would make sense to include some ordinary, non-spectacular gifts in order to avoid elitism which Paul is fighting against in the whole book of First Corinthians.

On the subject of spiritual gifts there are many views but four essentially have merit (1) some Christians hold that all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament have passed out of existence, and the Holy Spirit merely uses our natural talents today; (2) some Christians believe that all the gifts are active in the church today with full intensity; (3) some Christians believe that some spiritual gifts, like apostle, prophet, tongues, healing and miracles were temporary gifts which were needed only in the first century but have passed out of existence; and (4) still others like myself state

that all the gifts are potentially in the church today but not all may be active or operate with the same intensity they did in New Testament times. What I mean is that all gifts are potentially in the church universally, but some may not be active at any given time in a local church.

Those who hold to a cessationist position set forth the following arguments. First, the spectacular gifts (prophecy, tongues, miracles, healings, faith, interpretation of tongues) were given to the original Twelve Apostles as sign-gifts for the propagation of the gospel and/or attestation to the Apostles in the first century (Eph. 2:20; II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). Second, once the church had matured and received the inspired New Testament canon of Scripture there was no longer any need for the spectacular gifts. Third, these gifts ceased and this is stated in I Corinthians 13:8-13). Fourth, church history bears this out for after the second century there is very little if any emphasis on the spectacular gifts.

The Sovereign Lord dispenses gifts upon His church as He sees fit. We may seek gifts, we may ask for them, but He alone dispenses them by His sovereign will. A gift's absence in a local church, or even its absence for a time from the church universal, is not a necessary evidence of its having been withdrawn forever. For instance, the gift of miracles as it was used by Christ and the Apostles is very hard to prove is in existence today. If it is, it is not here with the same intensity -- it was immediate, always worked and was permanent.

My goal in this message is not to show that certain spiritual gifts are permanent and others temporary, but to list the gifts mentioned in the New Testament and explain how they are manifested. In other messages I will deal with the continuation or non-continuation of certain gifts and then deal in more detail with certain spectacular gifts.

To one there is given through the Spirit the message (word) of wisdom. This gift is not mentioned anywhere else in the scripture nor in any other early Christian literature, and so whatever we conclude about this gift will be tentative. This spiritual gift is the ability to bring practical spiritual insight in a timely way to a specific problem. It is an extraordinary ability to apply the Word of God to any situation. Gaining knowledge may not be this person's forte, but he or she is strong in living out faith in a practical way. This is wisdom based on content not on mystical experiences as the Corinthians were declaring.

To another the message (word) of knowledge by means of the same Spirit. This gift is mentioned only here so there is no biblical or historical help with this gift of the word of knowledge. This spiritual gift is the ability to deal with the theoretical and philosophical aspects of the Word of God. This person has an extraordinary ability to perceive and systematize the great truths hidden in the Word of God. Again this was crucial because the Corinthians conceived of knowledge as very mystical and touchy-feely.

The word of knowledge could possibly be keen insight into specific problems such as when Christ saw into the Samaritan woman's many husbands or when Peter had Holy Spirit leading on Annanias' and Sapphira's real problem of lying to the Holy Spirit. Today charismatics claim word of knowledge is a gift of getting special revelation from God. We have all seen and heard on TV during the healing time say, "The Lord is telling me someone with a stomach ulcer will be healed" or "I am visualizing a woman who has just come back from the doctor who told her she has cancer, but God says you are being healed just believe." I do not think this is the word of knowledge spoken of in the Corinthian context. What we see in these so-called TV healers is primarily the subtle power of suggestion and there is no way this can be substantiated. Yet, I do believe in the providential guidance of God in His children. He will at times lay things strongly on our hearts, and if this is truly from Him, this impression will surely come to pass.

To another faith by the same Spirit. This gift is the ability to believe God's power to supply and provide. This is the ability to see something which needs to be done and believe that God will do it even when it looks impossible. Some think this gift is linked with miracles, healings and casting out of demons, but there is no reason to think that this is nothing more than extraordinary faith which believes God to move mountains. This is not the kind of faith we hear about today which dogmatically and defiantly asserts, "You are healed" a "The pain will go away" or "You will not die" when in reality the pain has not gone away, the person is not healed and the person dies anyway. This is presumption and self-deception not faith. Yet, in some situations, God does grant extraordinary faith and things supernaturally happen. Cotton Mather, a Puritan and Congregational Calvinist said,

But then (in addition to the general faith of believers), there is a Particular Faith, which is not so much the Duty, as the Comfort of them that have it; and which is Granted, but here and there but now and then, unto those whom a Sovereign God shall Please to Favor with it. The devout believer cannot cause himself to believe what and when he will but under the Energy of some Superior Cause...there is Strong Impression made upon his mind. which Dissolves him in a flood of Tears, and Assures him, Thou shalt have the Petition which thou Desirest of thy God. The Impression is born upon the mind, with a clear as Light, and as full a Force, as if it were from Heaven Angelically, and even Articulatedly declared unto Him; The Lord has given thee, thy Petition which thou has asked of Him... (Cotton Mather, Parenator: Memoirs of Remarkables in the Life and Death of the Ever-Memorable Dr. Increase Mather).

To another the gifts of healing This gift is the ability to heal physically, psychologically and spiritually. Literally this says, "gifts of healings" (plural). This has caused some to think this refers to healing on different levels physical, psychological and spiritual. It may also refer to different levels of the healing gift to deal with various types of diseases. A person may have the gift to be the instrument God uses to effect supernatural physical healing, or he might have a natural gift of healing coupled with faith to be used in healing the physical body through natural means. There may also be psychological, inner healing by supernatural means or by the skills of a talented counselor with the gift of faith.

When we look at the New Testament, almost all healings done by Christ and the Apostles occurred immediately and the person was instantaneously restored to health. Today most healings are not instantaneous but are progressive. There appears to be a different intensity of this gift today and not everyone who is prayed over by one having the gift of healing is healed. Surely if the Apostle Paul could not heal Timothy of his stomach disorder or Trophimus of this severe illness, then we cannot expect 100% accuracy of modern day healers. We do not expect every person who is an evangelist to lead every person to Christ be witnesses to, so why require every healer to heal everybody he prays for? God is the healer and he heals whom he pleases just as he saves whom he pleases. However, if a person claims the gift of healing, then there must be some fruit or there is no gift.

Many of those who abuse healing today do so on a faulty view of God, man and sickness. They say: 1) all sickness is caused by Satan/demons and can be cured by casting out demons. To be fair, some sicknesses are caused by demons and will be cured when the demons are cast out but most sicknesses are not due to demonic activity; 2) God does not want anyone to be sick and wants all people to be well because all sickness is the result of sin and Christ died for all sins. Healing is in the atonement and those who truly believe will be healed; 3) What keeps one from getting a healing is that he does not have enough faith, but if a person believes strong enough, long enough and hard enough, a healing will take place. A quick review of Scripture will show this view to be faulty. First, God is ultimately behind all sickness and suffering (Exo. 4:10-11; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:5-7; I Sam 2:6-8). Second, all sickness is not the result of sin or Satanic activity (in. 92-3; Job 2:6; II Cor. 12:7-9). Third, it is not God's sovereign will to heal everybody (I Cor. 12:-9; in. 5:1-9; I Tim. 5:23; II Tim. 4:20) Fourth, the normative pattern for healing today is the elders anointing with oil and praying over the sick (Jms. 5:14-16).

There are many abuses today by those who claim to have the gift of healing. So much of the healing movement today is showboat glitzy and man-centered which certainly does not glorify the Lord Jesus. When Jesus and the Apostles healed, there was no hyped up meetings, no TV media to please, no excessive emotionalism and no crowd manipulation. It just all happened as a matter of lifestyle and without a lot of fanfare.

About nine years ago, a young boy named Luke Sayers almost died from drowning. He lived but was permanently brain damaged and left a total vegetable. His parents, Doug and Julie, were members there. We prayed for Luke as a congregation and as the elders but there was no change. In desperation, the parents took Luke to a nationally known healer in Orlando. All candidates are carefully screened before they can come forward for healing. Doug and Julie carried Luke to the screening area and held him for over two hours. Screener after screener passed by them but they would not even acknowledge Luke. Why? Because they knew Luke would not be healed and this would look terrible to the church audience and to the millions watching on TV. Real healers pray for everybody whether they get healed or not!

Most modern day healers and the healing movement are dependent on miracles to keep the ministry viable. Therefore, more and more spectacular healings and miracles have to be contrived in order to keep the people coming and the money flowing in.

Some criteria we might use as to whether a person has a genuine gift of healing are 1) He heals in the name of Jesus the Lord; 2) He claims no healing power in himself; 3) He gives all the glory to God for all healings; 4) He does not take money for his healings; 5) He actually sees healings in his ministry on a consistent basis; 6) He is willing to submit all supposed healings to validation if asked to do so; and 7) He is willing to use his gift anywhere not just mass meetings.

In my opinion, the gifts of healings are not here today with the same intensity as when Christ and the Apostles were on earth. Yet, if there are healers they must meet all the biblical criteria. We all must be on the alert for phony healers.

While leaders of the Counterfeit Revival can create the illusion of "lengthening" legs, they can't recreate an amputated limb; while they can create the illusion of slaying subjects in the spirit, they can't resurrect the slain; and while they can create the illusion that someone's vision has been restored, they can't replace a missing orb (Hank Hanegraaff, Counterfeit Revival).

To another miraculous powers, This literally says, "the workings of powers". It is in the plural so it may indicate different levels of miracles. This gift is the ability to release the power of God in a unique and supernatural way. Christ and the Apostles did miracles such as putting back a cut off ear, shaking buildings, walking on water, raising people from the dead, etc. The things that mark an apostle signs, wonders and miracles, were done among you with great perseverance (II Cor. 12:12). There are men and women today who claim to have this gift as there have been those who claimed to have it in the past, but they don't seem to meet the biblical criteria. At the highest level, I do not believe there are people today with the gift of miracles. However, if miracles means the ability to cast out demons as some claim, then I believe that this gift is most certainly in the church today, In fact, as the American culture grows more godless and pagan, there will be even a greater need for the gift of casting out demons.

To another prophecy. There are three ways Christians view the gift of prophecy. First, some say that there is no gift of prophecy today. It has passed out of existence after the first century. For these people I Corinthians 12 and 14 are not relevant for the church today and are in no way normative practice. Second, some say the gift of prophecy in the New Testament is essentially preaching declarative, and place the gift in the area of illumination. This was the position of John Calvin and other Reformed people. The emphasis is not on foretelling but forth telling the already revealed Word of God. Calvin said, "In the Christian Church therefore, prophecy at the present day is simply the right understanding of Scripture and the particular gift of expounding it. . we see that Paul is referring simply to ordinary gifts which remain perpetually in the church" (Roman, 12:6). Third, some say that prophecy refers to Holy Spirit impressions. which are not inspired or infallible, and are placed into the category of guidance. Strict prophecy in the Old and New Testaments involved receiving divine, inspired revelation from God and giving it to the people in a language they could understand, for in those days there was no closed canon of 66 books or the Bible. In a technical sense, there is no more inspired. infallible prophecy because the canon is closed and God is giving no more special revelation.

However, a distinction can be made between the office of prophet and prophecy as a gift as it is found in the New Testament. There are no more Prophets who formed the foundation of the church and gave infallible communications. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). However, in a non-technical sense there may be a type of prophecy today. This gift would be the ability to speak the mind of God whether that be by preaching the Bible or telling something which God has spontaneously brought to mind. This lesser or lower form of prophecy is not inspired and infallible and is subject to error, and that is why it had to be judged and tested. Those who had the official office of prophet spoke infallibly and what they said always came to pass. If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has

not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously (Deut 18:22). However, there maybe a lower form of prophecy today which continues but is not infallible and it is always mixed with some error; therefore, it is not intrinsically revelatory. This lower form of prophecy operates through the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and directed impressions. God still works providentially in the lives of Christians and can prompt inner thoughts in the mind of His people which can be a blessing to the church. This main use of prophecy today is to build up, encourage and console God's people. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort (I Cor. 14:3).

Prophecy today dabbles in the subjective; therefore it must meet the biblical criteria which are: 1) All prophecy is subject to the inspired Bible and never contradicts it; 2) All prophecy is to be tested by the church and the elders in particular; 3) Any prophecy which is not primarily for the building up, encouraging and consoling God's people is suspect; 4) People giving prophecies must be willing to be publicly questioned by the elders; 5) All prophecies used for a power play, mind control or draw attention to self should be rejected; 6) All prophecies must be prefaced with "I think" or "It appears to me" or "It seems as though the Lord is saying this to me" because no prophecy today is inspired and no prophet is infallible. Any prophecy given today in which a person says dogmatically, "Thus says the Lord:" or "The Lord told me to say this" is suspect.

Several years ago we had a very talented woman who had an important position at Covenant Christian School. She was a charismatic and believed she had the gift of prophecy. She honestly believed that God was speaking to her consistently. She would say, "I know God wants CCS to do this because God told me so." She was constantly sensing God's direct voice when none of the other leadership felt that way. Their was no way to substantiate her claims, but it was obvious she used her understanding of prophecy to control situations to make them go her way.

The gift of prophecy will be dealt with in another sermon, but it is suffice to say that apparently this gift does continue on in some form today. Yet, because it is very subjective, it is quite often abused and misused.

To another distinguishing between spirits. This gift is mentioned only here and nowhere else in the Bible; therefore, it is hard to know exactly what this gift may be. The spiritual gift of "distinguishing between spirits" is the ability to spot a phony, to detect false doctrine and to spot counterfeits. It may include the ability to recognize the influence of the Holy Spirit or demonic spirits in a person.

A person with this gift must be careful about getting a negative attitude, becoming judgmental, jumping to conclusions about words, actions and motives displaying an unforgiving spirit and cutting off those who do fall into error or sin. Yet, this is an important gift in the church.

To another speaking in different kinds of tongues. Because I have one whole sermon on the meaning of tongues, I am not going to say much about it today. There are three basic views on tongues today. First, some say it has ceased and any speaking in tongues must be put into the category of emotionalism and demonic activity. Second,

some say tongues are speaking in a cognitive, human language which can be reduced to writing. Third, some say tongues are divine utterances used primarily in the worship of God.

I personally understand that the spiritual gift of tongues is the ability to speak forth a language one has never learned, and which he or she does not understand. In my opinion this could take the form of a literal foreign language as set forth in Acts 2 or an unintelligible verbal prayer language as set forth in I Corinthians 14. Whatever tongues are, they are speech directed towards God eliciting prayer and praise. We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues (Acts 2:11). For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God (I Cor. 14:2).

Because tongues involves one's subjective experience, it is extremely important to use this gift according to the biblical criteria which are: 1) Tongues are not connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit sometime after conversion to Christ 2) Not everyone can will speak in tongues; 3) Tongues is just one of the spiritual gifts and may be the least of all the gifts; 4) God gives the gift of tongues to whom He pleases; 5) Tongues may be sought but they are not high on the list of important gifts; 6) Tongues does not make a person more mature or more spiritual than those who do not have the gift; 7) The primary place to use the gift of tongues is in private; 8) If used publicly, there must always be an interpretation and no more than two or three can speak. Probably no gift is more abused and misused today than the gift of tongues.

From time to time I am privileged to pray with various charismatic preachers in our community. I do not speak in tongues but the way they pray and speak in tongues is interesting. One man speaks in English so all can understand, and the others are quietly speaking in the background in their own particular tongue. It is usually a wonderful time of prayer which goes on for several hours. This people really pray! I may question whether this is the right use of tongues biblically, but I can say that these men are dead serious about prayer. I personally have no problem with those brothers who pray this way.

And to still another the interpretation of tongues. This is the ability to interpret a foreign language one has never learned or to give an intelligible interpretation of an unintelligible verbal utterance.

DESCRIPTION OF ORDINARY SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Apostle (Eph. 2:20). Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Technically "apostle" refers to the office of Apostle that was given to the Original Twelve. Only the Twelve will sit on the throne judging over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28) and in the eternal city will have twelve foundations with names of the Twelve Apostles (Rev. 22:14). A good case can be made that the Apostle Paul was God's choice to replace Judas Iscariot rather than Mathias.

Again we must distinguish between the office and the gift of apostle. Technically the office of Apostle passed away but the gift of apostle still continues on in a non-technical sense. The word "apostle" means "sent one". It would be equivalent to the modern day missionary or church planter. We know the Bible refers to James (Gal. 1:19)

and Barnabas (Acts 14:14) as apostles. Others of lesser status were also called apostles such as Epaphroditus (Philip. 2:25) and Andronicus and Junia (Born. 16:7). There is no continuing official office of Apostle but there is the continuing of the gift of apostle that is primarily church planting or a pioneer missionary. It is interesting that John Calvin called Luther "a distinguished apostle of Christ by whose ministry the light of the gospel has shone" (The Institutes, 2:1057). Calvin also said, "I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day" (Institutes, 2:1057).

Evangelist (Eph. 4:11). It was he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. An evangelist is one who has a special gift of reaching the lost and bringing them into the church. He can communicate the gospel in relevant terms to the unsaved. The evangelist also has the responsibility of equipping and training the saints to do the work of evangelism.

Pastor-Teacher (Eph. 4:11). ...and some to be pastors and teachers. The pastor-teacher (one gift according to the Greek) is one who instructs and cares for Christians. The evangelist deals with the initiation of a person into the Christian life, while the pastor-teacher is involved with the development and growth of that life. Evangelists are obstetricians and pastor-teachers are pediatricians. Some are paid full time to be pastor-teachers. Others are laymen pastor-teachers without pay. Christians with this gift would be involved in teaching, shepherding, counseling and discipling. Both men and women could have the gift of pastor-teacher, but women cannot use this gift as a teaching or ruling elder in the church. Again a distinction must be made between office and gifting.

Service (Rom. 12:7). If it is serving, let him serve. This comes from the same root from which we get the word "deacon" which means "one who serves". This would be service to help others which would include hospitality and the ability to meet in a practical way the physical and spiritual needs of others. This person also displays a willingness to do the menial tasks without receiving any human glory.

Encouragement (Rom. 12:8). If it is encouraging, let him encourage. This is the ability to encourage and comfort, move the will, warm the heart and Impel to action.

Giving (Rom. 12:8). If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously. This is a special ability to contribute money. These folks are able to give liberally whether rich or poor. This gift may also involve the ability to make money and give it for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. Those who have this gift give with great delight and joy.

Leading (Rom. 12:8). If it is leadership let him govern diligently. This is the special ability of leadership. Literally this means, "one who stands in front." This would be those who emcee meetings, conduct panels, chair committees, organize people, motivate the mass of people.

Showing Mercy (Rom. 12:8). If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. This is a special ability to deal with the sick and the afflicted. This person is able to identify with and comfort those who are in distress. He has a real sensitivity to the emotional needs of others.

Helps (I Cor. 12:28). Those able to help others. This is the ability to lend a hand whenever a need appears, but do it in such a way that it encourages and strengthens others. In the church, it often appears in those who do behind the scene ministries such as ushering, serving dinners, running the sound booth, preparing communion, working in the nursery or arranging flowers. Hospitality would be included in helps. Those with this gift make it possible for those with the up front gifts to function more effectively. Everyone is indebted to those who have the gift of helps.

Teacher (I Cor. 12:28). Third teachers. This person has the special ability to explain and to apply the truth of the Word of God. He or she also has the ability to communicate truth to others so they can learn and understand the content.

Administration (I Cor. 12:28). Those with the gifts of administration. Literally this says "one who pilots". It is a special ability to lead and administrate in the local church. Those with this gift can coordinate and administrate. They have the ability to see the overall picture and to clarify long-range goals. With this gift comes the ability to know how to delegate responsibility.

Spiritual gifts are given for the common good, to motivate God's people, to stir them into action. We all are to have faith, but there is the gift of faith. We all are to help but there is the gift of helps. We all are to give money, but there is a gift of giving. We all

are to teach, help, serve and show mercy to each other, but there are special gifts in these areas. God gives all these gifts to spur us on to higher things for Him.

DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS 12:11

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit. It is God the Holy Spirit who is sovereignly working all things out, so while there is diversity in spiritual gifts, there is one Spirit holding it all together so that it all brings glory to God. This is what has kept the church from breaking up into millions of splinter groups all claiming to have their unique manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

And he gives them to each one, just as he determines. God has sovereignly given each one of us our particular gifts. They were given to us at the moment of salvation. God expects us to use them for His glory. We dare not complain about the gift God has given us. We should be thankful for whatever gift He has given and get busy putting it to work.

CONCLUSION

God has given spiritual gifts so we Christians can make things happen for Him. There are always three groups in every local church: 1) Those who are wondering what is happening; 2) Those who are watching things happen; and 3) Those who are making things happen. Which group are you in? If you will discover your gift or gifts and put them to work in and through the church you will begin to make things happen!

If you are without Christ, you need to understand that the greatest gift God ever gave to man was the gift of his Son Jesus Christ who makes salvation possible. You cannot work for, buy or beg for salvation. It is a gift from God to you. All we can do is reach out in faith and receive Christ as Savior and Lord, and thank God for the gift. He will give you the gift of salvation. Reach out and take it by faith. Christ will give you the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, a divine purpose for living, assurance you will be in heaven with Christ when you die and the Holy Spirit. Only a fool would refuse to accept this kind of gift.