

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.

I am a terrible gif-giver. Just ask my wife. It's like horrible. I even have a list I keep for different people that I update to help in buying or making gifts for people, and somehow they still turn out terrible. People who want a sentimental memory gift will somehow end up with a vegetable chopper with one-star reviews. Someone who wants a coffee grinder will end up with a spoon for measuring tea. I'm hopeless. You most likely have felt the brunt of a terrible gift-giver at some point.

What am I talking about? Well, on this celebration of Pentecost, the day when Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on his apostles and had the birthday of the New Testament church, so to speak, we're going to be talking about spiritual gifts. We will be talking about God as the spiritual gift giver and how we are to use those gifts. In the account from the Book of Acts, we saw the Holy Spirit work powerfully on the Apostles, tongues of fire resting on each of them, and the Spirit enabled them to speak in different languages. Not only that, but all those gathered could hear them speaking in their own language. God gave the gift of his Holy Spirit on Pentecost and has continued to provide spiritual gifts to his church even today.

But speaking in tongues isn't the only gift that the Spirit gives; our text enumerates other spiritual gifts that God gives to us: **"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...."**

Now if you're anything like me, have you been caught gift-watching? Have you ever felt spiritual gift envy? You hear this remarkable account of Pentecost and see how the Holy Spirit blessed the Apostles, and you know the list of gifts that he also apportions to all Christians, and it's so easy to stare at the magnificence of someone else and think, I am not that. I've never done that; I can't do that; I don't possess those gifts.

If only God would give the gifts that the apostles had. If only the Holy Spirit would grant me the gifts to be able to be wise and discerning, of healing, or speaking, of teaching, or mercy. I have looked around me and been envious of the gifts that someone else has. I wish I could write as well as they do, or teach as clearly as that person does, or be as bold an evangelist as they do, as creative, or profound, or intelligent, or wise.

Or sometimes, we can do even the opposite; we can be guilty of a spiritual cop-out. We can sometimes sit and use it as an excuse; I couldn't possibly witness because that's not

my gift. I can't really ever teach anyone because God hasn't given me that gift. I can't listen to them intently and mercifully because God hasn't really gifted me in that way.

We can be like a disgruntled child who received 'the wrong gift' on Christmas. It's not the one I wanted. It's not the kind that I can use. It's not the right brand or even the right time.

Even when the opposite is the case, when the Holy Spirit gives a wonderful gift, there are still problems. Sometimes we can even become prideful of our gifts. Thinking that we are somehow more pious or better. Ranking ourselves higher than someone with a different gift or more talented than another with the same. As if we were somehow deserving.

The Corinthian congregation had these problems too. They struggled with ranking each other as better or worse based on their gifts, and some had resorted to boasting about the gifts they were blessed with. Some even twisting it for selfish purposes and personal gain, thinking of those who could speak in tongues as Christians of the highest order, with others to be dismissed.

What if I told you that the solution to these temptations, of comparison, of doubt, of neglect, was in a proper understanding of what they are? We'll take this in a very linear approach. 1. Who gives them? 2. What they are, and how they are used

1. Who gives them?

In our text, it's very clear that the one who gets the credit is God. **"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them."** The Holy Spirit is the one who distributes them. It is not anything about us that makes us worthy of the spiritual gifts that God has given to us. In this same section speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul affirms that our gifts that are given to us are no more to our credit than faith itself, where he says: "No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." In the same way, we do not have anything, any kind of gift, except by the choosing and power of the Holy Spirit.

We don't choose them, God himself has decided which gifts to give, and he has given you yours. Precisely, deliberately he has apportioned, distributed, and worked in you the gifts that he has decided to grace you with. This understanding of a gift, freely given, takes away any sense of pride or worthlessness that might creep into our thoughts. It is God's undeserved gift given to each of us. No Christian is excluded. God has told you that you have Spirit-worked faith, you are blessed, and you have been given spiritual gifts.

2. What they are and how they are used

What are these gifts that the Holy Spirit has given you? There are three different words that all describe the gifts that God has given to each of you. They are called gifts, as we

talked about, something immaterial God has given to you as an individual Christian by his grace.

And they are a working. **There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.**” They are something that is given in varying degrees to different individuals. God has not only decided with your gifts but also what degree you are given them. Just because someone is a better evangelist than you does not mean that he has not given you the gift of evangelizing to some degree. Just because you may not be the best listener to someone’s problems does not mean that you are incapable of listening to a person who is going through some pain in this life.

They are a service. **“There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.”** They are functioning not as something that is for you and your benefit. They are a service that is provided for the benefit of those outside of you. Your spiritual gifts are not something for you to look inward at; they are for the service of those around you. They are used for the benefit, the assistance of, the strengthening in, and the healing of those around you. Paul writes: **Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.** The gift of teaching is not given to boast in intelligence but to educate others who do not know. The gift of preaching is not given for the pride of eloquent speech but for the strengthening of the listeners. The gift of tongues was not for the elevation of the apostles on Pentecost but for the witnessing and spreading of the Gospel to those who were perishing.

In the same way, your gifts are given by God to serve others. Given to help those in this church, to serve the Holy Christian church. God has given these gifts to be used for the glory and the work of his church. They are given to each person, and they are given to be shared with all. Their whole purpose is not for the advancing of the self. For praise and honor of you, the holder. They are for the service of those who benefit from it. They are for the building of the church that God gave himself for. They are for the spreading of the saving name of Christ and for the strengthening of that faith.

I can’t tell you what gifts that God has given to you are, and there are too many specific examples to list, but I can tell you that he has given you the perfect ones. He has given them to you in the number, quantity, ability, and strength that he has determined. God is the perfect gift giver. Take some time, and examine. Think of all the ways God has blessed you with those gifts, and then think about how those can be put to the building up of the church. And with those gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to you, the church will grow and spread, as it has since its birth at Pentecost. Amen.