

1. In Chapter 11, we began a four-chapter section on how Christians are to conduct themselves when we get together. Chapters 12 and 14 deal with the specific issue of spiritual gifts and how they are to be used when Christians get together. My lesson title is simply "Understanding spiritual gifts". My goal for the reader of this lesson is to understand the purpose of such gifts.
 - a) The problem with the Christians in Corinth is not that they didn't have spiritual gifts; it is that they were not using them properly. Some were jealous in that they wanted gifts they did not have. Some were not exercising their gifts they did have.
2. Let's begin by defining "spiritual gift". It is the idea of a special gift giving to every Christian once they become a Christian. It is given by the Holy Spirit and they are only for believers.
 - a) This is different from special talents that people have. For example, a non-Christian may have a gift for making money or may have a special athletic talent. That is the not the issue at hand, although God is responsible for giving people special gifts and talents.
 - b) The bible teaches that all Christians are blessed with some sort of spiritual gift. We will define those gifts in this lesson. These are special talents that are designed so that Christians can grow together to become better Christians.
 - i) For example, some Christians have a special gift of evangelism. All Christians are called to spread the Gospel message, but some people have a special gift in that they may give the exact same message as you or me, but more people respond.
 - ii) Some Christians have a gift of leadership within the church. Others have a special gift of giving. Others are good helpers. Some are good teachers in large group settings and some are good teachers in small settings or one-on-one sessions.
 - iii) The point is all Christians are given some talent or gift that they can do better than "most" people. This gift is to be used within the body of Christian believers.
 - iv) The idea is all Christians are to use their gifts to help each other grow in their faith and trust of God. Bringing new members into the fold is a "subset" of all the possible gifts.
3. Verse 1: Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.
 - a) Paul stated back in Chapter 1, Verse 7, that the Corinthian church was rich in spiritual gifts. That means they had some understanding that Christians are given such gifts.
 - b) What they were ignorant about, as this verse implies, is how to use these gifts.
 - c) There are a number of places in the New Testament where Christians tend to be naive:
 - i) In Romans 11:25, Paul states that he does not want Christians to be ignorant about God's plans for Israel. Without stating a long discussion here, the point is that God is not done with the nation of Israel and still has plans for them as a nation.
 - ii) Here in First Corinthians, the issue is ignorance about spiritual gifts.
 - iii) In 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 1, Paul teaches about not being ignorant about God's promises for our lives despite the danger of persecution.
 - iv) In 1st Thessalonians Chapter 4, Paul brings up the issue of being ignorant about eternal salvation and Christians who have died before the 2nd Coming of Jesus.
4. Verse 2: You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.
 - a) One has to remember the church in Corinth was predominately non-Jewish. They were people of Greek decent. Before they became Christians, I'm sure that most, if not all of them prayed to various Greek gods. Even if such people did not truly believe in such gods, it is almost impossible to live in that society without accepting the practice.
 - i) Paul insults the Greek gods by calling them "mute idols". The point is these statues and temples are man made, and they don't have the power to speak.

- b) The concept of spiritual gifts is not unique to Christianity. There were pagan religions of that day with "priests" who could perform all sorts of wondrous things. If one is wondering whether or not something is a true spiritual gift, the question is not the "power" of the particular gift or talent, but is it biblical and does it benefit the church.
 - i) God allows demons all sorts of powers. God does this so that we freely choose Him over things that look appealing. Therefore, it is not the "miracle" itself that counts, but whether or not it is glorying to God and the Christian body.
 - c) This leads us back to Verses 2 and 3. There were people who were followers of various Greek gods who would insult the name of Jesus by saying "in the spirit" that "Jesus be cursed". The way one could tell the real Holy Spirit from demonic spirits is by the statement of "Jesus is Lord" versus "Jesus is accursed".
 - i) Does this mean you or I could never utter the words "Jesus is accursed" and still go to heaven? That is not the issue. The issue is "Do we mean it when we say it!" The same applies for "Jesus is Lord". A non-believer could physically utter those words. That is not the issue. The issue is does one believe it when one says the words "Jesus is Lord". If one truly believes Jesus is Lord, then it is the Holy Spirit working in their (our) lives. That is Paul's point in Verse 3.
 - ii) The reason Paul is stating this fact is so we can watch the actions of those who claim they are spiritual. One way we can tell if the Holy Spirit is working in one's life is to watch the words come out of their mouths. If someone is claiming to have some sort of Godly power, and at the same time say, "Jesus is accursed", we should know not to believe anything else that person says. That person may have "real" power to predict the future or perform some sort of sign, but some demonic power and not the Holy Spirit are also influencing that person.
 - d) Another reason the Holy Spirit is being emphasized here is the fact that it is the Holy Spirit that gives us the spiritual gifts! Therefore, if someone is physically saying, "Jesus is accursed", we know it is not the Holy Spirit working in their lives, no matter what other signs or miracles that person is performing at the moment.
 - i) The point I'm getting at is we have to watch the message of a person, not the signs they are performing. A person could perform all sorts of miracles and signs in our presence. The key is to watch what that person is saying about Jesus. That is the "sign" we should watch for and not the "performance".
 - ii) In other words, if a person is performing some sort of miraculous sign(s) but at the same time, they are putting down Jesus and denying His Lordship, we should not be impressed by the signs but understand it is not the Holy Spirit.
 - e) On a related note, I have heard stories of people who were demon possessed. A sign that a person really was demon possessed was their inability to physically say, "Jesus is Lord". Do I believe demon possession exists today? Yes, for nonbelievers. Once someone commits their lives to Jesus, they can sin, but not be demon possessed. One cannot be possessed by the Holy Spirit and a demon! I also think such a thing is less common in the United States than other parts of the world because people pray too much around here.
5. Verse 4: There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
- a) Paul has now finished his point about how to recognize when someone has the Holy Spirit working in his or her lives. The topic changes in Verse 4 to the issue of "true" spiritual gifts. The key point in these three verses is that it is the same Holy Spirit that distributes all spiritual gifts to all Christians.
 - b) One of the first things we should comprehend about spiritual gifts is that it is the Holy Spirit and not us that decides what Christian has what gift. We cannot force God (via the Holy Spirit) to have a particular gift. It is the Spirit's job to distribute the gifts.

- c) As to the specific gifts themselves, we'll get into a discussion of that in a matter of verses. What is important to understand at this point is that there is only one "Holy Spirit" and He is part of the Godhead and He does the distributing of the spiritual gifts.
 - d) It is important to emphasize again that "spiritual gifts" do not refer to special talents that any person could have. A person may have an incredible talent to play a specific musical instrument or a great athletic ability, but it does not guarantee they are saved. Spiritual gifts are specific gifts given to all Christians once they are saved. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to help other Christians grow in their faith.
 - e) Notice how the "trinity" is implied in these three verses. The word "Spirit", the word "Lord" (referring to Jesus) and the word God (referring to God the Father) are used in these three verses. The word "trinity" is not in the bible. The concept of the Trinity is used to describe the concept that "All three are one, yet all three are separate". The idea of a "Trinity" is a solution to a problem, not a problem itself!
 - f) As to the gifts, there are all sorts of spiritual gifts, but there is only one God the Father, there is only one Lord (Jesus) in our lives, and there is only one Holy Spirit that is distributing all the different gifts to different Christians. If you get nothing else out of this lesson, it is to understand that concept of the spiritual gifts and who gives them to us.
 - g) Getting back to the verses, Verse 5 says there are different kinds of "service". This means that two people could have the same gift, but each has a different "calling" within the Christian world. For example, there may be two great bible teachers in a church, but one is called to work with teenagers and another with adults.
 - h) Verse 6 says there are "different types of working". The Greek word translated working is associated with the English word "energy". The point is God not only gives us the ability to use our gift, but the "energy" (power supply) to exercise our gifts.
6. Verse 7: Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
- a) The ultimate purpose of the spirit gifts is to honor God the Father and Jesus in all that we do! The purpose of the gifts is so that Christians can work as a team to honor God in our lives. The gifts are special powers given to encourage each other to trust in God more.
 - b) Verse 7 states fairly bluntly that to "each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit."
 - i) That means that each Christian has some sort of spiritual gift.
 - ii) This is one reason why I believe nobody is "born again" until they are old enough to grasp that concept. When one grasps what that means, one becomes born again, and at that time, at same moment receives at least one spiritual gift.
 - iii) Do I believe children are saved? Yes. A fair God would not hold someone accountable who does not have the mental means to grasp it. Do I understand how? No. I simply trust that there is a God and He will be fair in judgment!
 - c) Verse 7 states the reason all Christians are given spiritual gifts is for the "common good".
 - i) That means the reason you and I (assuming we're Christians) are given spiritual gifts is for the benefit of the church, and not for our own personal gain.
 - ii) One may have a great ability to make money, but that in itself, is not a spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is one that is used to benefit the Christians around you. It is a special talent you and I have that benefits other Christians. In other words, spiritual gifts are not designed primarily to benefit ourselves, although we may realize we are using a spiritual gift and are being used by God for His glory!
 - iii) Can one derive any personal pleasure from a spiritual gift? Paul did! Paul says in Romans 1:11-12 that he desired to impart some sort of spiritual gift upon the Roman Christians and that Paul could be encouraged along with them. Paul is not claiming that he personally distributes spiritual gifts. Paul wants to teach the Romans about spiritual gifts and Paul wants to be with the Romans so that their spiritual gifts could strengthen Paul just as Paul's spiritual gifts could strengthen the Roman Christians!

- iv) The point is that spiritual gifts are designed to help all believers. Even veteran Christians can benefit from the spiritual gifts of newer believers. The point is God wants us to use our gifts to the benefit of each other and we should not be embarrassed to say we want to be "spiritually blessed" by other's spiritual gifts just as we want to share our spiritual gift(s) with other Christians!
7. Verse 8: To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,
- a) From Verses 8 through 10, we get into specific descriptions of the spiritual gifts.
 - b) Before I break them down, gift-by-gift, it is time for some disclaimers. ☺
 - i) Good Christians disagree as to which gifts still apply today versus which ones were only for the early church.
 - ii) Different denominations hold various views on spiritual gifts. All Christian churches agree such spiritual gifts exist. Some argue that certain gifts were only for the apostles and the early church until the bible was first canonized. Others argue that all the spiritual gifts still exist today.
 - iii) When we meet Christians who hold different views on the spiritual gifts than we do, we may think that person is wrong, but we need to remember they are still saved. We must treat them as brothers and sisters in Christ. Remember Paul's point earlier that a sign of a Christian is whether or not they truly say and believe "Jesus is Lord" and not their particular view on spiritual gifts!
 - iv) For what it is worth, I don't believe these 3 verses (8 through 10) are a complete list of spiritual gifts. There are several places in the New Testament where spiritual gifts are listed. I believe Paul's point here is to list general categories that spiritual gifts fall under.
 - c) Now, let's talk about the first two gifts on the list, which is the "spiritual gift of wisdom" and the "spiritual gift of knowledge".
 - i) For those who were reading my studies when I went through the book of Proverbs, one might recall that I attempted to define the words "knowledge" and "wisdom" as they are used in the bible. The essential idea is that "knowledge" is about knowing right from wrong and that "wisdom" is the application of that knowledge. For example, if one is hungry and there is food right in front of them, "knowledge" is the ability to comprehend that eating the food will satisfy the hunger. The concept of "wisdom" is the actual eating of the food!
 - a) Let me try to define it within the context of "God's word". The idea of "knowledge" is about the meaning of God's word. The idea of "wisdom" is about how to apply God's word.
 - ii) With that said, the "Spiritual gift of wisdom" is a special gift on showing another Christian what is the right thing to do in a given situation. The "Spiritual gift of wisdom" might be to explain right from wrong in a given situation. In other words there is a very fine line of separation between knowledge and wisdom.
 - iii) The idea as "spiritual gifts" is that each one is used to help other Christians grow in their relationship with God. When another Christian gives you or me Godly advice on how to handle a certain situation, they are applying their spiritual gift. When someone biblically tells us we should act "this way" or "do this thing" and that advice is biblically sound, one is exercising those spiritual gifts.
 - iv) So who has these gifts? The most common answer is usually one's pastor or priest. If that person has the ability to read God's word out loud and then tell us how to apply it to our lives, one is exercising that spiritual gift. It could apply to someone leading a small group bible study or to someone giving counseling. A Christian counselor should have the spiritual gift of wisdom and/or knowledge.

- v) Understand that all spiritual gifts are not things one just "turns on and off". A gifted bible teacher still has to prepare and study. A gifted bible teacher may give bad advice when they fail to prepare or fail to seek God in preparation of a study!
- vi) How does one know when one has such a gift? The answer is to watch the results. If our advice is biblical and people are taking our advice, we have that gift. We may have the ability to comprehend our bible well, but if no one wants to hear our advice, we may not have these spiritual gifts!
- d) Let's remember what spiritual gifts are: They are special talents given by the Holy Spirit.
 - i) If one has the ability to lead a bible study, be it a small group or a large group, one may have the spiritual gift of knowledge and/or wisdom. If one has the ability to counsel others (either as individuals or in group settings) and to give them good sound biblical advice, one has this gift.
 - ii) How does one know if they have such a gift? Try teaching something from the bible and see if others are willing to listen. See if anyone is willing to read your bible study notes. ☺ If one gives biblical counseling and others are willing to listen and actually apply your advice, one probably has these gifts!
- e) If you notice, I am describing the gifts of "wisdom and knowledge" interchangeably!
 - i) I don't think the distinction is nearly as important as the concept that one is taking Godly wisdom and Godly knowledge and applying it to people around them!
 - ii) Remember that the purpose of Spiritual gifts is to strengthen and support the "Body of Christ" which fellow believers. If one is just using a gift to strengthen oneself, it is not a spiritual gift. The purpose of the gifts is to help other Christians.
 - iii) Sometimes that "help" is by teaching a person about biblical "right from wrong". That would be "knowledge". Sometimes that "help" is about how to apply God's words to our lives. That is "wisdom". The terms are often used interchangeably. The point is that we shouldn't worry so much about which spiritual gift is being applied. The point is whether or not some sort of spiritual gift is being applied!
 - iv) We also have to get the idea out of our mind that such gifts are only used in formal "lecture" types of settings! These gifts do not only apply to sermon settings. They can and are used in casual meetings with other Christians. If one is talking to another Christian and one gives them good biblical advice, one is applying a spiritual gift at that moment in time! I want you as a reader to understand that this gift is not just for "formal" settings, but can happen at any time!
 - v) Does this mean we should trust the advice of every Christian we hear as biblical? The answer is always to check it against the Word of God as one's final source! When in doubt, study an issue for one's self and pray about the issue.
 - a) Remember God often uses other people to bring answers to our questions, but it is not a guarantee that answer is biblical. One still needs to do their homework and biblically determine what is right for any given situation.
- f) If you have one of these gifts, do you still have to prepare one's lessons? In most cases yes. A pastor, priest, teacher or councilor must still take the time to prepare. Most pastors and teachers will tell that when they are actually giving a lesson, not "everything" comes from preparation. Sometimes "thoughts" just pop into one's head as one is giving the lesson, and often, those are God inspired. Such inspiration does not mean one should ignore preparation, it just means one should be open to moments so that the Holy Spirit could work in one's life to help others at that moment!
- 8. Verse 9: to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,
 - a) The next gift listed is that of "faith". Let's start by saying that all Christians live with some degree of faith. We can't see God face to face, so our trust in Jesus for our salvation takes some degree of faith by all believers.

- b) With that said, the spiritual gift of faith is something different. The idea is to have a special gift to have faith to get one through a difficult situation.
 - i) Let's say one is going through a really tough time for some reason. A person who has the gift of faith may say something or do something to strengthen the suffering person's faith during that difficult time.
 - ii) I know that when I'm in a bad mood for some reason, my wife can say something to help my perspective. That is a gift of faith.
 - iii) Let me describe the gift in another way. Let's say some Christian is struggling with some form of sin. Someone with the gift of faith may say or do something to encourage them to go down the right road!
 - iv) The essential idea of the gift of faith is that somebody who has a lot of trust in God at one moment is using that gift to help someone who is weaker in faith at that moment in time!
- c) Verse 9 also lists the gift of "healing".
 - i) Back when I started describing the spiritual gifts, I gave disclaimers. ☺ It's time to apply them again. This is the first spiritual gift where good Christians debate.
 - a) Some Christian scholars argue that the gift of healing was only for the early church. They argue that once the canon of scripture became complete, this gift is no longer necessary. Those that hold this view do argue that God still heals people at His discretion and God does respond to prayer. The view is just that God does not give people a special "healing ability".
 - b) Other Christian denominations and scholars do argue that this gift is for today. They argue that God does give people the ability to heal people. They argue that people are healed by faith and the faith is mainly the person being healed, not the person doing the "healing".
 - ii) My personal view? The gift of healing does exist today, but there are a LOT of scam artists out there. I personally know some people who in certain situations had an overwhelming "urge" to heal someone and they did. Again, to me, the real faith is the faith of the person being healed and not the healer.
 - a) Someone who argues this gift does not exist today will simply argue that it is God healing that person and no Christian today has such a gift.
 - iii) Let's talk a little about what the gift is, and is not!
 - a) A person with this gift cannot go into a hospital and clear it out.
 - b) A person with this gift, cannot go onto a stage, and start waving their arms and people miraculously get healed.
 - c) With that said, my view is that some people are, at specific times given this gift to heal someone. Remember that all people who are "healed" will still die someday. Such healing will not guarantee salvation. It is simply a sign to Christians around them that God is in control, and at God's discretion, He or she can heal people of different illnesses or problems.
- 9. Verse 10: to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.
 - a) The idea of "miraculous powers" is similar to healing in that it is some sort of miracle occurs that does not have any human explanation. It is as if God defies the laws of nature in order to pull off some sort of miracle.
 - i) Like the gift of healing, some argue that this gift was only for the early apostles. Others say that this gift is to be used throughout the history of the church.
 - ii) Let's remember what the spiritual gifts are for: To edify the church. A "miracle" would be some sort of special "trick" (for the lack of a better word) in which the laws of nature would be defied for the benefit of the church.

- iii) My personal view is similar to that of "healings". I believe God can do what He wants when He wants. If He wants to work through Christians to perform special signs, He can do it. Some believe such miracles are strictly from God, while others argue that God chooses people to perform such miracles.
 - iv) Like "healings", this is not a gift that can be turned on and off by human ability. It is strictly something God controls on his timing.
 - v) In my lifetime, I've heard a handful of miraculous types of stories. My favorite is from Walter Martin. Walter is famous for writing a Christian guide to "cults". Many pastors from different denominations own his book. He had a radio talk show for many years and was considered a prominent apologist in the 1970's and 1980's. Anyway, Walter tells a story about when he was a young missionary, he and a group with him actually raised a recently died person back to life again.
 - a) I've heard many of Walter's lectures and respect him as a source. It is a moving story to hear and just one example of a "miraculous" intervention.
- b) Onto the next spiritual gift: Prophecy.
 - i) When people think of prophecy, they generally think of telling the future. While that is a part of prophecy, it is only a "subset". Prophecy means to "shine forth". The essential idea is to make God's word shine forth.
 - ii) If someone is describing end-times events based on scripture, that is also considered using the gift of prophecy.
 - iii) As to "predictions about other people's lives", yes that is part of it. Again, the important thing is to hear everything the messenger has to say. The bible teaches that a prophet has to be 100% accurate to be accepted. Further, if the prophecy is telling us to turn from God, such a prophet is not from God. (See Deuteronomy 13:1-5). My first thought on such prophets is "What, has God lost my phone number? Why does God have to go through you to deliver me a message?"
 - iv) For what it is worth, I've had a Pentecostal preacher prophesize over my life. The prediction has not come true yet. Do I believe him? I'm watching the rest of my life to see if it comes to pass. The point is I don't trust such things until the event itself happens and then I can have faith in someone's gift as a prophet, and again, I am interested in what he has to say over and above such prophecy.
- c) Onto the next spiritual gift: to another distinguishing between spirits.
 - i) The idea here is that demonic spirits can influence our lives. At the same time there is the Holy Spirit trying to influence our life.
 - a) With that said, some people are given the gift to distinguish between the two. When someone says they are speaking in the "Spirit", another person who has this spiritual gift has a God-given talent to say whether or not the first person speaking is speaking from God or not.
 - ii) Christians who specialize in apologetics (i.e., defending the faith) often have such a gift and work to distinguish between cults and the "real deal".
 - iii) Like other spiritual gifts, I don't think the person who has this gift gets a special feeling of knowing right from wrong, it is just a supernatural ability to distinguish God's truth from what is false.
- d) Finally, Verse 10 talks about "speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues".
 - i) This is the most controversial of the spiritual gifts. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this one as it is the main topic of Chapter 14.
 - ii) The essential idea is the ability to speak in a language one does not know. Let's say one is thinking in English, and all of a sudden "Swahili" comes out the mouth.
 - a) I'm assuming the speaker has no knowledge of "Swahili".

- iii) The idea of an "interpreter" is similar. It is someone who has the supernatural gift to translate the "Swahili" or whatever language is spoken of in tongues. It is a supernatural ability to understand a language one does not speak.
 - iv) The spiritual gift of tongues is only used in praising God. It is not meant for general speech. The idea is one is praising God and another language comes out of one's mouth.
 - v) With that said, I'll save the rest of this discussion for Chapter 14.
- 10. Verse 11: All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.
 - a) The first point of this verse is that even though there are lots of different gifts, the point is the gifts given by and used by Christians are designed to work as a team. I may have a particular gift and you may have a particular gift, but the idea is we are to work together to help each other. My gift is designed to benefit you and your gift is designed to benefit me. In other words, no Christian is an "island". It is designed to be a team effort.
 - b) The second point of this verse is that even though there are lots of different gifts, it is the Holy Spirit's job to distribute them based on the will of God the Father. Once one becomes born again, one also receives some sort of spiritual gift(s). It is the Holy Spirit's job to distribute those gifts. If one knows what is their special gift, one should thank God via the Holy Spirit who has given them that gift. It is His job (The Spirit) to determine what is our gift. We can ask God for a particular gift, but it up to the Holy Spirit to determine whether or not we have a particular gift.
 - i) This point is important as in a matter of verses we're going to get into the issue of jealousy as people coveted gifts they did not have. Paul is essentially saying to those people, "Don't look at me, it is the Holy Spirit's job to determine who gets what gift. Accept what gift you have and don't be jealous of others!"
 - c) Before we move on, I also want to say I don't hold the view that all the gifts listed in this chapter is a complete list. I believe what Paul focuses on here is "categories". In other words, he breaks down specific gifts by categories.
- 11. Verse 12: The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
 - a) The idea here is that even though every Christian is different, God's desire is that we work together as a team. All Christians form "one body" in that we are all a single group of Christian believers whether we like it or not. When we go to heaven will all be attached to each other? No. We will still have individual and distinct heavenly bodies, but together we are united as a "single body". Think of a sports team or a musical team. Each person is separate, but each is a necessary part of defined group.
 - b) What does that mean practically? It means we have to get along with everyone in our church whether we like him or her or not. We all have Christian friends that rub us the wrong way. We have to remember that they are part of the same "body" and we will spend eternity with them whether we like it or not! If there is some conflicting issue, ask God to intervene and help all of us to get along and work together. I suspect part of the problem of the Corinthian church was the failure to work as a team. People desired gifts they didn't have and didn't work as a team.
 - c) Verse 13 says that all Christians were baptized into one body. When did that happen? When John the Baptist was describing the coming of Jesus, he stated there is someone greater than I who will "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". (Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16). The idea is not that we as Christians are baptized more than once!
 - i) When we first give our lives to Christ, that is the moment we are "baptized" by the Holy Spirit and "fire". Water baptism is a separate issue. That is a physical sign to those around us that we are willing to give our lives to Christ.

- ii) The moment we first give our lives to Jesus is when we become part of the body of Christians and get some sort of spiritual gift. We may not realize for a long time what is our spiritual gift(s). The idea is God takes up residence inside of us beginning the first moment we accept Jesus in our hearts! That moment of acceptance is when we are "baptized with the Spirit and fire".
 - iii) Fire is used symbolically in the bible as to describe God changing us from the inside out. (See Numbers 31:23). When someone wants to shape metal, it has to be heated to a high temperature. Just like metal has to be heated to be changed, God wants to "heat us up with (spiritual) fire" to clean us from the inside out!
 - d) Paul's last point is that it does not matter what is one's human background. Christians come from all sorts of backgrounds. The examples here include Jews and Greeks, slave or free. Paul says elsewhere a Christian could be either male or female. (Galatians 3:28). The point is no matter what is one's background, once one accepts Jesus in their hearts, they are now a "new creature" and part of the body of Christ.
- 12. Verse 14: Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.
 - a) Paul now gets back to the issue of "division". The Corinthians understood about spiritual gifts (Chapter 1, Verse 7) and the Corinthians understood they had them. The problem had to do with jealousy, in that Christians desired gifts they didn't have.
 - b) The analogy used is body parts. The idea is that each Christian is different, but at the same time, each Christian is part of the Christian body, no matter what is their gift.
 - c) There are a couple of different "dangerous signs" hinted at here:
 - i) One danger is a person walking away from Christian fellowship, thinking their gift is not that important. That is the idea of "A foot saying, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong!"" Imagine thinking, "My spiritual gift is not that important, I don't belong here and I think I'll just worship God (as a lifestyle) all by myself! "
 - ii) A second danger is to think I am more important than that Christian over there as my spiritual gift is more important than theirs! That is the danger of thinking that just because I am a high ranking member of my church, I am more important than the person who sweeps up and I deserve my own parking spot up front! ☺
 - d) We as people tend to think of a foot as less important as a hand as we do "things" using our hands. Paul is arguing that just because one's spiritual gift is not thought of as highly as another, does not mean it is less important!
- 13. Verse 17: If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.
 - a) If everyone at a church were in charge of say, giving the sermon, who would sing and who would pass the collection plate? ☺ The point is that each of us are called to different roles with the body of Christ and no one is more important than the other.
 - b) If one does not like one's spiritual gift as a Christian, remember it is God who decides who gets what gifts and not the church leadership. If you are in charge of sweeping up and you believe you should lead the church, remember a few things: God may be preparing us for a greater role but first, God is working on our humility. Another issue is that if we want a different role, we may need to create some time to prepare ourselves for that role. Further, it is up to God to raise us up at the proper time, not our church!
 - c) The other idea of these verses is that if everyone were the leader, other functions of the church would never get done! No one would watch the children and no one would help clean up. No one job is more important in God's eyes than any other!

14. Verse 21: The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
- a) I've taken the last group of verses in a larger chunk. Paul is using more sentences to make a point and these verses don't need as detailed an explanation as the earlier verses.
 - b) Paul starts by saying, "The eye cannot say to the hand 'I don't need you'". In other words, if our eyes desire something to hold, it needs the hands to complete that mission. Along the same lines of thinking, a church leader may desire a good goal to be accomplished, but it needs the cooperation of that church in order to get it done!
 - c) Verses 22-25 make a different point. The idea is there are parts of our physical body that have skeletal protection. If we lose a hand or an eye, we will still be able to live. If we lose internal organs like a heart, we would no longer live. Those internal organs are protected by a surrounding skeletal system. Paul is saying that while we give greater "thought" to our eyes and hands, God thinks of the "whole body" including the parts of the body we don't think about, unless they are in pain!
 - d) Verse 24 says, "God has given greater honor to the parts that lack it (special honor)." In other words, those vital organs that have less visibility are more important as our physical bodies cannot live without them. At the same time, those people who do the "real work" in the church, who are not very visible and don't get a lot of praise are the one's who really get the "special honor" within the body of Christ (from God's perspective)!
 - i) Therefore, if one wants to see who gets special honors within a church, don't look the pastor or the board of elders. Look who's doing the cleaning up or look who's doing the menial jobs within the church!
 - e) A famous pastor once said (paraphrasing), "I don't want church members that just sit in their seats and are not involved in this church. I want people who get involved and make some effort to help out fellow Christians within the body of Christ". (Based on a quote by Charles Spurgeon). In other words, this pastor wants all Christians to use their spiritual gifts to get involved and make a difference to the lives of other Christians
 - f) This leads us to Verse 26: If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
 - i) If one member of a church is suffering somehow, then the rest of the church is "suffering with it". It does not mean all the Christians have to go to the home of one who is sick (although a few visitors are nice!) ☺ It means that if one Christian is not exercising their spiritual gift, then the church suffers because of it!
 - ii) At the same time, if one Christian is honored somehow, the rest of the body of Christ should rejoice with that person, as we are all part of "one body". For example, if someone at church is singled out that day, we should all celebrate with them, as opposed to being jealous as they were singled out and not you or me!
15. Verse 27: Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
- a) Let me use this verse to break for a moment, and talk about something important:
 - i) How do I know what is my spiritual gifts? I know I gave my life to Christ. I have now read that I have some sort of spiritual gifts. How do I know what they are?
 - ii) There are "designed written quizzes" that have been developed to determine what is one's spiritual gift(s). A simpler way is to ask one's self and ask others what are you good at? It may be more obvious than you think! The idea is then to combine what one is good at with a particular need within the body of Christ.

- b) Verse 27 is an introduction to the next set of verses, which have to do with describing different roles and functions within the church. I wanted to use it as an opportunity to teach people how to find their spiritual gifts. With that said, if one is not sure, spend some time with elders at your local church. Get more than one opinion! Beware that some churches may have a need for a baby sitter and put you in that position just to fill it!
 - i) Which reminds me of another point. When there is a need in our church, we may have to put aside our "special gifts" and help fill that need. I admit, I'm not the best at certain functions in our church, but I know there are times when we all have to do our duties and help out! For example, no one really enjoys cleaning up, but we all have to do our share. My point here is one should never use their spiritual gift as an excuse of getting out of doing our share of the work!
- 16. Verse 28: And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.
 - a) As I stated earlier in the lesson, I don't believe this chapter is designed to be a complete list of all spiritual gifts. The idea is to list different categories. All Christians have jobs within those categories. Further, two Christians may have the exact same gift, but be called to different roles within a Christian church. With that said, let me describe each of the categories being listed:
 - b) First are apostles: With all of the different beliefs about spiritual gifts, almost all Christians agree that this only applied to the original apostles of Jesus and the bible authors (including Paul). The term literally means, "sent one" as one person sent by another. It refers to the original apostles. In other words, this category in a direct sense ended with the original witnesses of Jesus and Paul.
 - i) I'll expand on this only that in every generation God does raise up "mighty" leaders within the church who are publicly recognized as church leaders.
 - c) The second category is prophets: I spent some time on this earlier. The main idea is one who has the gift of preaching God's word in that they can explain its meaning clearly. The idea of "prophecy" is technically different from preaching. The term prophecy does mean to preach God's word. The idea is to explain what it means, particularly as it ties to prophecy. That includes explaining end time predictions, it includes explaining our destiny as believers and yes, it can include predictive aspects about individuals.
 - i) It does include having a special ability to predict the future. I'm "hesitant" in that subcategory in that people should not "lean" on miracles as a sign. Remember it is the "message" that is important and not the sign itself!
 - d) Next are teachers: Almost all Christians agree the gift of "teaching" still exists today. Some people have a gift for public speaking to small or large crowds. Remember that the spiritual gift of teaching is different from the ability that some people have to teach. It is about teaching God's words and principals in formal and informal settings to others.
 - e) Next are workers of miracles and healings: Here is where the debate comes in. Some Christians argue these gifts were only part of the early church and were no longer needed once God's word was canonized. We'll discuss this more in the next lesson. Others argue that such gifts are still for today. The question is not whether or not God can still do miracles and healings. Almost all Christians agree that God still works today based on His will for our lives. The debate is over whether or not God still gives Christians special powers to perform miracles and healings. I'll stop here on this. ☺
 - i) The primary purpose of bible miracles was to heal needs. Such miracles were to show that God cares about our lives and intervenes for our benefit. A secondary purpose of miracles was to validate the speaker as a prophet. My point is we don't focus on the miracle "worker" but on God, and the "message".

- f) The next two spiritual gifts are key to church survival: The first is a special ability to help others, and the second is a gift of administration.
 - i) The idea of "helping others" is some people have a special gift to be of service and help to others more than other people. It does not mean the rest of us should ignore helping people in times of need. It means some have a special gift to be a "helper". A lot of people in the missionary fields have this gift.
 - ii) The gift of administration is the talent to organize the church. Many Christians and non-Christians have this talent. The specific spiritual gift is the ability to organize and run a church and help it function smoothly. Someone who has this gift should not be above any particular job and usually wants to help out some of the lower jobs in order for the church to function.
 - g) The last gift listed is tongues. Again, this is the main topic of Chapter 14, so we'll save a detailed discussion until that time! The main idea is that some people have an ability to communicate with God in a foreign tongue. I believe Paul specifically lists it last as to make a point as to its importance among the gifts. The great debate among Christians is whether or not this gift still exists today and how it should be practiced in church. This is a topic that will be discussed in the next two chapters, so I'll move on.
17. Verse 29: Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?
- a) Verse 29's main point is that not every Christian has every gift! There are Christians in some Pentecostal churches that wrongly think one does not have the Holy Spirit in them unless they have all the spiritual gifts. Paul does not think that all Christians have all gifts!
 - b) Remember it is the Holy Spirit's job to distribute gifts as He wishes, not as we wish. I do believe we can pray to have a spiritual gift, but God has the right to say no. It does not mean we are any less of a Christian if we don't have a certain gift, it just means it is God's will for us to not have that particular spiritual gift!
18. Verse 30a: But eagerly desire the greater gifts.
- a) So what are the "greater gifts" that Paul is talking about? The text does not say. I'll argue the greatest gift is the "need of the moment". If one is with other Christians and there is a need for either prophecy, comfort, healing, prayer or "whatever", the greatest gift is the need of that particular moment.
 - b) With that said, this sentence also ties to the second sentence of this final verses.
19. Verse 30b: And now I will show you the most excellent way.
- a) This sentence leads to Chapter 13. The main point of Chapter 13 is that one could have one simple spiritual gift or one could have all the spiritual gifts, but if one does not have Christian love for the fellow Christian, those gifts are a waste of time. I'll develop that point far greater in the next lesson.
 - b) Remember the purpose of Christian spiritual gifts is not to elevate ourselves, but to use those gifts for the benefit of other Christians. Our greatest motivation for having and using spiritual gifts should be for the benefit of other Christians. That is a summary of Chapter 13.
 - c) This second sentence also ties to the first sentence of this verse. The first sentence of Verse 30 says, "Desire the greater gifts". I suspect the "greater gifts" is whatever best benefits other Christians around us at that moment.
20. With that said, we made it through one of the most controversial chapters in 1st Corinthians. Good Christian scholars vary on many of the spiritual gifts in terms of which ones are still for today. All Christians that some gifts are for today.
- a) For example, all Christians will argue that the spiritual gift of teaching is for today. As to some of the more controversial gifts, I invite you to study the evidence and come to your own conclusion.

- b) Christians will argue for the fact that God still interferes in the affairs of man. The debate is whether or not God is "just" responding to prayers or do some Christians today get special gifts or talents to be used for His glory.
- 21. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the spiritual gifts that You give us through the Spirit. We understand that the gifts are a "bonus" over and above our salvation for the purpose of benefiting the church. Help us to recognize what are our spiritual gifts. Help us to use them to strengthen the church. At the same time, help us not to be jealous of other's gifts and at the same time, help us not to isolate ourselves due to any particular gift or lack of a certain gift. Guide us as we live for You in all that we do. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.