

Take-Aways for Small Group Leaders to Consider

Here are a couple ways Paul uses the Greek language to further illustrate and bring deeper meaning to his points:

- Paul changes the Greek word he uses for “gift” in verse 1 from *pneumatikon*, meaning “spiritual things” to *charismata* in verse 4, meaning “God’s gifts of grace.”
- Paul gives some examples of spiritual gifts in verses 8-10. Gordon Fee suggests they may be slightly categorized based on how Paul uses two different Greek words for “another.” In light of this we can group wisdom and knowledge together, which the Corinthians prided themselves on. The next five are supernatural workings. The last two – tongues and interpretation – were one of Paul’s main concerns, and an issue he will continue to expound upon through chapter 14.

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss this week's sermon, *On Spiritual Gifts*, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

In this passage, Paul is continuing to correct the self-glorifying and entitled behavior of the Corinthian Christians. This time his focus is on manifestations of spiritual gifts in worship. He discusses their common source – the Holy Spirit— and their ultimate purpose – the common good.

READ 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

ANALYZE THE TEXT

1. Discuss the differences between “mute idols” (Hab. 2:18-19) and Jesus Christ. According to vs. 3, what does the Holy Spirit enable us to do? What does He prevent us from doing? Why is this significant and how does this relate to vs. 2?
2. What repeated words and syntax (arrangement of words/phrase structures) do you notice in verses 4-6? How many iterations of this pattern are there? Do you find this significant? (hint: look at the names of the “givers”).
3. Count and identify the number of giftings in verses 8-10. Do you think this is an exhaustive list? See Rom. 12:6-8 and Eph. 4:11-13 for comparison. What is the common goal of these various gifts?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Like us, the Corinthians often had a knack for missing the point and skewing Christian practices to suit their own need for validation. As we observed in their disrespect towards the Lord's Supper, their tendency was to glorify the self over the needs of others, particularly members of the church body weaker or lower in status than themselves. This attitude also manifested itself in their abuse of spiritual gifts. They had a penchant for knowledge and enlightenment, and they enjoyed flashy ways to flaunt their spirituality, especially through the gift of speaking in tongues. Scholars suspect some were not using their gifts to edify the church but were disrupting worship in order to bring attention to themselves. In verse 1, Paul opens with the phrase “now about,” a signal that this is possibly a response to one of their earlier

letters. He alludes to their lust for superior knowledge with some irony in his tone as he says “*I do not want you to be uninformed.*” In verses 2-3, Paul explains that misplaced spirituality is idolatry - even pagans can call themselves “spiritual” but they are not being led by the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the distinction between those who profess Christ and those who do not. In verse 4-7, Paul explains how the trifold Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is the one source for these many different gifts, services, and activities, and that the single-minded purpose is “for the common good” of the church body. This idea is beautifully in line with the imagery of “one body, many parts” that we will encounter next week. Paul celebrates the diversity of various spiritual gifts in verses 8-10 and closes with a concise summary of his main take-away again in verse 11.

APPLY Break up into men and women for the application

1. Do any of these spiritual gifts resonate with you? Consider how the Spirit has led you to serve the church and “the common good” in the past.
2. Share a time when you were ministered to or when you allowed the Spirit to minister to others through you using the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
3. Are you tempted to compare your spiritual gifts to the gifts of others? How can you live into God's truth and remind yourself of Paul's teachings using this passage or other scriptures?

MEMORIZE

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

It is easy to get caught up in our spiritual gifting like a kind of spiritual personality typing system.

But does identifying them really matter? Paul focuses more on the source and the goal of the gifts than putting a label on them. Be observant of those around you who are hurting. Consider spending less time excusing yourself for not having certain giftings and let the Spirit lead you instead. You may be surprised how He can prompt and empower you to minister to others in ways you never imagined!

Suggestions for further reading: Richard Hays, *First Corinthians, Interpretation series*