

Good morning Crossroads. Let's thank our band this morning. Thank you very much Milo, Dan. Nice job. Good to see you all this morning. Well, let's take our bibles and let's now turn to that familiar book, 1 Corinthians. We are in chapter 12 this morning as we move into a brand new section. We're actually looking at the topic of spiritual gifts, a much anticipated topic for many of you. Spiritual gifts, obviously is an important subject but it can also be a very controversial subject as well. Scores of books have been written about the spiritual gifts. I think every year more and more dissertation and position papers are coming out of our seminaries on spiritual gifts. Denominations have split over the topic of spiritual gifts and certainly congregations and churches have been divided so we need to approach this subject carefully and with wisdom.

John MacArthur in his commentary writes:

“Perhaps no area of biblical doctrine has been more misunderstood and abused, even within evangelicalism, than that of spiritual gifts. Yet no area of doctrine is more important to the spiritual health and effectiveness of the church.”

I would agree with him. There are probably is no more important yet more misunderstood doctrine than this very doctrine. It's important because spiritual gifts really set the church apart. We're not a business. We're not an institution. We're not an organization. We are a living organism. The scripture call us a body. That's its favorite metaphor. It just says there are different parts to a body that make up a whole there are different parts of a church body. The different parts are you with your unique spiritual giftedness. It makes up the whole of us as the church and so it's an important aspect for the church to understand but spiritual gifts are greatly misunderstood. And why is that? Well, I think it's because they're essential to the function of the church. They're absolutely essential to the function of every day aspects of the church and I think that if the adversary can cause confusion in the area in something so essential then the adversary knows the church will not operate at its peak. So, what a better place to cause confusion than in the spiritual gifts.

Paul certainly understood this. I think this is why he spends chapter 12, chapter 13, chapter 14 on this very subject. He gives great detail in the area of spiritual gifts and we're going to give great detail. It will probably take us a better part of the summer, on in to the fall to finish these three chapters. We're going to work carefully and critically. We're going to understand not only the gifts and how they operate; how you might understand your gifts but we're going to understand some of the controversial sign gifts such as tongues and healing and miracles. I'm going to ask questions like do they still operate today and if so how are they to be operating and how are they to be functioning in the church. We're going to look into charismatic movement. We're going to look into some of the theology that is presented in the gifts. We're going to just carefully work our way through just as carefully as Paul writes in chapter 12, 13 and 14. He didn't want the Corinthians to be ignorant about this subject. That's clear.

Look at verse 1, he says now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers I do not want you to be uninformed. That's the word *agnoéō*, from the Greek which literally means ignorant or unaware. He says I don't want you to be unaware of the importance of this. The Corinthian believers, however, were acting ignorant when it came to spiritual gifts. They didn't fully understand it. They didn't understand the gifts primarily because they were operating by two assumptions and that is personal opinion and personal experience. And when you put those two together to develop a theology you know you're going to have trouble. I think that's actually the trouble that much of the modern church, when I talk about the modern church, talk about the universal church much of the modern church has the very similar problem. They operate on personal opinion and personal experience rather than the Word of God. In fact, I think before we even head out into this study we need to lay down some guidelines so that we all agree what is the premise of our study. We're always moving towards the Word of God but let's lay some guidelines down that we all operate by the scripture and I think there are three things that we need to confirm.

Number 1 – that the scriptures must be the guide, not personal opinion. Personal opinion reigns supreme today, doesn't it? Everybody has an opinion about something. Everybody has an opinion about the subject. Everybody has an opinion when it comes to religion and the scriptures, boy, it just goes on and on; ad-infinitum; ad nauseum. It says we all have our own "op-ed". We want to share our opinions. We have to be careful of that. I've told you in the past if you're ever in a group, ever in a small group or a house church or some setting and you're studying the bible and you're studying a particular topic and someone pipes up and they say well, I think...you have my permission to say we don't care what you think. We want to know what God thinks and that means we want you to be studying the Word; digging in deep; coming to a conclusion that is biblical and has a foundation built in theology. Then we understand. Then we care what you think because we then understand it's what God thinks. And so we have to steer away from personal opinion.

Second, scripture must determine our thinking, not past church practices. I know many of you have grown up in church. Many of you come from a variety of different denominations. We all bring our own baggage here. And I get that. And some of you come from much more conservative, main-line denominational background and no one talked about the gifts then. And there's a whole other side of the spectrum. Some of you came out of a Pentecostal, charismatic background and the gifts were always talked about then. And we've got to meet in the middle and we have to say, you know what? We understand that we all have different backgrounds. And we also understand that many of the people from our different backgrounds were sincere in how they were approaching worship. But we also have to understand that some of them might have been sincerely wrong and so we have to go to the scriptures ourselves. We can not ride the coat tails of any history. We have to determine ourselves. We have to study ourselves to understand the Word of God.

Then thirdly I think the most important is that scripture must establish our doctrine, not personal experience. When you get into this area of spiritual gifts personal experience

Series: 1 Corinthians

Spiritual Gifts Pt. 1

1 Corinthians 12:1-7

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reigns supreme but you have to be careful of personal experience. You have to be careful of experience as the baseline. Listen, the Word verifies our experience. Our experience never verifies the Word. It always starts with the Word first. When we go to the sense of experience you have to remember what we come out of. Even as redeemed people we live and we are fallen people and because of the fall, because of our own depravity we can't always trust our own thinking and our own judgment and our own hearts or our own motives. So we're always checking them by the Word of God, not by the experiences that we might have.

And so I think these are the three guidelines that I'm going to remind you of often as we work through these three chapters now that we're all in agreement on those three guidelines we can move forward together in unity and we need to start. Where do we start? We start with building a really strong foundation. In fact, I want to dig a deep foundation this morning and we're going to just cover one topic and that is what is and what is not a spiritual gift. I want it deep in your minds; rooted deep in your minds when you hear the word spiritual gift that you understand what we're talking about; you understand the complexities of what the Word of God is speaking of when you hear the term spiritual gift.

Now, what we're going to do in this first set of verses is we're not going to necessarily take an exegetical approach and work through verse by verse. We're going to come back to these verses time and time again. Actually, what we're going to do is we're going to pull out a few key words as we develop our definition of spiritual gifts. Paul uses four words to help us understand what the spiritual gifts are. It starts in verse 1.

He says, now concerning spiritual. Stop right there. You don't even have to go to the next word gifts because actually, the word gifts is not in the original; not in the Greek. The translators actually supplied it because it's supplied. Later it shows up in verse 4 and we'll get there in a moment but literally it's *pneumatikós*. The idea is that Paul stops with this word because *pneumatikós* is what is the central concept of what he's speaking of. Pneuma, comes from the idea of the spirit. Pneumatikos is literally the spiritual. It's a plural word. So when you see this he says, now concerning or now about the spirituals. Pneumatikos means things characterized or preceding from the spirit of from the Holy Spirit. So you hear what he's saying? Paul is saying now let me talk to you about the spirituals. Let me talk to you about those things that you know of that were given to you at your new birth. You see, when you became a believer God gave you a gift. It's called the spirituals. He gave you a supernatural ability that you did not have before your new birth in Christ. Paul is referencing these in the very first verse.

He says now, Corinthians, let me talk to you now about the spirituals. Obviously he had talked to them in person when he was in Corinth as their pastor about spiritual gifts and so he's referencing that again. And he says let me talk about those and let me give you clarity. He says you need to understand they come from God; that the source is the Holy Spirit. You say, where do you get that? Well, look at verse 4. Verse 4 says, now, there are

a variety of gifts but the same, what's the word? Spirit. See, it's capitalized. That's the Holy Spirit. So the source of these spirituals is the Holy Spirit.

Now, very important. What have we learned already? That spiritual gifts or the spirituals are not learned. They're not natural. What are they? They are supernatural. They've been given to you by God himself; by the Holy Spirit. And sometimes what I find is believers confuse the idea of spiritual gifts with natural talents or special abilities. Believers and unbelievers alike all have special abilities; special talents. Unbelievers, for example may excel at carpentry or cooking or being mechanically inclined or be artistic. The same thing can be said about believers. They might excel at carpentry or cooking or be mechanical or artistic. But those are not spiritual gifts. Those are talents. Those are abilities. Those are things that they have cultivated in their lives over a period of time. Spiritual gifts are not that way. Spiritual gifts are given to you by the spirit for an expressed purpose.

I did a little bit of a social networking experiment this week on Facebook, those of you who are following me. I asked a question of this. I asked do you understand the spiritual gifts? Do you know your spiritual gifts and what are they and I got a variety of responses. Let me just share a few of them with you. One person wrote in and they said I have the gift of teaching and service. Really? Is that a gift? Is teaching and service a spiritual gift? Yes. It is. The scriptures give us actually a clear list of what the spiritual gifts are and teaching and service are included in them. Someone else wrote in I have the gift of music. Is music a spiritual gift? No. We might think music is a spiritual gift but it's actually an ability. Now, that ability might have been given to you by God but it's also an ability that you've cultivated. It's not just something that was given to you for an expressed purpose that would be called spiritual. It's not defined. Music is not defined as a spiritual.

Let's continue. My spiritual gift is acting in drama. Would acting in drama be a spiritual gift? No. Now you're catching on. Another one, John McCollum, Director of Asia's Hope he wrote in and he said I think I have the gift of cartoon voices. Maybe John does but is cartoon voices a spiritual gift? No. How about this one – I believe and very sincere here, I believe I have the gift of faith. Is faith a spiritual gift? Yes. But it's also a fruit of the spirit. We all should share in the fruit of the spirit but for some of us we've been given a special gift called faith. We'll unpack this in the future.

One woman wrote in and said I have the gift of mentoring. Is mentoring a spiritual gift? You kind of have to be cautious here. This is where we want to work on specific language that comes out of scripture because part of mentoring is teaching. So you could say yes. But not all of mentoring is teaching. You understand that? So, you have to be specific and you have to go back to the scriptures to determine what are spiritual gifts.

Let me give you a couple more. I think I have the gift of administration? Would something like administration be a spiritual gift? Yes. It is. In fact, Jeanette Chase who spoke last week. Did a wonderful job. Does a wonderful job in our Family Ministry. She

has the gift, clearly of administration. When you work with her you understand that. In fact, many of the church leaders here have the gift of administration. Jeff Schultheis, the chairman of our Elder Board clearly has the gift of administration and leadership. You see that in his life. He's been given that gift, why? To help organize and to help understand the leadership of the church.

One more – I have the gift of love. Is love a spiritual gift? No. It's a fruit of the Spirit. So, we're going to have to be careful that we understand the difference and I'm going to be helping you with that. But, what we're going to do is we're going to see through scripture that scripture gives us a clear list of the spirituals. You say then how did it come up with this name spiritual gifts? If the real name is spirituals how did that become the name? Well, actually you put verse 1 and verse 4 together and you get the concept of spiritual gift and actually the word gift is the next word that helps us in defining the concept that Paul was giving.

So, the first word spiritual. The second word is gifts and that's the word *chárisma* or (proper pronunciation) and the idea is have you ever heard of someone having a charismatic type of personality, real outgoing? Or, have you ever heard of the Charismatic Movement within Christianity? It comes out of this word. But here, I want you to listen carefully because here is one of the tragedies of when you take a good biblical word and you assign it to a movement. The reality is we're all charismatic. We've all been given gifts of the Spirit. We may not be a part of the present, modern day Charismatic Movement but biblically we understand the word correctly. We're all charismatic because we've all been given gifts.

The word *charisma* means gift of grace. You know what Grace means, right? Unmerited favor – God's unmerited favor to us. So, he's given us a gift that we really don't deserve but it's His gift and He gave it to us. It's not something we've cultivated. It's something, rather He gave to us so it's a spiritual gift given to us by God. But it's not just one gift. There's a variety of gifts. Hold your place in 1 Corinthians. Come back one book to the book of Romans. Romans chapter 12, which, by the way is another chapter in the gift list.

Let me just help you just understand the variety of gifts for a moment. In verse 4 of chapter 12 Paul continues the metaphor of the body and he says for as in one body, verse 4, chapter 12, we have many members and the members do not all have the same functions so we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. You understand the metaphor where he's going? Now listen. Verse 6 what I really want you to see. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. Let us use them. If prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

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Let's stop right here. Do you see already the different gifts that are developing in scripture? And this is what I think you're going to find out. That I think each one of us has been given a unique spiritual gift that come out of the many gifts. It's as if God says here are the gift lists. And you can read them in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. In fact, I put them in your program for you just so you can have a snap shot of the different gifts represented in scripture. But I think what God does is He takes from these gift lists and He melds them together and He gives to you as is if one package, one gift specifically designed for you. That's your spiritual gift. Not your abilities. That's what I want to make sure you understand that these are spiritual in essence, given to us by God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

Why has He given this to us? Well we see that in verses 5 and 6 and that's the third word that makes up our definition and that is service; for the purpose of serving. Let me read the text for you – verses 5 and 6 back in 1 Corinthians 12. He says (verse 5), there are varieties of service. There's the word. Actually, that word in the Greek as a noun is *diakonia* where we get the word Deacon and what does a Deacon do? A Deacon serves so in the verb form it literally is we've been given the gifts to serve. But the same Lord, he says. There are a variety of service but the same Lord; there are a variety of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. Why are the spiritual gifts given? To serve. That's the primary function of the spiritual gift.

Many times, and we're going to look at this as we continue our study. People will say, well, you know the spiritual gifts are really a part of my own activities to grow and I use the spiritual gifts for my own purposes. No. Early in the study of 1 Corinthians we learn that the gifts were not given for ourselves. They are not inherently given to you to serve you. They were not for your own glorification but for others edification.

Peter says in 1 Peter 4:10. You don't need to turn there. Look at the side screens. As each has received a gift use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Now look at that text carefully. What do you learn from it? First that we all have spiritual gifts, don't we? No one here that names the name of Christ does not have a gift; has not been given a gift mixed by God. That's His gift to you. But notice what you're to do with it. You are to use it. How are you to use it? By serving one another, right? And when you serve one another what are you? You are a good steward, aren't you? See, the last thing that you want to do is to receive the gift and not use it. That would be like a body part that's not functioning. What happens? The whole body suffers.

Deering Dyer, just got out of the hospital a week and a half ago. His gall bladder stopped working and it was rather traumatic for him because he went through several days of great pain and anguish. Here was a body part that wasn't working and what happened? The rest of the body was impacted. That's the same way with our spiritual gift. See, you've been given a gift. If you're not using it to serve others the rest of the body is suffering. But listen to this. Look at verse 6. Verse 6 he says, but when we use them, he calls them these varied activities. That word activity actually is the Greek word where we

get energy. *Enérgēma* is the word. The idea here is that when you use your spiritual gift it's like infusing energy into the entire body. That's why we're called to understand our gift and to use our gift.

But the last word in verse 7 really gives us a definition; a complete definition of spiritual gifts and that's the word manifestation. We see this in verse 7. He says to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. What does manifestation mean? What does Paul mean by this? The Greek behind this word means to make visible or to make known. What does that mean? Am I to use my spiritual gifts to make myself known; to make myself visible before the church? No, although certainly there are spiritual gifts like the gifts of teaching and proclamation where you have to be before other people but this is not the sense. The sense of using our spiritual gifts why? To make the one who gave the gift known; to make much of the giver of the gift. That's the concept. I'm going to use my gift to manifest the grace of God working in my life and so if I don't use my gift I'm not giving glory back to God. You know, we talk a lot about that around here. We say I want my life to be use to the glory of God. How do we do that? We do that by effectively using our gifts to manifest the one who gave it to us.

So here, what is the definition of a spiritual gift? It's spiritual. In other words it's not something that is a talent or ability. It's a gift given to us by God. It is a service to be rendered for God to the church and ultimately manifests the Spirit of God. That's a spiritual gift.

Now, what are we going to do next week? Next week we're going to dissect that list. We're going to take it apart and we're going to understand each of the gifts and then we're going to see how might those gifts be a part of my life and how can I understand my gift mix and use it for the purpose of the church.