

# The Church: How Jesus Builds It #3 - Gifts and Fruit in Ministry

by Bob Hoekstra

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*The church is a living spiritual organism, and spiritual gifts are a manifestation of the Spirit, used for the benefit of all to make disciples and build up the body of Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:00:31

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:4

**Topics:** "Spiritual Gifts", "Fruit Of Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the church as a living spiritual organism, rather than a dead religious organization. The purpose of the church is to make disciples and grow in discipleship. The speaker also discusses the function of the church, which is to engage in activities that promote discipleship. While spiritual gifts are important, the speaker highlights that without the fruit of love, they are meaningless. Love is prioritized as the foundation of spiritual fruit, as seen in Galatians 5:22-23.

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## Transcript

We're continuing in this study, our series on the church, or how Jesus builds his church. This, our third study, concerns gifts and fruit in ministry. At this point, we'll begin to elaborate in the scriptures more on these matters of nature, purpose, and function of the church.

We've looked at that some already. The nature of the church, we're the body of Christ, we are a living spiritual organism, not a dead religious organization, and Christ is the head of the body. The purpose of the church, the purpose of the church is to make disciples.

That's why we're here on earth. It's the reason the Lord leaves us here instead of taking all of us immediately to be with him. That's one of the primary reasons right there, to become more of a disciple and to be making disciples.

And then the function of the church, what we're to be doing, we're to be doing those things that make disciples, and that's evangelism and edification, getting the witness out of the Word unto salvation, and then building people up in the Lord Jesus Christ, learning how to walk with him. Now more and more as we enter into the scriptures in this series of studies, ministry will become more and more our focus in the Word. In other words, we'll talk more and more about the function of the church, what the church is to be

doing, and that is ministry related to the discipleship.

All the while, though, as we speak about the functioning of the church in ministry, always behind that are the unseen matters we've looked at already. The nature of the church is behind the function of the church, and the purpose of the church is behind the function of the church. So with that in mind, let's consider gifts and fruit in ministry.

Spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit as they relate to ministry, to the functioning of the church. You'll probably notice along the way, though, in this study, there are a number of statements in scripture that keep elaborating upon the very nature of the church, that is, who we are essentially, as well as statements related to the purpose, that is, why we're here on the earth. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 will be the place that we spend most of our time in this study, beginning in verses 4 through 6 concerning diversities of spiritual gifts, a key biblical truth for the church to walk in.

1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 4 through 6. There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

A common interplay in these three verses, diversity and yet unity. Differences and yet there's a sameness in each of these three verses. First, diversities of gifts.

Verse 1 says, now concerning spiritual gifts, literally concerning spiritualities or spiritual matters. The spiritual matter to be discussed in this chapter, spiritual gifts. The word for gifts here in verse 4 is an interesting one, charismaton.

It's where we get an English word like charismatic, very good biblical word. When I was in seminary, it was a word that many were kind of afraid of, you know, sounded like Holy Spirit business. And some have taken that word and turned charismatic into charismania.

Of course, Pastor Chuck has written in an excellent fashion from the word of God in his teaching on that subject. But it's a wonderful word, charismaton, spiritual gifts. The heart of that word, maybe you noticed it, charis.

Do you know how that's translated in the New Testament? It's one of the greatest words in all the Bible, charis, grace, grace. Spiritual gifts have to do with the grace of God imparted to his people. In fact, actually, in Romans chapter 12, just a short divergence to illustrate this word, we'll come right back to 1 Corinthians 12.

In Romans 12, in the section that speaks of spiritual gifts, Romans 12, 6 says, having then gifts, same word, spiritual gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. We have gifts and they differ, but it's the differing according to the grace that is given to us. The spiritual gifts in the body of Christ are the grace of God imparted to us.

God's enablements by his grace flowing from the head, the Lord Jesus Christ, to his body and to each member. That's what spiritual gifts are about. The Holy Spirit imparting the grace of God in specialized, particularized ways in each of our lives.

And there are diversities of gifts, many different types of spiritual gifts, impartations of the grace of God, diversities, but the same, different but the same, different gifts, but the same Spirit. The Holy Spirit is

involved in the giving and the operating of all of the gifts in the body of Christ. Verse 5 again, diversity but sameness.

There are differences, literally the same word there could still be translated, there are diversities of ministries but the same Lord. Each spiritual gift can develop in different ministries, different ways that gift is used to serve people and serve the Lord God Almighty. So you have varieties of gifts and then varieties of ministries coming out of those gifts.

We're already getting multiplied diversification in the spiritual ministry of the body of Christ. But different yet the same. Differences of ministries but the same Lord.

All true ministry in using the spiritual gifts that God gives involves the Lord Himself active with and in and through those gifts. So there is great variety, nonetheless it's still the Lord Himself who's at work that keeps it the same in all cases if indeed we're ministering in the Lord. Verse 6, another one with diversity but sameness.

And there are diversities of activities or it could be translated effects. But it is the same God who works all in all. First we have spiritual gifts and each gift can produce different ministries.

Now we move on to the ministries and each ministry can produce different activities or effects. We again have this sort of exponential work of God where there's a multiplication of diversity. You start out with a number of spiritual gifts and they are diverse.

Then out of each gift can come diverse ministries. So you have more. And then out of each of the ministries can come different effects.

How glorious it is the way God works. Of course we want everybody to do it just like us, don't we? I mean that's the flesh. Don't be different from me, you know.

Affirm me, validate me. Demonstrate by everything you say and do that I'm exactly right on, you know, the ultimate. Well that's the flesh.

The Spirit works in diversity. And yet there is a glorious sameness. The sameness is who's behind it all.

Who's working in it all. As it comes out in appearance and activity and effect, great diversity. And certainly we have groupings and denominations and churches and all that in the body of Christ.

In Christendom and in the church world that are divided by the flesh, not by the Spirit. But there's also a diversity that's kind of healthy. Every church and every group and every movement doesn't have to be exactly the same.

The main thing is moving in the Lord with the things of the Lord, doing the will of the Lord. And there's great room for diversity in that. It's a wonderful thing to see.

Diversities of spiritual gifts. Now we see that they are for the benefit of all and by the will of God. Verses 7 through 11.

For the benefit of all and by the will of God. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit.

To another, the word of knowledge through the same Spirit. To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healings by the same Spirit.

To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy. To another, discerning of spirits.

To another, different kinds of tongues. To another, the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually, personal attention, how as He wills.

Again, tremendous insight into the way that the Lord Almighty works with His people. Oh, how God provides the enablement that is needed for the ministries that He has called us to. Verse 7 we see, spiritual gifts.

They are that which the Holy Spirit manifests or demonstrates. But the manifestation of the Spirit. Another way to talk about spiritual gifts is this.

Spiritual gifts are basically the manifestation of the Spirit. That is a demonstration of the Spirit of God at work upon and in and through a life. Essentially, they are not something human, though they take place in human lives.

They are something divine. Something God is doing in and through His people. And too often, people do things in the church and then kind of blame it on a manifestation of the Spirit.

Well, real spiritual ministry is a manifestation of the Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit using gifts given to the people of God. A manifestation or demonstration of the Holy Spirit.

Not of self and not for self, but by the Spirit, but also for the benefit of all. Now, verses 8 through 10 give us one of the listings of spiritual gifts in the scripture. Here, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4 and perhaps elsewhere, some would say.

Ephesians 4, another place. Some of the gifts are listed. Gift of the Word of Wisdom.

It's a manifestation of the Spirit. It's not just wisdom collected by human experience. This is a word of wisdom.

A wisdom from God to, in a word, enter into some perplexity, issue, opportunity or challenge and it be exactly right, because God is the one bringing forth the Word. Then the Word of Knowledge. A word from the Spirit of God to know something that you wouldn't naturally know.

To another faith by the same Spirit. Now, all of these gifts are to have, you might call them a non-spiritual gift application in each of our lives. For example, our spiritual gift might not be the Word of Wisdom, but we're all called to grow in wisdom.

We might not have the gift of the Word of Knowledge, but we're all to learn the knowledge of the Lord. We might not have the spiritual gift of faith, but we're all to exercise faith and to grow in faith and to live by faith. So, these spiritual gifts are a special enabling, a characteristic, particularized enabling.

One that sets each individual Christian off, making them unique in their calling and enabling apart from just the general fact that we're all to grow in wisdom and knowledge and faith. To another, the gifts of healings by the same Spirit. Gifts, a variety of kinds of spiritual enablements to bring wholeness of life, body, soul, and spirit to people.

To another, the working of miracles. Just the gift of miraculous things taking place through the life and walk and ministry of a child of God. To another, discerning of spirits.

Again, we're all to be discerning. Check the spirits. Measure them.

They're not all of God, but some are especially gifted at that, and it sets them out distinctive. It's a way they minister most effectively. To another, different kinds of tongues.

Different kinds of tongues. Tongues of men and of angels, as 1 Corinthians 13 would say. Now, we're all to learn to speak the things of the Lord, but here's a special enablement in different kinds of tongues.

And to another, the interpretation of tongues. When tongues are a heavenly language, a kind of tongue is a heavenly language. That person hasn't known or others, but they need to know what the message is, here's a gift to interpret that message.

Now, an interesting thing about these gifts, we are not given in the scriptures a detailed definition of what these gifts are about. And I am totally convinced that's not any way some kind of oversight by the Lord, you know, inspiring the Word of God to the prophets and then all of a sudden the apostles and then, ooh, we should have slipped in some definitions there. Not at all.

The Lord has said exactly what He wants to say. He hasn't given specific, elaborate, precise definitions. From the very words themselves, there's a sense of what they're about, but they're left very open and broad in many ways.

I believe there's a warning built in right here, telling us beware of stereotyping the gifts to our own particular preference or understanding or religious or theological tradition. Take, for example, the word of knowledge, the spiritual gift of the word of knowledge. If you ask many Christians in the American church who believe in all the spiritual gifts, which I believe is biblically sound, the Lord has not shown us in the word that you sort out some of the gifts from some other gifts.

They're all kind of mixed in together. The kind of ordinary ones that men are more comfortable with and then the kind of, to man, strange ones that man is often uncomfortable with. And, of course, theologically we can find ways to sort these out and this one's okay and this list is no good, you know.

But for those who believe all of the gifts are for all of the church age, which I believe is biblically sound and certain, many people, if you ask them about the gift of the word of knowledge, they would almost define it like this. Oh, that's when the leader of the meeting or the church, the pastor or the moderator, whoever is leading the gathering of the body, that's when they get that word that sister so-and-so is having that lump on her liver dealt with right now. Well, I fully believe that the gift of the word of knowledge can function that way, but in no way do I believe that's a definition of that gift.

Far too narrow. Far too narrow. How about something very different from that for an application of the gift of the word of knowledge? How about someone who's ministering the word of God or is in a one-on-one counseling or personal discipling situation? And in the sharing of the word or in the listening and praying for someone, the Lord gives by his spirit a word of knowledge that comes out in counsel or biblical exposition.

Wow. How about this gift in one-on-one discipling and counseling ministry? You're sharing with someone and they're struggling, they want help and they're doing everything but describing what they're really

struggling with. They're putting in every kind of possible good term skirting around the edge.

The Lord gives you a word of knowledge. Brother, sister, I know what you're struggling with. Boom.

What does that do to the heart? Laid bare before God. No more games, no more playing around. Here's the issue.

How about in teaching the word? Only God knows what's going on in the heart of everyone listening, but how about in the expounding of the word? In a children's class or a home bible study or the body gathered? And the Lord gives a word of knowledge that explains the text but touches in application the lives there. Wow. What a glorious use of that gift.

But how different in each situation? I believe that's how all the gifts are. That just fits biblically how they're spoken of and it fits how they're not spoken of. They're not given a tight narrow definition.

They're just mentioned. Then we learn to see how God wants to apply them and use them in the body of Christ. May the Lord guard us against stereotypical definitions of the word of knowledge or other gifts.

In other words, defining them just in the way we like to see them or we have seen them. Another interesting thought on this, have you ever thought of this? It hit me one day many years ago. I think it happened after I had a conversation with a brother.

It was just a conversation, I thought, and we don't think conversation is that big a deal. You know, you're just kind of talking together. Yet if you're walking in the Lord, abiding in the Lord, holding fast to the head, wanting him to use you, something big can be going on in that conversation.

I was talking with a brother and a day or two later he got in touch with me and began to give testimony of the awesome, mighty, heart-touching, life-changing work God was doing as he and I chatted together. Boy, was that a wake-up call to me. Even in our conversational relationship with each other, the Spirit of God can be doing a mighty work.

There's nothing preventing the Spirit of the Lord from using these gifts just in our conversational relationships and interaction. In fact, I will not be amazed when we get to heaven and see that the predominant measure of times that the Spirit of God used the gifts he gave us was just when we were interacting in sort of an informal, friend-to-friend, brother-to-brother, sister-to-sister conversational relationship. Nothing to prevent that.

In fact, I believe there's plenty in the Scriptures to commend that anticipation. Just talking with each other, if we're walking in the Spirit, and if we're asking God to use us and to use the gifts he's given, just chatting together can be used of God to change our lives. Oh, the gifts, they're so diverse, they're so flexible in their setting and their use, and they're given for the benefit of all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. All have spiritual gifting given to each one, and it's for the profit of all. It's not for individual benefiting by what God has given to us.

Then verse 11, but one and the same Spirit works all these things. All these gifts work in all these different ways. It's the Holy Spirit who is to be the one working all of these things, including distributing to each one individually as he wills.



Well, by our drink of the Spirit through faith in Jesus, that living water which is the life of Christ imparted to us, the life of the head of the body, we are joined together in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Remember now, spiritual gifts are the context of 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Here at this point, spiritual gifts are going to be likened to being made different, that is, differing members of the body of Christ. In that sense, you'd say there's a spiritual gift of being the foot. There's a spiritual gift of being the hand, a spiritual gift of being the ear, spiritual gift of being the eye, a spiritual gift of being the mouth, and on and on and on.

Spiritual gifts are here likened to being members in a body. In fact, some of these very terms are picked up in just a moment, we'll see as we read. Now, think about the implications of that.

Spiritual gifts, therefore, are the specialized, characteristic, Holy Spirit displaying of the life of Jesus in and through our lives, whereby the life of the head, the Lord Jesus, as we hold fast to Him, as we look to Him, believe in Him, that life flowing through the body comes out as a spiritual gift, as well as just general, all-round provision. Not only just general, all-round provision for everything we need for life and godliness, but also in that, a spiritual gift is included, or gifts. And likening that to the body, it says this, just like every member of my physical body, not only in general gets the life it needs to function in every way and exist comprehensively, there's something in that life that comes alive in that member that makes it a hand instead of a foot, an ear instead of a nose.

What a fantastic parallel for the body of Christ. Every one of us, every member in the body of Christ, we're to live by that flowing life of Christ in us like a physical body shares the same life. And every one of us finds in that life everything we need for life and godliness.

It's the life we're to grow up in, the life of Christ, growing up into Christ in all things, as we saw in Ephesians 4.15. So all of us find in that life all that's needed for growth and service and development, but also something unique to each of us. In that life, there's a spiritual gifting. That's exactly how it works in the body.

Every member of a physical body finds all it needs for growth and development in that common life, and yet each member develops differently. So it is in the body of Christ. This is the end of Site A. To listen to the rest of the message, please turn the tape over now.

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That's exactly how it works in the body. Every member of a physical body finds all it needs for growth and development in that common life, and yet each member develops differently. So it is in the body of Christ.

The Spirit of God sharing the life of Christ among the members of the body of Christ, but in each life, bringing out that life with a distinctive, particularized, specialized, characteristic display that causes us to say, that brother has the spiritual gift of being a hand. That sister has the spiritual gift of being eyes that just see things with discernment. It's the spiritual gifts brought into very practical and real application in our lives.

So we hold fast to the head. He lives in and through us not only a general Christian life as we grow in faith in Him and service and obedience, but He particularizes each of our lives. So there's this great sameness.

All have the Spirit, all have Christ living in them, all members of the body, all connected to the head, but each one is getting displayed by the Spirit in a different way, a particularized way. So all are praying, all are giving, all are sacrificing, all are learning to grow, all are serving, all worship, all do all kinds of things in common, and yet in each life there's something or some things that stand out as unique, characteristic. Those are the spiritual gifts.

It has to do with being one yet many, and many yet one, and all of that made real by the work of the Holy Spirit. Now in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, at verse 14 and following, there's an elaborating that the Lord God gives through the Apostle Paul on the many aspect of this, you know, one yet many, many yet one. The many aspect is elaborated, and then in a moment we'll read verse 20 and following where the Lord elaborates on the oneness aspect of it, just kind of building on the theme laid out in verses 12 and 13.

Well, what is it about this many aspect? Many yet one, what is it about the many? Verse 14 and following, for in fact the body is not one member but many, and now some implications of us being many. If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them in the body, just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? You see the picture here? What if we all came in here tonight with the spiritual gift of being, say, a nose? It would be a rather strange gathering, wouldn't it? It would be bizarre to the extreme.

You know, just row after row of noses, noses, noses, all the same. We're just here to smell, see if it's good or if it stinks, you know? Just that simple. Well we would be very effective in one arena as a church.

But that's not the way it works. How about if we came in here tonight and all of us just, you know, from let's say five foot five to six foot three or four, hands. You know, just, I assume, walking on our hands, you know? Finding our places, and everywhere you look, only hands.

Oh, all kinds of things we could do. Wow, could we function as hands. But where would the body be? The Lord has ordained this manifold nature of the body.

This is the many aspect, and it's a very important aspect. And what does it say? The point is that we each have a vital role in the body. Each of us.

See, verse 15. The foot cannot say, I'm not a hand, so I'm not of the body. No.

The foot must realize, the hand must realize, I am what I am because I have a vital role in what God has made me to be. The point of the many is not just diversity, but each of us has a vital role. The body needs the hand.

The body needs the eye. The body needs that capacity to smell. The body needs all of these roles.

That's the manifold, the many aspect. The body is many, why? Because every one of us has a vital role. God doesn't want us saying, hey, I'm just an ear.

I'm not an eye. I guess I'm not part of the body. Oh, no.

The ear is critical. Yes, thank God for the eye, but thank God for the ear. Each one of us has a vital role through spiritual gifting in the body of Christ.

Not just only generally in serving and helping and being available, but particularized in light of our gift, we have a vital role. That's the many aspect and its implication. Now, verse 20 flips it around.

Here's the implication of the oneness issue, verse 20. But now, indeed, there are many. Okay, it's acknowledging there are many.

That's an important aspect. Many members, yet one body. Now, the oneness is going to be stressed.

And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. Nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. See, there's a subtle change here.

In the earlier paragraph, it's the eye saying, hey, I'm just an eye. I guess I'm not of any value or need or use in the body. No, because there are many, everyone has a vital role.

But now it's flipped. In light of the oneness of the body, I can't say to you. I don't need you.

In the first paragraph, it's sort of, we must not say to ourselves, we're not a part of this. The body doesn't need me. I have no function to fulfill.

Oh, no, we do. But also because we're all one, we cannot say to each other, who needs one like you in the body of Christ? And sometimes we behave that way. We think our gifting, our enabling from God, that specialized way God packages his grace to characteristically, distinctively be used in and through my life means this person or that who doesn't function that way, hey, I don't need them.

Oh, quite the contrary. We're one. We're one.

My hand needs my foot. My foot needs my hand. I need you.

You need me. We need each other in the body of Christ. The many aspect, everyone has a vital role to contribute.

But while we're contributing our role, don't forget, we need, because we're one, everyone else. We need each other. Now, that's sort of a capsule overview in the scriptures of spiritual gift.

Near the end of this chapter, there's an interesting shift that builds a bridge into chapter 13. And it has to do with this issue, the priority of spiritual fruit. The priority of spiritual fruit.

Verse 31, 1 Corinthians 12, but earnestly desire the best gifts, and yet I showed you a more excellent way. As this section of the discussion that God is bringing on spiritual gifts, as it comes to a conclusion, the word is this, earnestly desire the best gifts. As the body, collectively, we are to desire in the body to give the greatest attention to the more strategic gifts.

For example, this chapter does give a listing of priorities. Verse 28, God has appointed these in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, and so on. There's actually a hierarchy of significance and importance.

Not that any gifts are unimportant, but some are more important than others. So it is in our body. Not that any member is unimportant, but let's face it, my head and my heart are much more important than my left hand.

So it is in the body of Christ with gifts. This is not saying that individual Christians are more important to God than others. He has the same love for all of us.

It's that the gifts that we have differ, not only in type and kind, but even in priority. For example, toward the end of the gift list is the spiritual gift of tongues. Now that's a wonderful gift in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And 1 Corinthians 14 especially expounds a lot on how to use it, not to use it, and gives a lot of implication of its private worship use as a high priority. But it's not ranked high in the list. It's not ranked up there next to a prophet or an apostle or a teacher of the Word of God as far as the gift goes.

That's why Paul said, when I gather with the church, I'd rather say five words that are understood about the things of God than 10,000 in a language that's not understood. Just talking about priority in gifts. And the church is to desire earnestly the best gifts.

Collectively desire to give the appropriate measures of attention to the major gifts for the benefit of all. But, this verse adds, and yet I show you a more excellent way. It is an excellent thing to desire collectively that the more important gifts get the more important attention and time and place.

That's an excellent thing, biblically speaking. But here's a more excellent way. And I show you a more excellent way.

There's something even more important than keeping the right priority in which gifts get more attention, time, and place in the body. And that's 1 Corinthians 13, verses 1-3, which speaks of the priority of spiritual fruit. Verses 1-3, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I've become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

What a stark contrast. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. But though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

What the natural mind would think, my goodness, tongues of men and angels, gift of prophecy, understanding all mysteries, all knowledge, mountain-moving faith, sacrificial ministry, even martyrdom if necessary. Wow! What a mighty servant of God. How absolutely, certainly pleasing to the Lord.

What a great impact that will have on everyone. What a place in the kingdom. That's not what these verses are saying.

They're saying something quite the contrary. They're saying even if we have those things, if we don't have love, it comes out to one of these two things, noise or nothing. Not very exciting, is it? It's kind of humbling.

Look at the importance of love. It's the priority of spiritual fruit. Remember Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit is love, and then manifested in many ways, joy, peace and gentleness, meekness, goodness and all of that.

Notice this truth here. Spiritual gifts, spiritual ministry seeming strikingly available in these verses, but without the fruit of love, noise or nothing. Doesn't come to much, does it? Because fruit, spiritual fruit, no doubt seems to the natural man as weak and insignificant.

But with God, it has a priority. There's something exciting about the spiritual gifts, you know? Power, dynamic, boom, explosion, watch, look. Fruit, I mean, how big a deal is it to watch a peach grow, you know? And yet in the kingdom of God, the fruit is even more critical than the gift.

Oh, this in no way diminishes the importance of the gifts. It only exalts the importance of the fruit. The gifts are glorious.

The gifts are vital. But without the fruit, the gifts are an ineffective noise or a self-centered, self-exalting nothing. Let's not underestimate the things of God, even the weak looking things.

The weak things of God, in our estimation, are greater than the mighty things of man. And even in the kingdom, it isn't just the explosive gift that's the dynamis of the spirit at work in a particularized way, the grace of God on display in and through us. Oh, those are important.

Those are glorious. But we don't want to get dazzled by them. We don't want to get focused in on and make our whole life them.

Our life as Christ and fruit even exceeds gift in importance. Gifts are ineffective without fruit. Gifts, spiritual gifts, we could call them Christ-like enablings.

That is an ability to do things as Christ would do them. But spiritual fruit, it's Christ-like character. We're talking about the right attitude while we're doing the things we're to be doing.

Doing right, even wanting the power of the gifts operating and doing it in the wrong character or attitude, noise and nothing. Oh, the importance of spiritual fruit. So easy to overlook it, it has a priority in the kingdom.

Oh, by the grace of God, may we function in the gift or gifts that God has imparted to us. Holding fast to the head, drawing life from Him, letting the spirit particularize, characteristically let that life come forth in line with our gift. But if we're not growing in Christ-likeness all along the way, if we're not wanting to walk in humility and love and meekness and in the joy of the Lord and in gentleness and kindness, we'll undermine all the gifts that God has given to us.

The priority of spiritual fruit. The great, great thing about the Lord Jesus Christ was not just that He could walk on water, could raise the dead, give sight to the blind. Praise God for those glorious abilities of the divine work of God in the servant Jesus of Nazareth who laid aside His independent exercise of His deity and became a humble servant, depending on the Father, doing the Father's will, even unto death.

Oh, praise God for those mighty displays. As John 14.10 puts it, the Father working in and through the Son. Jesus said, the Father who abides in Me does the works.

That's why when you look at Me you see the Father. Praise God for those mighty displays. But what was greater than that? He was meek and lowly.

He was love. He was trusting. He was caring.

He was compassionate. He was sacrificial for the glory of God and the benefit of others. His character.

The only thing that exceeded the glory of the things Jesus did was the glory of who He was. Even in Christ, the fruit exceeded the gift. And Jesus never exercised spiritual enablement without the right accompanying spiritual character.

He was holy. He was love. He's still that today and He's the life we're drawing on.

The character we need to enhance, to not inhibit, to not undermine and block the gifts God has given, we find in the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the body. In conclusion, let's read two last verses in 1 Peter 4 to sort of reflect on what we've looked at already. It's a great little cryptic overview of spiritual gifts.

1 Peter 4, verses 10 and 11. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.

If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Verse 10.

As each one has received a gift, same word here, spiritual gifts, the charismata. Each one of us has received at least a gift, priceless treasure of the grace of God to be used for the glory of God. Well, since we have, and as we have, minister it to one another.

Serve it up one to another. Ministry by gift. It's there for one another, not for self-enhancement.

My gift to bless you, your gift to bless me, and one to another we minister these gifts. And do it, notice verse 10, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. We are stewards of the Lord.

That is, we have entrusted in our lives that which is His and He owns and He imparts to us to be used for His glory. We're accountable to the Lord for these things, answerable to Him. What do we ultimately answer to the Lord about? Being stewards of the manifold grace of God.

I love to study, pray, teach, and learn to walk in the grace of God because it's so manifold. It's so many-faceted. It has so many aspects to it and so many implications that flow out of it.

And God has poured that out in our lives in many ways, not only forgiveness, not only gifts, but other ways. And we're stewards of that. That's what we're using from God for the glory of God, for the benefit of His people, and in reaching the lost.

Stewards of the many-faceted aspects of the grace of God. Now if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies.

Here in verse 11, the spiritual gifts are categorized two-fold. Sort of speaking gifts and action gifts. Talking gifts and doing gifts.

If we have a speaking gift, let him speak as the oracles of God. If God has given us a spiritual gift that involves speaking, let it be God speaking. Not man becoming a great orator.

But God, by His Spirit, according to His Word, saying through us what He wants to say. And then if we have a sort of a doing, an action gift, if anyone ministers, a word that relates more to action or serving in

that sense, contrasted here with speaking, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies. If it's an action gift that takes that supply of energy, let that energy come from the Lord.

Do it with the ability that God supplies. So speaking, let God speak through us. Acting, let God be enabling.

Why? That in all things, God may be glorified. If the words are from the Lord, He'll be glorified. If the strength in serving is from the Lord, He'll be glorified, not us.

And He'll be glorified through Jesus Christ. See, it's through Jesus, the head, we receive this life and these gifts. So, to Him to whom belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

A question of reflection, how do we know what our gift or gifts are? Or how do we discover them? Interesting, the scriptures never state that that is a command or a necessity. It's not essential to know our spiritual gift to serve God. We're not even commanded to go on a quest for it.

Nothing wrong with wondering what it is and asking God to show us. But what's not set out is critical in the scriptures. Rather, if we just concentrate on things like, One, holding fast to the head, growing in life in Christ.

Two, serving wherever there's an opportunity. You know what will happen? A third arena will keep developing. In some areas, we'll prove again and again, more effective than in other areas.

Ooh, maybe you're a hand. Maybe you're an ear. In some areas of service, a desire to be in that more and more and more will develop.

Ooh, clue. Delight yourself in the Lord, you know, hold fast to the head. And He'll give you the desires of your heart.

And as we're serving one another, often others will say to us, I didn't know you had the gift of such and such and so and so. I remember early on when people started saying that to me. I didn't know you had the gift of teaching.

I didn't know that you had the gift of pastor-teacher. It's kind of like, well, I didn't either. I didn't have a clue almost up until the day I was a pastor that God had gifted me to be a pastor-teacher.

I'm not saying I did everything right, but part of what I was doing right was I wanted to love, seek, and follow the Lord. And I wanted to serve wherever I could. And some things were more effective than others.

Some were more joy than others. And in some, people said, hey, I see something in you. I believe that's biblically sound, how we live together and really find our gift more in service than in some discovery quest.

It is all about relating to the head and then pouring that life out to each other. Oh, there are gifts and fruit for ministry. Spiritual enabling, but also spiritual character.

And in it all, we can build each other up and reach the lost, and God will be glorified. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you so much that you are the captain of our salvation, the head of the church, the head of the body of Christ.

Thank you for the ways you've ordained to work on us and in us and among us and then right out through us. Thank you for spiritual gifts, Lord. We count them from you as another treasure of your grace.

But, Lord, help us not to lose sight of the priority of spiritual fruit, to want to grow in Christ-like character, even more important than Christ-like abilities. Lord Jesus, you're the head. We want to hold fast to you in all these things, and in it see the body built up and the world reached more and more with the great salvation of Jesus Christ.

In his mighty name we pray, amen.

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