How Can I Use This Gift? 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4 – 11

The topic of spiritual gifts has been debated for many years going all the way back to Corinth, where tension can result from the overemphasis on certain gifts. We see Paul addressing this as he writes to the church of Corinth, which was beset with many problems and difficulties. The church was filled with division, arguments, lawsuits and immorality. They also had confusion about marriage, worship, and spiritual gifts among others. In particular, some people thought that they were more important than other people because they had some pretty remarkable gifts. Paul gives us six directives so that we, like the Corinthians, can better understand the purpose of spiritual gifts.

1. Informed – In verse 1 Paul wanted to make sure that they had a proper understanding
   1. Definition – “Spiritual gifts are divine abilities distributed by the Holy Spirit to every believer according to God’s design and grace for the common good of the body of Christ.” (Bruce Bugbee)
   2. Spiritual Gift vs. Natural Ability – Spiritual gift given by the Holy Spirit at conversion, whereas natural talent is something we’re born with. Oftentimes Spiritual gifts are in line with natural abilities.
   3. Lists – Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4.
   4. Categories – 1 Peter 4:11 begins to look at this (speaking/serving). Chuck Swindoll gives three gift groupings
      1. Speaking gifts – Word of wisdom, prophecy, evangelism, pastor-teacher, and teaching
      2. Service gifts – Administration, exhortation, faith giving, helps, serving, and mercy
      3. Sign gifts – Distinguishing of spirits, miracles, healings, tongues, and interpretation
2. Influenced – Be influenced by the working of the Holy Spirit
   1. Focus must be on the giver, not the gifts themselves
   2. The Holy Spirit empowers and energizes us for ministry
   3. Galatians 5:25 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” – not an occasional influence of the Spirit, but an abiding state, wherein we are continually alive
3. Incorporate diversity – Verses 4 – 6 challenges us to incorporate diversity in our understanding of spiritual gifts
   1. We all have different gifts, different ways to serve, different workings – all complement each other in the body of Christ
   2. Since God is at work in us and through us, we can accomplish His purposes
   3. Corinthians elevated the more spectacular gifts, giving more attention to them, but Paul challenges them, and us, to incorporate diversity in our understanding.
4. Identify – Verse 7 – “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”
   1. Manifest – to make plain. Spiritual gifts are given to make plain the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives
   2. Every born again believer has been given the manifestation of the Spirit – each one of you has been given at least one spiritual gift
   3. We’ve been given this to contribute to God’s community of believers
   4. Gifts can change.
   5. www.spiritualgiftstest.com
5. Implement
   1. Gifts are meant to be used – we must blend faith with action
   2. As David Henderson wrote – “Say one of you owned a set of tools. Would you spend all of your time counting them, naming them, organizing them, polishing them, and putting them on display? Would you not simply use them? So it is with the gifts of the Spirit: they are tools not admire, but to use.”
   3. Call to worship 1 Peter 4:10 “Each one of you should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.
   4. You and your gift are needed here in this ministry. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something!
6. Intensify – Intensify your love
   1. A lesson that we can take form the church at Corinth is that having spiritual gifts does not necessarily make you spiritual.
   2. We as a community of believers can have all of the gifts listed, but still miss the point if we don’t bind all of these in love.
   3. Paul further develops this in 1 Corinthians 13, which is next week’s sermon.

In conclusion, I could talk all day about spiritual gifts, but that is not the best part of it. It is one thing for someone to tell you what you have, but it is far richer to discover this gift that God has given you through the Spirit and to use it for His kingdom. Remember, God is in the business of changing lives! Your biggest question is not “What is my gift?” but will you use the gift that God has given you? Likewise, the question is not your ability, but your willingness to put your gift into action. I invite you to find out what God has gifted you with and be reminded that we are responsible to use what we have been graciously given.