

Understanding Spiritual Gifts

I Corinthians 12-14

In I Corinthians 12.1, Paul begins to answer questions about the Spirit

- We don't know the exact questions, but from Paul's answers, we get an idea of the nature of those questions
- Just who gets gifts from the Spirit?
- Which gift(s) are the best gifts?

- Does having the best gift mean that you are the “best” Christian?

12.1-7 set forth some of Paul's basic positions

- Paul uses 2 words:
- “Spiritual” (12.1)
 - It's an adjective—that's why the word “gifts” is supplied.
 - It means “pertaining to the Spirit,” or “Belonging to the Spirit”

- Paul uses it to describe gifts (in 12.1, the adjective is neuter)
- But in 14.37, Paul uses it to describe people (the adjective is masculine)
- “Gifts” (12.4, “charisma”)
 - This word refers to something given by grace
 - Romans 1.11

- Romans 5.15-16
- Romans 6.23
- Romans 11.29
- Romans 12.6
- I Corinthians 1.7
- I Corinthians 7.7: marriage and celibacy are gifts
- I Timothy 4.14

Basic Position # 1

- All believers have the Spirit: knowing Christ is not possible apart from Him. I Cor. 12.1-3
- I Corinthians 2.14: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Basic Position # 2: The Triune God gives a variety of gifts

- 12.4-6: the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God.
- Gives diversities of gifts, 12.4
- Gives diversities of service (“administrations” is “deacon”), 12.5
- Gives diversities of accomplishment (“operations” means “things done”), 12.6

Basic Position # 3

- Spiritual gifts are not merit badges
- They are the “display” of God’s Spirit: 1Peter 4:10 “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
- They are given for the good of all, 12.7