

GIFTS

Christmas. The word itself can make the hairs on our arms stand up. Christmas is one of the most exciting and enjoyable times of the year. Throughout the community, individuals dress up their houses with hundreds of lights and figurines. Each home puts up their tree and adorns it with ornaments. School is out and the hope for snow begins. Christmas carols begin to play with their joyous lyrics and melodies. Families join together to share a holiday meal with ham and all the trimmings. The "Christmas Story" is read and once again we picture the King of Kings being born in a manger. Even with all of these wonderful things that are associated with Christmas, most people cannot wait for December 25th because of one word: gifts! Gifts are a huge part of Christmas. The whole holiday is centered on giving to those that we love and care about. For the most part though, these gifts are simply materialistic and soon will be forgotten about, replaced, or broken.

When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior, God gives each of us one or more spiritual gifts. These are given so that we can assist and allow the body of Christ to prosper and grow. Many people who have accepted Christ do not even realize that they have been given a gift from God. These people do not use their gift and the entire body of Christ does not reach full maturity because of it. Paul tells the Corinthians about the gifts that God had given them and the way they are to be used. He compared the body of Christ to our earthly body and explained how each part is vitally important to the survival of the whole. In this same sense, each believer is vitally important to the body of Christ. Paul wanted us each to realize that we have been blessed with one or numerous gifts, that all the gifts are important, and that all gifts are needed.

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

God Knew Which Gift to Give Us (1-11, 27-31)

God is all-knowing. It is of no surprise then that God knew which gift to give each and every believer. Once we accept Jesus as our Savior, God equips us with one or numerous gifts. There are many different spiritual gifts that are listed throughout the Bible. Some of these include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, tongues, teacher, pastor/shepherd, administration, and edification. Many others are listed throughout the Word. At least one spiritual gift is given to every believer at the time of their conversion. God uses His supreme knowledge to give the believer the gift that He sees fit. He is not going to give a believer a gift that they will never use. He knows which gift that we were made for and even aligns our personality, characteristics, and interests around that gift. That means that when we realize what our gift is, we should use it often. God gave us the gift in order to further His kingdom and it is a failure on our part if we never discover what our gift is or if we simply fail to use it.

Gifts Are Worthless if Not Used (12-20)

When God equips us with our spiritual gift, He wants us to use that gift in order to expand His kingdom. If we do not use our spiritual gift, then we are hindering the entire body of Christ. Paul begins in this chapter to compare believers with their gifts to the many parts of the human body. Just as each part of the human body is important, so each believer is important to the health of the body of Christ. Imagine for a moment that our big toe decides that it is not important to the body and refuses to help the body. We would no longer be able to walk properly or keep our balance when we are standing. The big toe may not seem to be very important, but in all actuality it helps keep the balance of our entire body. Or what if the liver thought that since it wasn't on the outside and wasn't pretty that it would quit working? Or maybe it didn't know what its role was at all. Once the liver chose to quit working, the body would begin to shut down. The same is true for the body of Christ. Each and every member is vitally important. If one believer does not think that their spiritual gift is not as important as others or does not even know what their spiritual gift is, then the entire body is not as effective as it could be. Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that each person is important and each gift is important. All of us together, using our gifts, will help advance the cause of Christ and make the body of Christ effective in this lost and dying world.

All Gifts Are Equally Important (21-31)

Paul knew that even in the church, pride would exist. He knew that people would even become prideful over the spiritual gifts that God had given them. Some felt as if they were more important as they possessed the gifts that placed them in important roles in the church and in the limelight. Others felt as if their gifts weren't needed because they did not get any recognition. Once again, Paul compares this to the human body. Each and every member of the human body is important for the survival of the entire body. While some parts of the body, such as the eyes, ears, nose, and hands, get more attention and adoration, all parts are necessary to survive. Not many people brag about how nice their feet are, how pretty their heart is, or how grateful they are to have ears. Without these parts though, we would not be able to walk, live, or hear. While some parts are more noticeable, we can actually live without our eyes, nose, or hands. Some parts, though, that do not get the glory, such as the heart or lungs, we could not live without. The same is true for the body of Christ. Some spiritual gifts such as pastor/shepherd or teaching are out front for everyone to see. Other gifts such as service, exhortation, or giving may not ever be noticed here on earth. However, all the gifts are equally important for the body to remain healthy and fully operative. Whatever our gift is, we should be proud of it and use it to the honor of God and to edify the church.

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