

Spiritual Gifts



SABBATH—AUGUST 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 12:1–6, 12–31; 1 Corinthians 13:1–7; 1 Peter 4:8–11; Ephesians 4:11–13.

MEMORY VERSE: “Love is the thing you should want more than anything else. But you should also want other things the Spirit gives. You should want very much to be able to speak words from God” (1 Corinthians 14:1, WE).



Every member does different things to help the church work.

WHEN WE COMPARE the church to the human body, we can learn many things. The body has many different parts. In the same way, the church has many different members. Every member does different things to help the church work. Every member has different spiritual gifts, too. These gifts help the church work together in peace and love. The peace and love in the church show the peace and love that are in God's heart.

This week, we will look at 1 Corinthians 12–14 and its teaching about spiritual gifts. These chapters are part of a bigger set of chapters about correct Christian behavior in the church (1 Corinthians 11–14). Paul talks about the problem with meetings that are out of control. His answer to this problem is spiritual gifts. The gifts help the church “become strong” (Ephesians 4:12, EASY). In short, God gave the church different gifts to help unite it.

For sure, Paul is thinking about the problem in the church of separation into different groups (1 Corinthians 1–4). The answer to this problem is to become one in Jesus. Now Paul adds to this idea with his teachings about the gifts. Our becoming one in Jesus and with the Spirit is the only way to help us avoid separation in the church.

DIFFERENT GIFTS FOR DIFFERENT MEMBERS (1 Corinthians 12:1–6)

Paul starts a new topic in 1 Corinthians 12:1. The word “now” (ERV) shows that Paul is going to talk about something new in this verse. That new topic is spiritual gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 12:2, 3, Paul says that the Spirit’s first gift is faith in Jesus as Lord. In New Testament times, when people said that Jesus was Lord, that was the same thing as saying that the King of Rome was **not** Lord (Acts 17:7; also read John 19:12, 15). So, the person who said that Jesus was Lord could be punished with death. That’s because the King of Rome was worshiped as a god. Anyone who said that the King of Rome wasn’t a god was guilty of a crime against the Roman government.

Both Jesus and Paul taught that faith in God is a gift from the Holy Spirit. For sure, faith is the most basic gift. So, we shouldn’t be surprised that faith is first on the list in 1 Corinthians 13:13. Paul says faith is a spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 12:9. But faith isn’t the only gift. There are many other gifts, too. The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different people. “He [the Holy Spirit] decides which gifts he will give to each person” (1 Corinthians 12:11, EASY).

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–6. What is Paul talking about in these verses?

Paul says, “The Holy Spirit helps us with different kinds [types] of gifts. But it is the same Spirit who gives them. We serve the Lord in different ways, but all of us serve the same Lord. We do different kinds [types] of work. But it is the same God who helps us all to work in different ways” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6, EASY). Do you see from these verses that God gave spiritual gifts to the church to help us work together? When we work together, we show God’s love and peace (also read Ephesians 4:8–11). Yes, the Spirit gives gifts to Christians. But God gives us the strength to serve Jesus in the church (1 Corinthians 12:5, 6). The Holy Spirit gives each Christian gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11). But we must use the gifts to help the church as a whole.

The church must work together in peace and love. Why is this work so important to the church?



Both Jesus and Paul taught that faith in God is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

ONE CHURCH, DIFFERENT GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:12–31)

As we saw already in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, Paul talks about how God makes us one in Jesus. At the same time, Paul also talks about how each church member is different. So, the Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different members. Paul wants us to understand that we are one church with different gifts. God gives different gifts to members in the church to help it to become one with Jesus.

The different spiritual gifts show us the love and peace in God's heart. The Father is one Person. The Son is another Person. The Holy Spirit is another Person. All Three are God. The Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit all have separate personalities. But they work together to grow the church and give it strength to do its work (1 Corinthians 12:4–6; Ephesians 4:11–13).



The eyes must depend on the hands to feel objects or pick things up.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. What does Paul compare the church to in these verses? Why is this symbol so powerful? How does the body with its different parts help us understand the church with its many members?

One important idea in 1 Corinthians 12 is that the body's parts are different from each other (1 Corinthians 12:15–20). But each part depends on the rest of the parts (1 Corinthians 12:21–26). The feet depend on the eyes to help them see where they must walk. The eyes can't touch anything. But the hands can. So, the eyes must depend on the hands to feel objects or pick things up. Some parts of the body may seem to be weak (1 Corinthians 12:22) or not as useful or important as other parts (1 Corinthians 12:23). But this idea is meant to teach us how much we must depend on each other and work together. All members are necessary to the church (1 Corinthians 12:22).

Sad to say, some church members thought that certain gifts were better than other gifts. Paul didn't want the Corinthians to make this mistake. So, he asked them to remember to do everything with love. When we do things with love in our hearts, that is "the best way of all" (1 Corinthians 12:31, NIV). Whatever our gift is, we must use it wisely and with love. Then we will make God happy.

Look at the lists of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28; Romans 12:6–8; and Ephesians 4:11. What is your spiritual gift? How can you use it to help the church?

THE BEST WAY

(1 Corinthians 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 4:8–11)

“Love is not the same as every other gift from God. Love is a very special gift. Love helps us to use all the other gifts in the right way.”—Carl P. Cosaert, “1 Corinthians,” *Andrews Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), page 1643, adapted.

How is love connected with the spiritual gifts? Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 4:8–11 for the answer.

We must have love to use the spiritual gifts correctly (read 1 Corinthians 13). Paul says that God’s love must control us. Or the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 are useless. The Holy Spirit gives some people the gift of saying wise words. The Spirit gives other people the gift of knowing what is true (1 Corinthians 12:8). To some people, the Spirit gives the gift of faith. This faith is so strong that it can move mountains (1 Corinthians 13:2). But these gifts have no worth if we don’t have love. What if a person can speak many different languages but doesn’t have love in his heart? Then the gift of languages is just noise (1 Corinthians 13:1). In the same way, the important gift of getting messages from God is nothing if we don’t have love (1 Corinthians 13:2).

In 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, Paul talks about what love is and what it is not. Also, he talks about what love does and what it does not do. Love is more than a feeling. Love is an action. Paul says that love is patient. Love is kind. Love is happy when good things happen. Love always hopes for what is best. When our hearts are filled with love, we won’t brag. We won’t be jealous. Our hearts will be empty of all pride. We won’t be mean and nasty. We won’t try to get our own way. We won’t get upset easily. We won’t hate people or be happy when bad things happen to them.

1 Corinthians 13 shows us the way we should behave when we use the gifts God gives us. Love is the answer to the wise use of our spiritual gifts. Paul includes faith and hope in the same list with love. But the most important of these three gifts is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Why is love so important to our faith? How does our showing God’s love to other people help us better understand His love for us?



**This faith is so strong
it can move mountains
(1 Corinthians 13:2).**

THE GIFT OF TALKING IN OTHER LANGUAGES (1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 26, 27, and 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30)

In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, Paul talks about the gift of talking in other languages. People with this spiritual gift can talk in languages they never studied before.

Paul talks about this gift in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. (Also read 1 Corinthians 12:28, 30 and 1 Corinthians 13:1, 8.) Paul talks about this gift many times in 1 Corinthians 14. The Greek word for ‘language’ is ‘glossa.’ Paul uses this word more than 20 times in 1 Corinthians 12–14 and 15 times in 1 Corinthians 14. Also, he uses the Greek word ‘heteroglossos,’ which means “strange languages” (1 Corinthians 14:21, EASY). So, this topic matters to Paul. The church in Corinth used this gift in the wrong way. Many people started talking in different languages all at the same time during public worship! This problem caused trouble in the church (1 Corinthians 14:23, 27, 33, 40).

What lessons did Paul teach about the gift of talking in other languages? Read 1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 26, 27 and 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30 for the answer.



If no one can understand, then the gift of speaking in other languages isn't helpful to the church (1 Corinthians 14:6).

When someone is talking in a different language, people in the church need to understand what the person is saying (1 Corinthians 14:9). If no one can understand, then the gift of speaking in other languages isn't helpful to the church (1 Corinthians 14:6). So, Paul says that someone else needs to explain what is being said. Paul isn't against the gift of talking in other languages. He is worried that the church thinks the gift is the most important gift. Then they may not care about having the gift of communicating special messages from God.

For sure, Paul wanted everyone in the church at Corinth to talk in other languages (1 Corinthians 14:5). But he didn't expect that to happen (1 Corinthians 12:10). Today, some Christians teach that everyone must talk in a second or third language before they can get baptized. But these people don't understand Paul's teaching.

Are there people in your church who learned a second language? How can they use this skill to share Jesus with other people? Also, how can this skill help us better understand the spiritual gift of talking in other languages?

THE GIFT OF SPECIAL MESSAGES (Ephesians 4:11–13)

The gift of special messages from God is an important gift. Paul often talks about this gift before he talks about the gift of talking in other languages (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 1 Corinthians 13:8). Paul wants us to understand that the gift of special messages is very important.

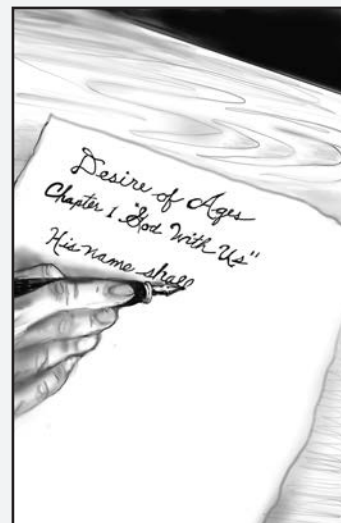
Why did God give the church spiritual gifts? Why did God give us the gift of special messages? Read Ephesians 4:11–13 and 1 Corinthians 14:3, 4 for the answers.

The gift of special messages teaches the church how to live. This gift also gives the church hope and encouragement (1 Corinthians 14:3; compare with Acts 15:32). Special messages from God can be information about the future. Or they can be news from God to His people. In Acts 2:29–31 (compare with Amos 3:7), David is God's special messenger. God shows David what will happen in the future. In Acts 15:32, Judas and Silas are named God's special messengers. But their messages aren't about what will happen in the future. Their messages encourage God's people and make their faith strong.

In Ephesians 4:11–13, we learn that the spiritual gifts didn't stop in New Testament times. The spiritual gifts should be in the church until Jesus comes back (Acts 2:39). How do we know if someone really is God's special messenger? This person must pass the Bible test. This test has four rules: (1) The messenger's words must come true (Deuteronomy 18:22; Jeremiah 28:8, 9). (2) The special message must fit with other special messages in the Bible (Deuteronomy 13:1–3; Isaiah 8:20). (3) The messenger's life shows that Jesus lives in his heart (1 John 4:1–3). (4) Jesus warned us that false messengers do evil and say evil (Matthew 7:15–20). In the same way, you can tell true messengers from the things they say and do.

The book of Revelation shows us that the gift of special messages is an important part of God's end-time church (Revelation 12:17; Revelation 19:10). As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that God chose Ellen G. White to be His special messenger. We see the gift in her writings.

Why do we, as a church, believe that Ellen G. White was God's special messenger?



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Roswell F. Cottrell, “Spiritual Gifts,” pages 5–16, in Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1.

“Go to work for the Lord. Trust in Him. He will go with you. He will help you touch hearts and change lives. Some workers will be wonderful speakers. Other workers will be excellent writers. God gives some workers the gift of prayer. To other workers, God gives the gift of singing. God gives some workers the special skill to explain the Bible so that people can understand it. Each gift is a powerful blessing from God. The Lord works together with the worker. God gives wise words to one worker. To another worker, God gives faith. But all these workers serve the same Master. He is in control of all the work. The different gifts help us to do the different types of work God gives us. ‘But all these ways are from the same God. God works in us all in everything we do’ (1 Corinthians 12:6 [ICB]).”—Ellen G. White, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 12, 1906, adapted.



“God gives some workers the gift of prayer.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think more about the spiritual gift of special messages from God. Why is this gift more important than the gift of talking in other languages if nobody can understand what is said? If you need to, read 1 Corinthians 14 again to review Paul’s teaching.
- ② In class, talk about the life and work of Ellen G. White. Why do we, as a church, believe that she was a special messenger from God? How does God bless the church with this gift? What is the best way for the church to use this gift?
- ③ Think of three to five people who really love you. How do you know their love for you is real? What does your answer tell you about why Paul talked so much about love in his teaching about spiritual gifts?
- ④ For sure, a loving heart is very important. But is that the only thing a special messenger should have? What else do they need to have to be a real special messenger from God?

THE DAVIS INDIANS—PART 2

The last words in Davis's travel diary were: "God blessed this trip. After I finished starting a church center, I got sick." The church center was started on June 25, 1911. This center was the first Seventh-day Adventist church center in the area. Before Davis died, he promised that someone would come and teach the people. Davis died July 31, 1911, from blackwater fever. Chief Jeremiah buried Davis at Mount Roraima. Davis's wife, Carrie, went home to the United States.

After Davis died, the Indians came to his grave every Sabbath and sang. Many times, they asked the Seventh-day Adventists in Mount Roraima to send them another teacher. 14 years passed before new Bible workers showed up in the village.

In 1918, an explorer found a group of Indians who were singing a song about Jesus in the English language. The explorer wondered how they knew English. He soon learned. The Indians showed the explorer the religious books and things that belonged to Brother Davis. Then the Indians worshiped Jesus together.

After 10 years, Chief Jeremiah was done waiting for a teacher. In 1922, he hiked for four weeks to the Seventh-day Adventist center in Georgetown to ask for a teacher. W. E. Baxter and C. B. Sutton visited Mount Roraima the following year. They traveled for a long time to find the Davis Indians. They arrived at Davis's grave on October 25, 1925. Chief Jeremiah and his son brought them a stack of papers. In the stack was a letter from Davis. The date on the letter was July 17, 1911. The letter said that 130 persons at Roraima gave their lives to Jesus. The 130 persons decided to follow Him and be loyal to the Bible truth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sad to say, both Baxter and Sutton got a terrible fever on that trip.

In August 1927, a special offering helped Arthur and Elizabeth Cotts to continue the work at Mount Roraima.

Davis's death filled so many Seventh-day Adventists with surprise. His death helped them to remember that they must continue to follow Jesus' command to share the Good News with people everywhere, even in faraway places.

Today, a hospital with 54 beds in Georgetown, Guyana, is named in honor of Davis. In 1956, the Davis Indian Training School became part of the Mount Roraima center. In the early 1980s, more than 1,500 Davis Indians said they were Seventh-day Adventists.

This story came from Michael Campbell's story in the online Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists. We invite you to visit encyclopedia.adventist.org to enjoy more stories about Seventh-day Adventist Bible workers and pioneers.

INSIDE
Story
by MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL



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