

**The Real Thing**  
1 Cor. 12:1-11  
**Small Group Guide**

**Opening Icebreaker Question:**

- Who do you know that lives out “authentic Christian spirituality?” What is it about them that makes them that way?

**BACKGROUND:** This past Sunday was the second sermon in the series called, “Organic,” where we’re looking at chapters 11-14 in Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. You may remember from last week that Paul had started this church just a few years earlier, and now he has heard about some of the problems happening there, and he’s writing to clarify and correct some very important aspects of what it means to be the people of Jesus. We saw from chapter 11 that because Jesus gave up his body to form us into a body of people, the well-being of the church family is more important than our exercise of personal freedoms or preferences. This week, at the outset of chapter 12, Paul’s beef with the Corinthian Christians is coming to a head. Pastor Josh says that 12:1 is better translated, “Now about being truly spiritual, I don’t want you to be uninformed.” Then Paul proceeds to inform them on how to be truly spiritual, especially with the proper motive for and practice of spiritual gifts.

**TAKE TURNS READING** 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

- a. Josh discussed two types of churches: Word and Power. Word churches (and people) emphasize the Scriptures—the Word of God is our life. Anything that speaks of emotionalism or excitement is suspect. Power churches (and people) on the other hand emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit, and expressive emotion is common, and sometimes, the teaching of the word is minimized. However, author Doug Banister<sup>1</sup> states that both are needed. **Where do you fall on the continuum below? Explain.**

Word   5     4     3     2     1     0     1     2     3     4     5   Power

- b. Reread vs. 2-3. What does it mean when we say Jesus is Lord of your life? Why would that have been such a big deal for the Corinthians? Does it carry the same weight for us?
- c. How do you know when a spiritual expression or use of a spiritual gift honors Jesus as Lord?
- d. How do we monitor a tendency within ourselves to express ourselves spiritually in a way that either a) draw attention to our own giftedness or b) is by our own human effort instead of by the Spirit?<sup>2</sup> [You may want to review Addendum 2 together to answer this.]
- e. Josh mentioned the way that one commentator (Fee) captured the theme of vv2-3:

The presence of the Spirit in power and gifts makes it easy for God’s people to think of the power and gifts as the real evidence of the Spirit’s presence. Not so for Paul. The ultimate criterion of the Spirit’s activity is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself.

**Where are you specifically tempted to take some of the attention and glory from God and onto yourself when exercising your gifts or spirituality?**

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<sup>1</sup> Word and Power Churches: What Happens When a Church Seeks All God Has to Offer?

<sup>2</sup> See Gal 3:1-3.

2. There's another answer that Paul gives about true spirituality, and it acts as a complement to this first one. He sets it up in vv. 4-7:  
  - 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 7 Now to each one the *manifestation* of the Spirit is given for the common good.
  - a. What do you learn about God's involvement in spiritual gifts from this passage? How would this principle have spoken to the imbalance at Corinth, where one spiritual expression was being over-valued?
  - b. What is your reaction knowing that the spiritual gifts given you are "a **manifestation of the Holy Spirit**?"
  - c. For what purpose does God give us these spiritual gifts (v. 7)?
3. In vv. 8-10, Paul gives 9 examples of "manifestations of the Spirit." This is not an exhaustive list (see also Ephesians 4:11-13 and Romans 12:6-8). We've provided a brief explanation of these gifts in Addendum 1 (leaders can decide whether to take the time to read these). If you're comfortable sharing, which of these gifts have you experienced in a way that lifts up the name of Jesus and builds up people? About which do you have questions or concerns?
4. In v11, we learn "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."  
  - a. What are all the implications of the fact that the Holy Spirit determines our gifts and distributes them to us?
  - b. What is the fallout to the Body when we either a) take pride in our gifts or b) persist in trying to operate in a gift or role that we don't have or was not determined for us?
5. Getting back to the "Word and Power Church" theme:  
  - a. What fears do you have in being a more Spirit-empowered church?
  - b. What proper boundaries should we have to make sure the use of any spiritual gift is not abused?
  - c. How can we be more open to all that the Holy Spirit wants to do in us and in our church?
6. **Share and Pray:** Among our prayer requests, let's pray for spiritual gifts, activity, and expressions that honor God and are done by the Spirit.

## Addendum 1 – Pastor Josh’s Explanation of Some of What Some Term “The Miraculous Gifts”

1. See v. 8: 8a: A message of **wisdom** and 8b: A message of **knowledge**. We all need to cultivate godly wisdom. But to some people, the Holy Spirit gives a unique degree of wisdom, or the ability to make good choices in light of the realities of life. But it’s not the wisdom of the world. In fact, the ultimate expression of this kind of wisdom, as Paul says in ch. 2, was a crucified savior, who by dying would ultimately overthrow death. A message of **knowledge** is similar, but it probably has a more revelatory aspect to it; in other words, the Spirit of God sometimes gives people knowledge that they would not otherwise have, facts that they could not have known, apart from him revealing them. This kind of message of knowledge often comes in prayer, and can be used to bring great encouragement to people, and even to bring emotional or physical healing.
2. The next three items in the list should probably be grouped together as well, because they’re closely related: the gift of **faith**, gifts of **healing**, and **miraculous powers** (see vv. 9-10). Anyone who has received Jesus has exercised one kind of faith, which is a gift, but this is speaking of a special manifestation of God’s Spirit, and it probably “refers to a supernatural conviction that God will reveal his power or mercy in a special way in a specific instance.” Of course, this kind of faith is necessary for and works alongside “gifts of healing.” The wording here probably implies that healing is not a permanent gift or power that one person has for every situation for all time, but instances where the Spirit of God enables someone to give supernatural healing. Paul and Peter and the earliest followers of Jesus lived with the expectation that God would at times heal people’s physical bodies. Our permanent healing won’t come, of course, until Jesus returns, but because his Spirit has invaded this age we ought to expect to see his power manifest in healing at times, and some people have been given a special gift of asking for and administering that healing. The gift of “miraculous powers” most likely covers all other kinds of supernatural activities beyond the healing of the sick.
3. The next two items, still in v. 10, are **prophecy** and **distinguishing between spirits**. Prophecy is a “spontaneous, Spirit-inspired, intelligible message, ... intended for the [building up] or encouragement of the people” (Fee). Distinguishing between spirits sounds mysterious, but it probably just means discerning which prophecies are truly from God and which ones are not.
4. The last two items in this list are the gift of **speaking** in different kinds of tongues (languages), and the **interpretation** of tongues. “It is speech essentially unintelligible both to the speaker and to other hearers; it is speech directed basically toward God,” and is most likely thought to be angelic language. Paul will make the argument in ch. 14 that this gift is mostly for private use, since it is directed toward God, though there are times when someone with the gift of interpretation might be present to relay a prophetic message which was given in another language for a group of people.

## Addendum 2 – Called vs. Compulsive in Use of Spiritual Gifts

Sometimes it hard to identify in ourselves when we are becoming fleshly (“compulsive”) in our use of gifts rather than Spirit-empowered and God-honoring (“called”). The contrasts below may help.

Called	Compulsive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most often you are asked; someone notices your gifts.</li> <li>• Works well under authority and gives grace to them.</li> <li>• Works well on a team.</li> <li>• Speaks in terms of “we.”</li> <li>• Doesn’t need credit to stay motivated.</li> <li>• Serves with joy.</li> <li>• Seeks to give God glory.</li> <li>• Seeks to make others look good, knowing how this motivates others on the team.</li> <li>• Can lead if needed.</li> <li>• Ministry dominated by prayer and seeking God’s will.</li> <li>• Seeks to reproduce themselves and can delegate to skilled people or train those who aren’t.</li> <li>• Majors in majors and minors in minors.</li> <li>• Leads/serves by grace, humor, and a prayerful listening to the Spirit that shows a dependence on God.</li> <li>• Leads/serves in peace.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Though not always a sign of compulsion, usually this person volunteers.</li> <li>• Resents authority, always seeing their flaws.</li> <li>• Prefers to have control and does not “play well” with others.</li> <li>• Uses “I” a lot.</li> <li>• Needs credit to keep motivated.</li> <li>• Serves by guilt.</li> <li>• Secretly desires to be glorified.</li> <li>• Seeks to make <u>themselves</u> look good, often thinking of how they are performing or how others view them.</li> <li>• Needs to lead (or avoids it).</li> <li>• Ministry dominated by effort and sacrifice.</li> <li>• Is a doer predominantly; seeks control; always too busy to delegate or train.</li> <li>• Majors in minors, often becoming compulsive about a particular point or detail.</li> <li>• Leads/serves by effort, standards, and a seriousness that betrays that it all depends on them.</li> <li>• Leads/serves with anxiety.</li> </ul>