

Phanerosis

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1 Corinthians 12:7-12

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A man is driving along late at night and breaks down near a monastery. He knocks on the door and says, "My car broke down. Do you think I could stay the night?" The monks graciously accept him and even fix his car. But as the man tries to fall asleep, he hears a strange sound. The next morning, he asks the monks what the sound was, but they say, "We can't tell you. You're not a monk." "All right", the man says. "I'm dying to know. How do I become a monk?" They reply, "You must count how many times the letter "E" appears in The Bible". "That's easy", says the man. "The answer is two". The Monks reply "You have displayed great wisdom, you are now a monk. We shall now make known to you the source of the sound."

The monks lead the man down a winding staircase and stop before a wooden door. They open the door which leads to a long corridor with another door at the far end. They open that door, descend another staircase, and enter a large room filled with a small table and a single chair. The monks ask the man to have a seat, and then proceed across the room to a locked safe. They open the safe, remove a small wooden box, and set it on the table before the man. When he opens this box, at last the source of that strange sound became known to him; his eyes beheld an incredible sight. But I can't tell you what it was because you're not a monk.

I'm sorry to disappoint you. I understand that you're dying to know. However, if you must know something, then know this; if you have called Jesus your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit has manifested Himself in you. Unless you're a truck driver, you probably don't hear the word manifest very often. But it basically means "To Make Known". It's the Greek word *Phanerosis* (fan/ner/o/sis). It is the Spirit that makes known to you the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 2:12). But more than that, it is through you that the Spirit makes Himself known to others. Through you people hear about Jesus, know about Jesus, feel the love of Jesus, and know that Jesus cares. It is through you that the world may know that God is real and that Jesus is Lord. This is what Paul says to the Corinthian church while answering their question about Spiritual Gifts. He proclaims, "*But to each one is given the*

manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Each believer is given the *Phanerosis* of the Spirit. In other words, a believer makes known the Spirit of God by the Special Abilities given to them by God.

When a person surrenders themselves to the Lord, they give Him their talents and skills. And by the Spirit's power, these skills become sanctified. They become holy and set apart for the Lord's use. But the spirit also gives each believer a Divine Enablement; a Special Ability that on their own they did not possess. It is this list of Gifts Paul mentions to the Corinthian believers.

*"To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have."*¹ (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

Based upon Paul's answer it's easy to see that some believers in Corinth desired certain gifts (the more flamboyant ones), were faking certain gifts, or looking down upon those with the less glorified gifts. But Paul is not trying to inform these believers about the number of gifts or which the most important gift is. He is implying that there are many different ways the Spirit manifests (*Phanerosis*) Himself in a believer. That's why he gives his whole Human Body/Body of Christ analogy found in the rest of this chapter. God pours out a gift into each believer based upon what He wants to accomplish. Instead of merely giving these believers a list and ranking of Spiritual Gifts, Paul is saying that it is by these gifts the Spirit manifests Himself to the Church and to a watching world.

This is where the whole topic of Spiritual Gifts gets bogged down. Take a Gift Discernment Survey some time and it will reveal to you your natural talents, your passions, and your Spiritual Gifts. But no survey ever answers the question why.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

Why did God grant each believer a gift in the first place? Why does God find it necessary to grant some of us the ability to speak about God and some of us the ability to teach about God? Why do some have the ability to serve and care, or display the tenderness and love of God? Paul gives this answer in verse 7. The Spirit is manifest (made known) to help one another. The Spirit is revealed in each of us so that one may help someone know, another helps someone grow. Still another helps someone understand. Some help us stand, and some help us proclaim that Jesus is Lord and that God is to be praised.

Sometimes I think we make this whole Spiritual Gift issue more difficult than it really is. Sometimes I think we fret too much or, like the Corinthian Church, desire a gift for the wrong reason. But truthfully, it really is simple. It just takes a willingness to let God work through you. For example, a person may be highly skilled at speaking, but when the Spirit manifests Himself in that person, suddenly they find themselves with the ability to speak so that others hear from God. A person may have the passion to teach. They study and perfect that skill. But when the Spirit manifests Himself in that teacher, they find the ability to help others know God in a whole new way. A person may have the natural ability to sing like an angel. But when the Spirit manifests Himself in that person, the people listening join the Angels in praising God. A person may think deeply about things, but when the Spirit manifests himself in that person they find the ability to help others discern God's Truth. And the list goes on.

The bottom line is this; the Holy Spirit works through you so that others may be strengthened. That's why no Christian gifted by the Spirit seeks their own glory or honor. The Spirit does not manifest Himself in you so that you may receive praise. No gift is designed to bring attention to the person. And the Spirit manifests Himself in every Christian, in some particular way that God has chosen so that God may be praised. It is through this manifestation of the Spirit that the world might come to know God. Which is why, unlike the Monks who keep the source secret, a Christian is to make known (*Phanerosis*) the Spirit within them. It's not just for the benefit of others, but also to glorify God.