

The Community of the Spirit

I. The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to each Christian

- The Holy Spirit has been given to everyone in the church: Acts 2:16–18.
- In addition to giving salvation, the Spirit also gives us “gifts” (or strengths).
 - WCF 26.1: “All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory.”
 - The gifts are ultimately the strengths of Christ, communicated to us.
- The gifts are for the building up the church. 1 Cor 12:7, 11: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ... All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (See 14:5, 12)
- “To each is given”: *every* Christian receives some gifts! *Every* Christian is deeply valuable to the body!
 - We must recognize the importance of *all* the gifts, just as every member of the human body is valuable (1 Cor 12:14–26).
- Lists of gifts: Rom 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:8–11, 28; Eph 4:11.
 - Evangelism: sharing the good news with unbelievers.
 - Discernment, wisdom.
 - Teaching: explaining the word to the church.
 - Exhorting / preaching: declaring the word with power.
 - Service, helping, mercy, leading, and administrating: caring for the needs of others and helping the church function.
 - Giving and faith: terrific acts of trust in God.

II. A vision for a gift-sharing community

- WCF 26.1 (continued): “All saints, ... being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.”
- Imagine a church ...
 - Where the church is constantly pouring itself into each other.
 - Where hospitality to other members is happening all the time.
 - Where older Christians actively disciple and mentor the younger.
 - Where no one goes hungry or in need because they generously give to needs that arise.
 - Where *all* of the saints from the little child to the elderly seasoned saint are vitally engaged in using *all* their gifts for the glory of God!
- We are the family of God. We get to be family to each other, which is especially powerful for those who have no families or are estranged from them.
- Practical questions and applications:
 - How would you respond to Cain’s question: “Am I my brother’s keeper?”
 - What is the problem with a member who simply attends worship and has no other contact with the church?
 - What tends to short-circuit the fellowship of the saints? What are obstacles for you personally?
 - Remember the deacons’ list of gifts!