

**Text: 1 Cor 12.27-13.13****Summarizing 1 Cor 12 so far**

- **The context:** In the mystery religions of the ancient world, ecstatic practices resembling the gift of tongues *confused* the Corinthians
- **The issue:** Some Christians in Corinth equated tongues-speaking as the mark of true spirituality, skewing their focus from serving others to exalting self
- **Biblical gifts:**
  - Comprise a variety of equally valued gifts from the Triune God
  - Given for the benefit of the church as a whole: “the common good” (7), “just as He wills” (11)
  - Differing in nature according to the times:
    1. At-will miracle supernatural gifts in apostolic times
    2. Day-to-day ordinary gifts in all times and all places
- **The importance of the Body** for contextualizing the use of gifts

**The Ranking of Gifts (1 Cor 12.27-31a)**

What kind of statement do we have in v. 27? **summary** statement

What two concepts do this statement point to?

1. **The church is a body**
2. **The body is made up of individuals**

Paul returns to the gifts in the next verses. He already gave a list of gifts in vv. 8-10.

1. What does “first ..., second ..., third...” imply about the gifts in v. 28?  
**ranking**
2. Paul repeats the list in vv. 29-30. What differences do you note between v. 28 and 29-30?
  - a. **No “ordering” words**
  - b. **Same order of gifts**
  - c. **Addition of “interpretation of tongues”**

Why does Paul include “gifts” that seem to refer to persons or offices as opposed to “spiritual abilities” or “enablements”? Compare Ephesians 4.11.

**Gifted persons are spiritual gifts to the church**

In vv. 29-30, the list takes the form of rhetorical questions. What is the point of this rhetoric?

**No one gift is given to all believers in the church**

This counters the modern emphasis on one gift above all others as a sign of the filling of the Spirit (*i.e.*, tongues). Every believer is filled with the Spirit, and each believer has his own gift (whether on this list or not).

In the ranking, which gifts are of most importance?

**Apostleship, prophecy, teaching**

Which gifts are of least importance?

**Tongues and interpretation of tongues**

Which gifts listed in v. 28 are not included in vv. 8-10?

**Teaching, helps, administrations**

Thinking back to our chart and the distinction between “At-will miracle supernatural gifts” and “Day-to-day ordinary gifts,” what sort of gifts are these three? Why?

**Day-to-day ordinary gifts — because they continue to this day**

When we consider the “person-gifts” and the “gifting-gifts” in this list, what does the ranking imply about order in the church?

**Authority and structure**

Do these gifts still operating in the church today? If yes, how?

**Yes, through the written word**

Looking ahead to 14.1-2, what gifts are emphasized there? (also throughout the chapter) **prophecy** and **tongues**

What does the narrowing of focus in chapter 14 (from multiple gifts to just two gifts) imply about the situation in Corinth?

**The Corinthians were over-emphasizing the gift of tongues.**

Again, considering the ranking of gifts in 12.28-30, at what rank do we find the gift of prophecy? **second** behind **apostles**

And at what rank do we find tongues? **last**

What is Paul emphasizing by his question in v. 31a?

**That the more desirable gifts should be desired by all.**

What gift did the Corinthians most desire? **tongues**

What else does the question of 31a imply? If one is to earnestly desire some gift, does he already possess it?

**No, thus at least some gifts are not necessarily given at the moment of salvation**

### **Something Superior to Gifts (12.31b-13.13)**

A new paragraph begins with v. 31b: "And I show you a still more excellent way" — what does this line refer to? (Hint: look ahead to chapter 13)

**The spiritual fruit of love is more important than any gift**

In the comparisons Paul makes in 13.1-3, what gifts does he mention?

1. (1) **tongues**
2. (2) **prophecy**
3. (2) **knowledge**
4. (2) **faith**
5. (3) **giving (see also Rm 12)**

What makes the exercise of these gifts useless?

**The absence of love**

When Paul speaks of love in 1 Corinthians 13, is he speaking of a gift?

**No, he is speaking of the fruit of the Spirit, see Gal 5.22-23**

Paul defines love in the short phrases in vv. 4-8a. What words can summarize the meaning of love?

**Various answers: Selflessness, others oriented, giving, sympathy, uplifting others**

In v. 8, Paul says love never fails, in contrast with prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (all spiritual gifts). What does this mean?

**Spiritual fruit will bear fruit in other lives forever, but spiritual gifts are temporary**

Specifically concerning the gift tongues, Paul says they will cease. Paul limits prophecy and knowledge as partial (9). What replaces them?

**“the perfect”**

What does the illustration of v. 11 imply?

**That the gifts are things to put away as maturity comes**

Verse 12 speaks of a time to come. What time is that?

**Most likely, the time of the resurrection**

What three things abide in the meantime? (13)

1. **faith**
2. **hope**
3. **love**

Which is greatest? **love**

This passage doesn't teach us exactly when the spiritual gifts come to an end, but it certainly teaches they will end.

Consequently, where should one focus his spiritual desires? (see 12.31)

**On the best gifts, but even more, on the best fruit**