

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 29, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 12 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 29, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 12, Biblicalelearning.org

Dr. Gary Meadors' Lecture 29 on 1 Corinthians 12-14 examines **Paul's response to questions about spiritual gifts**, focusing initially on the **identification of Jesus as Lord** as the fundamental work of the Spirit. The lecture then explores the **diversity and unity of spiritual gifts** within the church, using the **analogy of the human body** to illustrate their interdependence and the **sovereign distribution by God**. Meadors analyzes **various spiritual gifts listed by Paul**, considering their nature and function, and addresses the importance of **love as the superior way** to exercise these gifts, setting the stage for chapters 13 and 14.

2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 29 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).



Meadors_1Cor_Session29.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 29, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 12

Briefing Document: Dr. Gary Meadors on 1 Corinthians 12 - Spiritual Gifts

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Gary Meadors in his Lecture 29 on 1 Corinthians 12, focusing on Paul's response to the Corinthian church's questions concerning spiritual gifts.

Main Themes:

- **The Foundational Significance of "Jesus is Lord":** Meadors emphasizes that the recognition and confession of Jesus as Lord, enabled by the Holy Spirit, is the foundational context for understanding spiritual gifts (12:1-3). This acts as a crucial differentiator between genuine spiritual manifestations and pagan ecstatic utterances.
- **Unity and Diversity in the Body of Christ:** A central theme of Chapter 12 is the idea of the church as one body with many diverse parts and functions, each empowered by the same Spirit, Lord, and God (12:4-31). This diversity is not a cause for division but a necessary aspect of the body's health and function.
- **The Nature and Purpose of Spiritual Gifts:** Meadors explores the different categories of spiritual gifts listed in verses 8-10 and 28, emphasizing that they are distributed sovereignly by God for the common good of the church (12:7, 11). He suggests a possible structure for the first list (wisdom, knowledge; faith, healing; miraculous powers; prophecy, discerning of spirits; tongues, interpretation) highlighting "miraculous powers" as a central hinge, implying a supernatural nature for all listed gifts.
- **The Importance of Proper Motivation (Transition to Chapter 13):** While not covered in detail in this lecture on Chapter 12, Meadors highlights that the discussion of gifts in Chapters 12 and 14 is intrinsically linked with the "more excellent way" of love presented in Chapter 13. Love is the governing principle for the proper exercise of spiritual gifts and community life.
- **Understanding New Testament Prophecy:** Meadors discusses the ongoing debate surrounding the nature of New Testament prophecy, contrasting the classical view with Wayne Grudem's "third wave" perspective, which posits a less authoritative and potentially fallible form of prophecy. He notes the controversy surrounding this redefinition and its limited acceptance within mainstream theology.

- **The Role of Leadership as Shared Praxis:** Meadors briefly touches on the concept of leadership within the church, emphasizing a model of "shared praxis" where leaders enable followers to own a vision rather than merely conforming to it.

Most Important Ideas and Facts:

- **The Sovereign Lordship of Christ:** The lecture begins by establishing that the ability to confess "Jesus is Lord" is a Spirit-enabled act and a fundamental criterion for discerning true spiritual activity. "Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says 'Jesus be cursed'... and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." (12:3)
- **Pagan Influences in Corinth:** Meadors points out the heavily pagan and polytheistic context of Roman Corinth, where ecstatic utterances and curses were common, suggesting this might explain some of the issues the Corinthian church faced regarding spiritual gifts. F.F. Bruce is quoted noting Apollo's association with ecstatic utterance.
- **Unity is Not Uniformity:** Meadors stresses the crucial distinction between unity and uniformity within the church. "Unity is not conformity, but it is the appreciation of diversity." (Page 186) He argues that forcing conformity does not create true unity.
- **Gifts for the Common Good:** The purpose of spiritual gifts is consistently emphasized as being "for the common good" (12:7). This underscores the communal and service-oriented nature of these gifts.
- **A Possible Structure of the Gift List (12:8-10):** Meadors proposes a structure of doublets (wisdom/knowledge, faith/healing, tongues/interpretation) surrounding a central hinge of "miraculous powers," suggesting all listed gifts are supernatural manifestations.
- **Challenges in Defining Specific Gifts:** Due to the limited context within 1 Corinthians and the broader New Testament, definitively defining each spiritual gift is challenging. Meadors cautions against overly confident interpretations. "Anyone or any source that confidently defines the items in a gift list probably disqualifies themselves from validity." (Page 11)
- **The Body Metaphor:** Paul's use of the body as a metaphor for the church highlights the interdependence and necessity of each member, regardless of their perceived significance. "Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many." (12:14)

- **Diversity as God's Plan:** Meadors asserts that diversity is not accidental but part of God's creative design in both nature and the church. "Diversity is God's plan." (Page 22)
- **The Nature of Apostles, Prophets, and Teachers (12:28):** Meadors discusses the ranking of gifts in verse 28, noting the prominence of apostles, prophets, and teachers. He touches on the debate surrounding the definition of "apostle" and the distinct roles of New Testament prophets and teachers. He highlights the view that New Testament prophets provided direct revelation, similar to Old Testament prophets, in conjunction with the apostles. Teachers, on the other hand, were likely focused on transmitting and explaining the Christian faith.
- **The Significance of "Helps" and "Administrations":** Even seemingly less prominent gifts like "helps" (forms of assistance) and "administrations" (forms of leadership/guidance) are essential for the functioning of the church. Meadors suggests "helps" could refer to a wide range of practical services.
- **Rhetorical Questions in 12:29-30:** The series of questions ("Are all apostles? Are all prophets?") expects a negative answer, emphasizing that not every member possesses every gift.
- **Transition to Chapter 13:** The statement "But seek the greater gifts. And now I will show you the more excellent way" (12:31) serves as a direct transition to the discussion of love in 1 Corinthians 13, highlighting its superiority as the foundation for the exercise of all gifts.

Quotes for Emphasis:

- "Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says 'Jesus be cursed'... and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." (12:3)
- "Unity is not conformity, but it is the appreciation of diversity." (Page 186)
- "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit: unity. And he distributes them to each one, diversity, as he determines." (12:11)
- "Every believer is a necessary part of the body." (Page 190)
- "Diversity is God's plan." (Page 22)
- "God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them." (12:18)

- "But seek the greater gifts. And now I will show you the more excellent way."
(12:31)

This lecture by Dr. Meadors provides a valuable introduction to the complexities of 1 Corinthians 12, emphasizing the foundational role of Christ's Lordship, the vital interplay of unity and diversity within the church, and the sovereign distribution of spiritual gifts for the common good. It also sets the stage for understanding the crucial role of love in the subsequent chapters.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 29, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 12

1 Corinthians 12 Study Guide: Spiritual Gifts and the Body of Christ

Quiz

1. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:1-3, what is the fundamental purpose or function of the Spirit in relation to Jesus? Why is this important in the context of spiritual gifts?
2. Dr. Meadors discusses the cultural context of 1 Corinthians, noting the prevalence of paganism in Corinth. How might the phenomena associated with pagan worship have influenced the Corinthian church's understanding and practice of spiritual gifts?
3. Explain the significance of the phrase "Jesus is Lord" in 1 Corinthians 12:3. How does this confession serve as a "watershed" according to the lecture?
4. What does Dr. Meadors mean when he says that unity in the church "is not uniformity but the ability to live with diversity"? How does this relate to the concept of spiritual gifts?
5. Describe the balanced structure Dr. Meadors proposes for the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. What is the significance of "miraculous powers" within this structure?
6. How does Dr. Meadors define "New Testament prophets" in contrast to Old Testament prophets, particularly in light of Wayne Grudem's perspective? What are some key points of this debate?
7. According to Dr. Meadors, how should the "discerning of spirits" be understood in the context of 1 Corinthians 12? What does it likely not refer to?
8. Explain the two main perspectives on the "kinds of tongues" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. How does 1 Corinthians 14:22 potentially shed light on this issue?
9. Describe the metaphor of the "body of Christ" used in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. What does this metaphor illustrate about unity and diversity within the church?
10. In the concluding section of 1 Corinthians 12 (verses 28-31), Paul presents another list of roles and gifts in the church. What is notable about the ranking and inclusion of various gifts in this list, according to Dr. Meadors?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The fundamental function of the Spirit is to enable the believer to recognize Jesus as Lord. This is crucial because the proper use and understanding of spiritual gifts are intrinsically linked to the Lordship of Christ. If Jesus is not acknowledged as Lord, the exercise of spiritual gifts can be misdirected or even counterfeit.
2. Pagan worship in Corinth involved ecstatic utterances and perceived communication with deities, sometimes through trances. This cultural familiarity with such phenomena may have led the Corinthians to misunderstand or misapply similar expressions within the church, potentially valuing them for the wrong reasons or confusing them with pagan practices.
3. The phrase "Jesus is Lord" is a foundational confessional truth that distinguishes true spirituality from other influences. It signifies submission to Christ's authority and is the only confession that can be made genuinely through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it acts as a clear dividing line between those operating under the Spirit of God and those who are not.
4. Unity in the church, according to Dr. Meadors, means that despite the differences in spiritual gifts and individual characteristics, believers are interconnected and work together for the common good. It is not about everyone being the same or having the same abilities, but rather appreciating and leveraging the diverse gifts for the benefit of the whole body.
5. Dr. Meadors proposes a balanced structure of four doublets with "miraculous powers" as the central hinge. The doublets are "word of wisdom" and "word of knowledge," "faith" and "healing," "prophecy" and "discerning of spirits," and "kinds of tongues" and "interpretation of tongues." He suggests that "miraculous powers" in the center defines all the items in the list as supernatural expressions provided by God.
6. Dr. Meadors notes that Wayne Grudem redefined New Testament prophets as ordinary Christians who spoke without absolute divine authority, merely reporting what God laid on their hearts. This contrasts with the classical understanding of Old Testament prophets as direct spokesmen for God. This redefinition is debated and not widely accepted in mainline systematic and biblical theology.
7. Dr. Meadors believes "discerning of spirits" should be understood as a supernatural ability to validate prophetic statements, distinguishing between

genuine and counterfeit prophetic truth. He does not think it primarily relates to identifying demonization.

8. One perspective on "kinds of tongues" is that they were actual human languages (xenologia), possibly for evangelistic purposes, as seen in Acts. The other view is that they were ecstatic, unintelligible speech (glossolalia). 1 Corinthians 14:22, where Paul uses the illustration of speaking in a foreign language to unbelievers, raises the possibility of xenologia being relevant in some contexts within Corinth.
9. The "body of Christ" metaphor illustrates the unity and interdependence of believers. Just as a physical body has many diverse parts that work together, so too the church is composed of individuals with different gifts who are all necessary and contribute to the functioning of the whole. It emphasizes that no member is insignificant and that they need each other.
10. The list in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 ranks communication and leadership gifts (apostles, prophets, teachers) first, placing the more "showy" gifts like tongues at the end. This suggests that while all gifts are important, some are more foundational for the building up of the church. The inclusion of seemingly "bland" gifts like "helps" underscores that every function within the body is valuable and a gift.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the relationship between the recognition of Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:1-3) and the proper understanding and use of spiritual gifts as presented in Dr. Meadors' lecture. How does the former serve as a foundational principle for the latter?
2. Discuss the cultural context of Corinth and its potential influence on the Corinthian church's struggles with spiritual gifts, particularly in relation to ecstatic utterances and the concept of lordship.
3. Evaluate Dr. Meadors' proposed balanced structure of the spiritual gifts list in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, including the significance of "miraculous powers" as the hinge. What are the implications of understanding these gifts as primarily supernatural expressions?

4. Compare and contrast the traditional understanding of prophecy with Wayne Grudem's redefinition of New Testament prophets, as discussed by Dr. Meadors. What are the key theological implications of these different perspectives on prophetic authority?
5. Explore the metaphor of the "body of Christ" in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. How does this imagery effectively convey the principles of unity and diversity within the church, and what practical implications does it have for Christian community and ministry?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Pneumaticon (τοῖς πνευματικοῖς):** Greek term that can refer to spiritual persons or spiritual gifts. Its exact reference in 1 Corinthians 12:1 is debated.
- **Anathema (ἀνάθεμα):** A Greek word meaning "cursed" or "devoted to destruction." In the context of 1 Corinthians 12:3, saying "Jesus be cursed" is presented as incompatible with speaking by the Spirit of God.
- **Glossolalia (γλωσσολαλία):** Speaking in tongues; often understood as unintelligible or ecstatic speech.
- **Xenologia (ξενολογία):** Speaking in foreign languages.
- **Chiasm:** A literary device where words, phrases, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, creating an "X" structure. Dr. Meadors mentions chiasmic structures proposed for 1 Corinthians 12-14.
- **Inclusio:** A literary device where similar words or phrases mark the beginning and end of a section, creating a boundary. Dr. Meadors points out an inclusio in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.
- **Forensic:** Relating to legal matters or judicial proceedings. Dr. Meadors uses this term to describe the significance of Pentecost as the legal starting point of the church and the "baptism in the Spirit."
- **Corporate Personality:** A concept, particularly in Old Testament studies, emphasizing the collective identity and solidarity of a group or nation. Dr. Meadors suggests the metaphor of the body of Christ might be derived from this idea.

- **Balipolitic:** A Greco-Roman societal concept emphasizing unity and common purpose within a city or state. Dr. Meadors proposes this as another possible background for Paul's body metaphor.
- **Shared Praxis:** A term used by Thomas Groom, discussed by Dr. Meadors, referring to a model of leadership and education where individuals collectively engage in and own ideas and practices.
- **Diakoneia (διακονία):** Greek word meaning "service" or "ministry." Fitzmeyer suggests the apostolic role in 1 Corinthians 12 should be understood as a form of diakoneia.
- **Cessationism:** The theological belief that some spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, tongues, and miraculous healings, ceased after the apostolic era. Dr. Meadors mentions cessationist views in the context of the debate over New Testament prophecy.
- **Third Wave:** A movement within Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement, associated with figures like John Wimber, that emphasized the availability of spiritual gifts within a broader evangelical context. Dr. Meadors discusses Wayne Grudem's association with third-wave theology.

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 29, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 12, BiblicaleLearning.org

Frequently Asked Questions on 1 Corinthians 12

1. What is the main purpose of 1 Corinthians 12-14 according to Dr. Meadors?

Dr. Meadors states that these chapters represent Paul's response to questions concerning spiritual gifts within the Corinthian church. The overarching theme is the proper understanding and use of these gifts in the context of the lordship of Christ and the unity of the body of believers.

2. How does Paul begin his discussion on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1-3, and why is this significant?

Paul begins by emphasizing that the ability to confess "Jesus is Lord" comes only through the Holy Spirit, while no one speaking by the Spirit of God would say "Jesus be cursed" (anathema). This surprising start sets the context that the proper use and understanding of spiritual gifts are intrinsically linked to the acknowledgment of Jesus' lordship, distinguishing Christian spiritual expression from pagan ecstatic utterances common in their culture. This foundational truth undergirds the entire discussion on spiritual gifts that follows.

3. What does Dr. Meadors highlight regarding the unity and diversity of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11?

Dr. Meadors stresses that while there is a diversity of spiritual gifts, services, and workings within the church, they all originate from the same Spirit, the same Lord (Jesus), and the same God. This unity in origin underscores that the variety of gifts is not a cause for division but rather a reflection of the triune God and is intended for the common good of the body of Christ. He emphasizes that unity is not uniformity but the appreciation of diversity.

4. What is the significance of the metaphor of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26?

The metaphor of the body of Christ illustrates the interdependence and necessity of each member within the church, regardless of their specific gifts. Just as a physical body has many parts that function together, so too the church requires the diverse contributions of all believers. Dr. Meadors points out that every believer is a necessary part, needs the help of others, and is complemented by others. This metaphor aims to counteract the divisions and feelings of superiority or insignificance that might have arisen concerning spiritual gifts.

5. How does Dr. Meadors interpret the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, particularly the placement of "miraculous powers"?

Dr. Meadors suggests that the list in verses 8-10 has a balanced structure with doublets and that "miraculous powers" serves as a central hinge. He proposes that all the items in this list are best understood as supernatural expressions or miraculous provisions from God, rather than simply the development of natural talents through spiritual formation. This interpretation emphasizes God's active and extraordinary involvement in bestowing these gifts for ministry within the church.

6. What does Dr. Meadors say about the list of roles and gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 (apostles, prophets, teachers, etc.)?

Dr. Meadors notes that this second list, following the body metaphor, seems to rank communication and leadership gifts first, with more "showy" gifts listed later. He raises the question of whether this ranking indicates actual rank, authority, or historical precedence in the church's founding. He also highlights the inclusion of seemingly less prominent gifts like "helps," underscoring that every function and every member in the body is important. Regarding apostles and prophets, he touches on the ongoing discussions about their nature and continuation in the church beyond the foundational figures.

7. What is Dr. Meadors' perspective on the nature of New Testament prophecy in light of different theological views (e.g., Wayne Grudem's)?

Dr. Meadors discusses the debate surrounding the nature of New Testament prophecy, contrasting the classical view of Old Testament prophets as speaking with absolute divine authority with the view proposed by figures like Wayne Grudem, who see New Testament prophets as ordinary Christians reporting what God has laid on their hearts, with the possibility of error. Dr. Meadors expresses his skepticism towards this redefined, less authoritative view of New Testament prophecy, suggesting that New Testament prophets likely served as authoritative proclaimers of truth, working in concert with the apostles.

8. How does 1 Corinthians 13 ("the more excellent way") relate to the discussion of spiritual gifts in chapters 12 and 14?

Dr. Meadors emphasizes that 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter on love, is not a digression but an integral link between chapters 12 and 14. It addresses the problem of division and the need for proper motivation in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Love is presented as the "more excellent way" that should guide the use of all gifts. Without love, even the most impressive spiritual gifts are meaningless. Thus, chapter 13 provides the crucial principle for the unified and edifying function of the diverse gifts discussed in the surrounding chapters.