

First Corinthians 12:4-6 gives us a great example of how God has equipped each Believer for ministry and discipleship. It includes a diverse set of gifts with a wide variety of ministry and one God, the God of the Trinity. With these few verses we can take a look at three items, gifts, ministries, and the effects, which when combined, will provide the Believer with a joyful heart when serving the Lord. Though we are all gifted differently, from God, God's work becomes unified in us regardless of which specific gift or gifts we have bestowed upon us.

First, verse four shows us that there are a variety of gifts, which God has given to us. There are several places where these gifts are listed in scripture including further on in this chapter (v 28), and in Romans 12 but the Greek word used here by Paul, *charisma*, is different from its prior use in this chapter of *pneumatikon* (v 1), and refers to grace-gifts, gifts of grace, or gracious gifts. Grace gifts are extraordinary abilities that each Believer has been given in order to build up the church body. (Radmacher 1999) Some people have tried to use this *charisma* for the charismatic movement for the exclusive gift of tongues, but the Greek would seem to refer to *all gifts* given by God. (McGee 1983, 58) The word varieties (NASB) here is a reference to Paul's letter to the Romans where he repeats that we all have gifts that differ according to God's grace (Rom 12.6). At the end of verse 4 we see that one part of the Godhead, the Trinity, specifically the Spirit of God is the One assigned to distribute (12.11) these gifts to each Believer. The diversity or variety of gifts here is important for many reasons because if we were all given the same grace gifts, the local church would not be able to function to the extent it does

today. Interestingly, although we are not all grace-gifted the same ability, we are all still called to individually develop and mature each of the gifts to further God's work.¹

Second, we have a wide variety of ministries (v 5) in which to use the grace-gifts we have received from the Spirit. From this verse we see that the Son of God decides how each of our gifts will manifest itself into the Church body (12.12-27). This means that it does not matter which gift you have been given, it has been given to you to be used by Jesus, and he will use each of us accordingly. Scripture says nothing here about any one gift as being more important than the other or that it will be used in a greater ministry, but it assures us a place in ministry used by Jesus Himself.

Lastly, in verse 6, we see that when we combine all of the grace-gifts and all of the ministries, the result will be a wide variety of effects achieved by the final part of the Trinity, God, who works all things in all persons (NASB). The Greek word for effects here is *energema* (energy), which is what God provides. This verse culminates the Trinity into a great statement of how the church disciples and ministers to all people. The Spirit provides the gifts, Jesus the Son of God provides the ministries, and God provides the energy to put it all together. The church body is made up of an enormous number of people who are all gifted in many different ways. This diversity through the Trinity provides the necessary means for which the church functions in ministry and discipleship. The church needs diversity and variety in its people and God the Father, Son, and Spirit, make for a joyful ministry.

¹ For example, the extraordinary ability to help (12.28) is one gift and we are all also called to help and serve each other (Gal. 5.13, Rom 12.7), a special gift of teaching (12.8; Rom 12.7) and are told to teach others (Matt. 28.20; 2 Tim. 2.2, 24). Earl D. Radmacher, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999).