

Further texts and discussion

In 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, Paul emphasises that the variety of gifts and ministries within the church all come from the same Spirit and are distributed by the Spirit (and presumably not by people). He returns to this idea in v. 28, with a list of the various roles found in the churches that amounts to a warning against desiring one gift over others.

It is not clear what criteria Paul is using to order these roles. Perhaps it is their order in growing the local church ('apostles' usually refers to missionaries). Some commentators suggest it is their value for encouraging the community. It is significant that Paul leaves speaking in tongues to the end. Paul will spend chapter 14 arguing that speaking in tongues is only beneficial for the community when practised with an interpreter who can translate the heavenly language.

12:28 *And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29* *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30* *Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?*

Questions

- ▶ How would your character order your community of characters? (the apostles roles would already be filled Paul, Prisca and Aquila)
- ▶ To what extent would this order reflect the social statuses of individuals before they joined the group?
- ▶ What types of people would your character want to have filling these roles?
- ▶ What problems might arise within or outside the community if traditional hierarchies were undermined by a slave or a woman taking a role over a free person or man?
- ▶ How might the group as a whole decide how God is distributing gifts?
- ▶ What would likely happen if a figure in a position of authority began behaving in ways other members of the group found objectionable? (cf. 1 Corinthians 5)

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