

Life in the Spirit, The Gifts of the Spirit Part 1, Romans 12:3-8, 8/18/24

Romans 12:4-8

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;

if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

We've been studying the Holy Spirit this summer, we've seen that the Holy Spirit is indeed a person not a force, He is the third member of the Triune God, equal in every way, yet distinct in his role. We learned the necessity of the Spirit who convicts us and awakens us to the truth of the Gospel. No one comes into a saving relationship with Jesus without the Holy Spirit, He indwells us giving us assurance of eternity, He unites us into one body, He fills us with power, love and self-discipline, and guides us and teaches us using His Word which he helps us apply personally in our lives called the ministry of illumination, and he empowers us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, the character qualities of Jesus Christ himself. Where we want to go over the next three weeks is discovering more about what are called the **Gifts of the Spirit**.

Raise of hands, how many of you consider yourself handy? So, if you are in need of some work done- these are the people you should be talking to! (set you up for that)...I admire that quality, and I've tried hard to make an effort in being more handy myself. In fact, I brought my toolbox with me. Do you want to see what is inside? [Open...a hammer]. Now, how many of you would want me to come to your house for a project with just a hammer? Why not? Because in order to do a project, whether a repair, new construction, whether big or small- you are going to need more than a hammer. In fact there is a saying if all you have is a hammer, everything is going to be a nail. That's not good. You need a variety of tools, big and small, some for power, some for precision. Each tool in a toolbox has a unique and specific function, each are necessary to accomplish the task they are designed for. And in fact, the more complex and significant the project is, the more diversity and specification of tools you need to complete the project.

Did you know that **Ephesians 2** uses this same image of a building project as a metaphor to describe how the church is designed to function. Built on the apostles and prophets, Jesus is the cornerstone, and this isn't just any building project, we aren't building a strip mall, we are building a holy temple where the Spirit of God lives among us in power...seeking and saving the lost, transforming lives and changing the world! Wow! And the Bible tells us that every one of us as Christians has a vital role in that building project- each of us are like a tool in God's spiritual toolbox designed to be part of his glorious and holy building project. But that can't happen, that won't happen if all we have in the toolbox is a hammer. If only a few people are

active in the church and its mission. In most churches 20% of the people do 80% of the work. While we have a much better ratio and so many people are engaged in serving here, there are also some who attend but aren't engaged in building God's church. Maybe it's because you have other priorities, or because you fear getting too involved...you'd rather keep some anonymity and distance, or maybe you think you aren't needed, don't think they have anything to contribute.

What would you say from God's perspective is the most important thing happening on Earth, the thing he wants us most engaged and involved in? It's not politics...that's important, but it's not the main thing. Economy? Education? It's building Christ's church, and using the church to demonstrate and declare the gospel of Jesus. What if one of the critical reasons you were put on this earth, and that you are part of this church is because God wants to use you uniquely and vitally for the greatest mission on earth? What if you have unique and vital tools that the Spirit has given you to build up the church? And what if you are missing out on one of the significant blessings of the Holy Spirit who indwells you? And that's exactly what the Bible tells us and what we want to discover today and over the next two weeks: **The gifts of the Spirit**. There are four key texts of Scripture that reference spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4 which we will be looking at for insight over these three weeks. Today we are going to focus on the seven **purposes Spiritual gifts**.

Definition of Spiritual Gifts: Millard Erickson- "Special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to each believer to be used for the benefit of the church."¹

Let's break this down with seven things we need to know about Spiritual Gifts.

1. Gifts are not the same as talents and skills. *pneumatikos* Spirituals- word gift isn't there, only context that tells us that. The emphasis is on the Spirit's empowerment, not on our talents and abilities. Although they can interact with our natural abilities, they are supernatural in their spiritual calling and effects. For example- someone might be talented in persuasive abilities but not necessarily have the gift of evangelism. And the opposite is true- I don't think I would buy a used car from Tim SantaBarbara, he's not a salesman...but when he shares the gospel- he's effective and it's clear the Spirit is empowering him through his gift of evangelism.

2. Every Christian has at least One Gift

Romans 12:6 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.*

The Bible teaches that if you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you, which you do if you have trusted Jesus, you have at least one spiritual gift. You may have more, but never less. Your salvation is your qualification to serve as a builder in the body of Christ, you don't need a resumé. This means of course that there are no spiritually unemployed Christians, and it's why we strive for 100% spiritual employment. You have a gift and we need your gift!

3. Gifts are Distributed by the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:4 *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.*

¹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*

Using our metaphor- the Holy Spirit fills the toolbox with all the necessary tools, and the functions that are needed within any given church. God's work, done God's way, will never lack God's supply. Now this is also important to note, we do not choose which tool, which function, which spiritual gift we get. We don't say, "I want the tape measure, not the sandpaper." We can't go to the spiritual Home Depot and exchange our spiritual gifts. Switching metaphors, the Apostle Paul also describes the spiritual gifts in the church like parts of the human body. ¹⁸ *But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.* That's the Holy Spirit's job to determine for his own purposes and for our collective benefit. The sooner you discern, accept and live into your spiritual gift, the greater you will sense your vital purpose in the mission of God through the church.

4. The Spirit Gives a Diversity of Gifts

Romans 12:6 We have various gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

To build God's house, we need all kinds of tools, all kinds of gifts and that's exactly how the Spirit intended. Unity in diversity is one of our values. Just as we don't all look the same, same, age, color, socio-economy status, spiritual background...so too we are all uniquely wired and gifted for ministry. That's beautiful. But it's not just the diversity of the gifts, it's the diversity within the gifts themselves. Illustration: Two wrenches, but they each look different, have different strengths and have a different for different jobs. The same with Spiritual gifts, we might have the same gift, but a unique personality, skills, passions and experiences using the gift. You can have two people- both with the gift of mercy but that manifests itself in vastly different ways- one has a passion and such patience with people with addiction, off the charts mercy...but put you in a nursery and you don't feel the same passion and patience while changing a diaper. Endless diversity of the operation of the gifts in the church.

5. Every Spiritual Gift is Vital

Again, Paul gives the metaphor of the physical body *1 Corinthians 12:¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.* ²¹ *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!"*

And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² *On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.* Every body part has it's vital function doesn't it? When I was in high school one of the pranks we would play is the first person to fall asleep at a sleepover, we sometimes would shave one of their eyebrows...which is really mean. But they found out how quickly something as basic as an eyebrow suddenly feels indispensable. But more seriously- anyone ever hear of the pineal gland? It's a small pea-sized gland located deep within the brain, seems unimportant compared to your cerebral cortex for example, and yet this tiny, hidden pea-sized gland plays a crucial role in releasing melatonin, regulating sleep and your circadian rhythms as well as releasing hormones that are essential to sexual and reproductive development. Every part is vital. Some of you are the mouths and eyes and hands and feet of the body, and some of us are the left eyebrows and pineal glands of the body of Christ! But all roles are vital: from the people who count the offering on Sundays, to those who are buddies to children with special needs each Sunday, to those who run our a/v, to those who serve, or tutoring children at Urban Promise or hosting a small group. Don't listen to the enemy who

would want you to think you don't matter. You are vital! Tim Goertz, was active for so many years in the church, but because of his health he became limited in what he could do, but it didn't make him any less vital. In fact, it made him even more vital- because Tim was gifted in prayer. He was a prayer warrior. I knew that Tim was praying, actively, vigilantly for me, my family, and so many others at our church. And it won't be until the shores of heaven that we begin to grasp all the ways God moved mountains and protected us because of Tim's prayers. Every person, and every gift matters.

6. There are categories of gifts Lots of different ways to break these down, there are leadership and speaking gifts, behind the scenes gifts, people serving gifts, gifts designed to protect the body, outreach gifts to bring more people into the body. But the Apostle Peter is pretty binary he divides them into two categories. *¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.* So a way to think about this- there are those who are gifted to speak for Jesus and those who are gifted to serve for Jesus.

7. Gifts are for Building up the Church

Ephesians 4 ¹⁶ *From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

This is so critical. Your gifts are not about you. They are to serve others. Think about this- who was the most gifted person who ever walked the planet? Jesus. Jesus had all the spiritual gifts. And yet what did he say? *Mark 10:45 The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.* He has called us to the same mission. This is where we must fight against the natural temptation and the cultural flow to make the church about us and the gifts about us. It is said that Satan attends church every Sunday. And his goal may just be to make you think that church isn't for anyone but you. We are not consumers, we are contributors.

1 Peter 4: ¹⁰ *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.* I love this idea- the gift comes from the Spirit and then through you to bless others. We are conduits so that God's grace is on display through you. When you serve people, you represent the grace of Jesus in their lives. When you are holding babies in the nursery or holding doors open to greet people you are the hospitality and love of Jesus. When you are walking with someone through grief or walking through the building as part of our safety team you are the comfort and protection of Jesus. How will people see Jesus? The answer is through you as you exercise your gifts.

Gospel: With God, his gifts are always gifts of grace...that is they are freely given, never earned...none of us can earn a spiritual gift. And if you don't know God or have a relationship with him, he offers a free unearned gift of grace, salvation through Jesus Christ, and that's the first gift to receive.

Title Slide Summarize... So, will the building project be built with just a hammer? No! We need all the gifts the Spirit has distributed in the toolbox and engaged in ministry. Some of you have tools that we need in our church's toolbox! Bring them up...All of you matter!

Close- Blue Serving card.

Now you say, well this is great Pastor Nate- I'm seeing that I need to be engaged, I'm a tool I got it...but what tool am I? How am I supposed to discover my spiritual gifts and what would it look like to use my gifts to serve? And Nate what about those gifts that seem a bit supernatural- tongues, healing, prophecy...are those still active and if so how do we know if we have them? Many you all ask such great questions! Those are the next two weeks.