

Things of the Spirit - Gifts

So today is Mother's Day for anyone who didn't know! Statistically, this is the 2nd biggest gift giving day of the year behind only Christmas. (for some reason Father's Day is 5th!) They estimate that 20 billion dollars will be spent for special outings, presents, flowers, and cards for Mother's Day!

So I figured this seemed like a pretty good week to speak about gifts!

Gift giving can be complicated. Sometimes it's really easy and other times it's really difficult! If you can think back to the best gifts you ever got. They usually came from someone that knew you really well. They just got you, knew not only what you liked but often more importantly what you needed or what would improve your life....make it better!

God is in the gift giving business. If you don't know, God is the ultimate giver! Jesus gave His life on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin and offer us new life when He rose from the dead! I don't think any of us can top that one!

But do you know that God has given us many other gifts? Do you know that He even continues to do so? However much you like giving gifts.....God likes it even more. He loves to bless us!

Today in the series "Things of the Spirit" we're looking at gifts....specifically the Gifts of the Holy Spirit!

1 Corinthians 12:1 (NKJV)

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

In Romans 12 we see the gifts of the Father, otherwise known as the motivational gifts. These are **prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy**. These gifts are knit into every human being in the womb as part of his/her makeup. I like to say that this is God's personality matrix. Every person has one or two of these as a fundamental part of his/her motivation.

In Ephesians 4 we see the gifts of the Son. These are positional gifts that Jesus gave the Church. **Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers**....these are for the equipping of the saints (Church) to do the work of service and build up the body. These are people gifted with a specific leadership assignment. Not everyone will have one of these gifts.

Then we have the gifts of the Spirit here in 1 Corinthians 12 and this is our focus today....

There are some who believe the gifts of the Spirit ceased with the completion of the biblical canon. But that is an exegetically, theologically, and historically unsound viewpoint.

In 1 Corinthians 14 - urged to speak in tongues, and especially to seek prophecy

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 we are commanded don't put out the Spirit's fire, not to despise prophets but to test everything and hold to the good

Who changed that? NO ONE

In 1 Corinthians 1:7, Paul commends them for celebrating the gifts until Jesus returns

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 reinforces that the gifts will not cease until Jesus returns.

Look these verses up! Study them. Remember that Thing of the Spirit, revelation? The Spirit of God will show you the truth!

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant."

1 Corinthians 12:2-3 (NKJV)

You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

People believe all kinds of dumb things. Things that are not truth, things that are lies of the enemy to lead you away from Jesus. People believe in superstitions. They believe in dead saints and relatives acting on their behalf in heaven. They believe if they dance for the rain gods then it will rain. But then they deny the gifts of God's Spirit!

See these other things were created by satan to cause division in the church while the gifts of the Spirit were created by God to bring unity in the church!

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NKJV)

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

The key isn't what gifts you have compared to someone else, the key is that you have gifts and God's plan is for you to use them to build up the body of Christ.

God has gifted you with spiritual gifts, some from birth that are a part of who you are, and part of the reason we need believers in every workforce. God has blessed you with these things so that you can use them to get influence and access to places to be His light and lead people to Him!

But then these gifts of the Spirit are gifts that are imparted upon the believer after salvation through Jesus!

These are not “greater gifts” but they are gifts reserved for the redeemed, born again, children of God....why? Because they are the working of the Spirit.

Anyone work from home? Anyone ever wanted to?

The Holy Spirit has a work from home job. He doesn't give spiritual gifts to those that don't belong to Jesus because He doesn't dwell within them. The Holy Spirit MUST be present in order to use His gifts!

If you didn't have the Holy Spirit you couldn't use these gifts even if you wanted. It would be like having a car but not having any keys!

You know that God doesn't dwell in a place built by human hands? (Read Acts 17:24) You know this church (as in building) is not His home? Do you know that it's possible that when we all leave this building today that God may not reside here?

Because His Spirit lives in US. And He works through us. And He has gifts for us, the ability to do something supernatural that we couldn't otherwise do! The gift is more about the manifestation of the Spirit than about the action performed.

That's the real gift....the manifestation, that's the outshining, the Spirit that dwells within you shining out and working miraculously through you!

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (NKJV)

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, 9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healings** by the same Spirit, 10 to another the **working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another **different kinds of tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

The Spirit distributes spiritual gifts and manifestations of His presence to and through the body. Again these are for the born again believer. You may have one or you may have more than one. I believe that the Spirit will work through every believer that allows Him to, in at least one of these giftings.

Word of wisdom - this is an intimate understanding of God's Word and His will. Not wisdom that is learned by life experience or study, but straight from God. Wisdom above all other...

Word of knowledge - this is supernatural knowledge, like when you know something you should not. This what people have when they “read someone’s mail” and tell them exactly what they are going through without having been told. It’s knowledge about a specific situation.

Faith - not saving faith, this is great faith in the truths of God’s Word. This is having a confidence, certainty, trust, and assurance that God is at work and His will will be done. It’s a faith that moves mountains.

Gifts of healings - Jesus is healer....this gift is when the Spirit supernaturally uses a man to manifest that healing in people’s lives. It takes faith, it takes a miracle, but this is a special anointing to pray for healing and for it to manifest. This is likely what Peter (shadow) and Paul (handkerchief) had.

Working of miracles - literally workings of power....God’s power - including casting out demons, healings, raising people from the dead, and any other working of His power and these always point people to Jesus, not to glorify man but Christ.

Prophecy - Prophecy appears in every group; that helps us to compare the different areas of giftings.

- Gift of the Father: A person who is prophecy-motivated is driven to reveal things that were hidden or unknown, to bring truth and fresh insight to the table.
- Gift of the Son: a person is appointed by the Lord to speak divine wisdom, revelation, insight into the life of a leader, a congregation, or a certain group or demographic of people.
- Gift of the Spirit: The Holy Spirit brings revelation to a person or group of people using someone as vessel to speak the message.

Discerning of spirits - being able to rightly judge or appraise a person, statement, situation, or environment. A supernatural ability enabling a believer to clearly recognize and distinguish between the influence of God, satan, the world, and the flesh in a given situation.

Different kinds of tongues - There’s a lot to say about tongues, we’ll get to much more on that in a few weeks but for this week....this is the prompting of the Spirit to speak in another language (possibly earthly or heavenly) but it’s spoken man to God.

- Not everyone does it (like all gifts)
- It is for today
- It is God
- It should not be forbidden
- It is done orderly
- It is for the edification of the body (building up not tearing down, unity not division)

Interpretation of tongues - When a word is spoken in tongues in the church, it is a word from man to God and if it's to edify the church the people have to know what was spoken. The Spirit gives someone the interpretation or explanation of what was spoken through a person to the body in our known language. This is a gift or revelation. Through it the church is edified and Jesus is glorified.

So what's the point of all of this? Why do we need these gifts?

Because these gifts are part of the abundant life. I personally believe that the reason our world is riddled with believers who are all self conscious and down on themselves and even depressed is because the body is not walking in the gifts of the Spirit!

Because these gifts build people up. They encourage. And they are to be desired and shared with others! Spiritual gifts are for strengthening others!

Rick Warren put it this way:

*“God gave me a gift, not for me but for you,
and God gave you a gift, not for you but for me.
If you don't use your gift, you're depriving me;
if I don't use my gift, I'm robbing you.”*

I want to show you what Paul said about this....

Romans 1:11-12 (NKJV)

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Paul was not going to give his gift to them as in lay hands on them and transfer his gifting to them. What he's saying is that he is going to give his gift to them as a way to encourage them.

I'm going to encourage you WITH my gift. He is going to use his spiritual gifts to encourage the church. He is imparting it “giving it” because that is exactly what you do with spiritual gifts... they are not for you but for the body!

The aim of all spiritual gifts is ultimately that Jesus is glorified. That in giving us these gifts, the Spirit wants us to marvel and be in awe of how great Jesus is. That we may point people to Him.

So what are you going to do with your gifts?

Maybe you think that the few gifts you have are so insignificant. Each gift is important!

There is an old story about an old crow who was out in the wilderness and became very thirsty. He had not had anything to drink in a long time. He came to a jug that had a little water in the bottom of it. The old crow reached his beak into the jug to get some of that water, but his beak wouldn't quite touch the water. So what did he do? He started picking up pebbles one at a time and dropping them into the jug. And as more and more pebbles accumulated in the bottom of the jug the water rose in the bottle until finally the old crow was able to drink all that he desired.

This is a parable of the way God has chosen to work out his plan in our world. Each of us dropping in our own little pebble:

sharing wisdom in a bible study,
sending that get well card,
speaking out supernatural faith to someone struggling,
providing transportation,
speaking a word from God in an unknown tongue to encourage the church
visiting a lonely neighbor;
praying for healing, miracles

Utilizing the gifts that are ours, to serve in the ways we can, may not seem all that important at the time, but as the pebbles accumulate in the bottom of the jug, and the water rises, God builds His kingdom and brings his plan to fruition. You are important!