

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift

1 Peter 4:10-11

When we became a Christian, a member of God's family by faith in Christ's death for us, the Holy Spirit did a work within us. Actually, he did five works. Each was invisible and irreversible. But each was a reality:

- He regenerated us. "You who were dead in your trespasses and sins, he made alive together with Christ."
- He indwelt us so now "You are the temple of God."
- He baptized us "For you were all baptized into one body whether Jew or Greek, bond or free."
- He sealed us "in Christ" with the Holy Spirit of promise guaranteeing what God purchased through the redemption of Jesus would be delivered safely to its heavenly destination.
- And he gave us a spiritual gift. We see this truth in our biblical text for today's sermon, 1 Peter 4:10-11.

¹⁰*As each one has received a (spiritual) gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

¹¹*Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

As each one has received a spiritual gift

Every Christian has at least one **spiritual gift**.

The text is clear. "Each one" means every believer has at least one spiritual gift.

The **Holy Spirit** decides what gifts you get.

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul teaches about diversity of gifting within the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:15 he employs humor to emphasize his point:

"If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' is it not for this reason any the less a part of the body?"

What a mental picture Paul paints. Imagine a foot getting jealous of a hand. "Poor me. I never get to interact with others. No one ever says 'Let me shake your foot.' I never get to attract attention. The teacher never says, 'If you know the answer just raise your foot.'

I never get to express marital commitment by being adorned with a diamond ring. Yesterday, as Reilly performed the marriage of Bob and Itoe Rapp he did not say, 'If it is your intention to fulfill these vows, place the ring upon the fourth toe of the left foot.' "Instead," says the foot, "What do I get? I get crammed into a fashion statement. I get covered with a sweaty sock and smell like a locker room."

But is the foot important? You bet it is. What the hand is to dexterity, the foot is to mobility. The body needs both. And the body needs you with your specific gift!!!

There is no single gift that **everyone** is supposed to have.

When I was a student at Baylor University, some of my best friends were Charismatic believers. We enjoyed fellowship with much in common. But at the time I believed they were in error about one thing—and I still believe they were mistaken in this. They insisted that everyone who is right with God should have had the gift of speaking in tongues as evidence of having been baptized by the Holy Spirit. Regardless of what my dear Charismatic friends believe, what does the Bible say? It tackles this issue directly in I Corinthians 12:39-30, "*All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?*" The implied answer is a resounding "No." There is no single gift that everyone is supposed to have.

Employ it in serving one another

Gifts are given to benefit **others**, not just to satisfy you.

Sure when you are functioning within your gifting there should, over time, be evidence of fruitfulness and fulfillment. But never forget the purpose of the gift is to benefit others, not to feel good about oneself. Occasionally we encounter people who become possessive of their place of service, refusing to allow someone else who might benefit others even more to have their turn. I so appreciate the opposite attitude as expressed recently to me by Donna Gurney. She has done such a great job decorating the entryway bulletin board for the last two years. But as summer came up this year she approached me to say, "Let's see if anyone else would like a turn doing the bulletin board this summer. And, if they do a good job and want to continue, I am sure willing to let them continue." Thank you Donna, for your attitude: willing, but not possessive.

As good stewards of the manifold grace of God

We returned from our two-week trip to visit our daughter and her family in Mexico on June 10th. When we got back, there was so much to do. Unpack, do laundry, mow the grass, read the mail, pay the bills, drive to get some groceries. But trying to start the car, I found the battery was dead. Here's what the owner's manual says: "If your car is not going to be run for 30 days or longer, disconnect the negative lead to keep the battery from discharging itself." In other words, use it or lose it! The same could be said of your spiritual gift.

Your gift is loaned to you from God. **Use** it, or **lose** it. Paul warned Timothy not to let his gift lie idle, getting rusty and useless. “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you...” (1 Timothy 4:14) Timothy, use it or lose it! Believer, use it or lose it.

And how we use our gift will be the basis of rewards in heaven. (See the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30).

Since you will be rewarded for how you use gifts, you better **discover** and **develop** the gifts God has given you.

How do you discover what your gifts are?

1) Reaffirm you are available for God to use as he sees fit.

- “Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord, to Thee. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.”
- “Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee. Take my voice and let me sing, always, only for my King.”
- “Take my will and make it Thine—it shall be no longer mine. Take my heart—it is Thine own, it shall be Thy royal throne.”
- “Take my love; my God, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store. Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.”

The man or woman, the boy or girl, who prays such a prayer of dedication will be in such a position that God will show what your gifts are and how to develop them.

2) Analyze how your past service has exposed what are (or are not) your gifts.

3) Begin serving. Learn to say, “Yes.” It is easier to steer a truck that is moving than one that is stationary.

4) Learn to say, “No.” As you become aware of your primary gift, focus on using it more and begin to eliminate other commitments that would compete with the time you need to use your primary gift.

Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were the utterances of God.

Gifts can be classified in many ways, including **speaking** gifts and **servicing** gifts. Some gifts require verbal communication; some require non-verbal service.

Do you know into which category your primary gift falls? For example, you usually need to speak to exercise gifts of teaching, prophecy, exhortation, and leadership.

On the other hand, you usually don’t need to open your mouth to function in the gifts of service, mercy, and giving.

There are other ways of categorizing gifts for your consideration. My favorite way to classify the gifts in the four passages of the NT where they are listed are to call them: motivational gifts, equipping gifts, and manifestation gifts.

Category	Spiritual Gifts	Rom. 12:6-8	1 Cor. 12:8-10	1 Cor. 12:28-30	Eph. 4:11
Motivational Gifts	Prophecy	X	X	X	X
	Service (helps)	X		X	
	Teaching	X		X	
	Exhortation (encouragement)	X			
	Giving	X			
	Leadership (administration)	X		X	
	Mercy	X			
Equipping Gifts	Apostleship			X	X
	Prophecy	X	X	X	X
	Evangelism				X
	Pastor-Teacher				X
Manifestation Gifts	Word of Wisdom		X		
	Word of Knowledge		X		
	Faith		X		
	Healing		X	X	
	Miracles		X	X	
	Distinguishing spirits		X		
	Tongues		X	X	
	Interpretation of Tongues		X	X	

Some people believe these manifestation gifts have ceased. That God does not, and even cannot, use them anymore. Well, obviously we are on shaky ground anytime we say God “cannot” do anything. He can do whatever he wants. The question really is, “What does the Bible say?” And the Bible never says these gifts ceased. It is true that the exercise of these gifts have often been problematic, even during the New Testament times, as illustrated by the misuse of these gifts in the Corinthian Church. But remember, the solution for misuse is not disuse, but rather proper use.

That being said—that these gifts have not necessary ceased—it seems the authentic exercise of these miraculous gifts is rare. And that should not be surprising or discouraging to us. Actually, miracles—the bursting through of God in suspending the laws of nature for his own glory and purpose—is rare even in the Bible chronologically speaking. There were only three brief time periods in which miracles were not rare. The

three time periods in which God intervened miraculously into history were during the life of Moses (and his successor Joshua); Elijah (and his successor Elisha); and Jesus (and his successors, the Apostles). If you were to take out these three brief time periods from the biblical history, you would also be taking out—I haven't done a statistically count, but I would guess—98% of all recorded miracles in the chronology of the Bible. So, in consideration of the span of eons recorded in the Bible, miracles are rare, not commonplace. But never should we say God can't do something. He has, and he can, and he will.

God has given manifestation gifts to his Church, he does give manifestation gifts to his Church, and he will yet give manifestation gifts to his Church. But they are to be exercised in conformity to the guidelines laid out in 1 Corinthians 12.*

*[*For further study and consideration, please refer to the article by Pastor David Stevens that will be posted on the church sermons website next to this sermon manuscript.]*

Whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies
God is the one who gives you **strength** and brings about the **results**.

“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5).

“For we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Your **main** ministry should be in the area where you are gifted. Your **secondary** ministry may be where you are needed.

God does really want us to be fulfilled as we serve him. Usually God does not take a football player, break both legs and make him a violinist. He wants you to serve him with joy as you serve him with those gifts he has given you—both natural talent and spiritual gifts.

I'll say it again, your main ministry should be in the area where you are gifted. Your secondary ministry may be where you are needed.

[Drama sketch with Luke Krieger and Karen Walter, “Somebody's Got To Do It”]

***So that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ,
to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

Gifts are to bring **praise** to God, not to you.

The children worked long and hard on their own little cardboard shack. It was to be a special spot--a clubhouse--where they could meet in solemn assembly or just laugh, play games and fool around. As they thought long and hard about their rules, they came up with three rather perceptive ones:

- Nobody act big.
- Nobody act small.
- Everybody act medium.

—*Growing Strong* by Chuck Swindoll

Not a bad set of rules for a clubhouse...or for a church. As a pastor who has often worked closely with recruitment of volunteers and assimilation of newcomers, I struggle frequently with people falling off either side of the tight rope—either thinking too highly of their abilities or depreciating too lowly what abilities and gifts God has loaned them. “No, I just couldn’t do that. I don’t think I can do it.” Of course you can’t. But if God has equipped you, God can do it through you. Then people others are benefited, you are fulfilled, and God is praised.