

INTRODUCTION

We begin a series on this section of 1 Corinthians dealing with “spiritual gifts.” I would like for all the ministers here tonight to hold up your hand. I didn’t say vocational ministers and I didn’t say pastors. Now if you are a Christian and you did not hold up your hand, you, my friend, have a wrong concept of what the ministry is. You thought I asked for all the *professional*, vocational ministers to hold up their hands. You were thinking about pastors, ministers of music, ministers of education, missionaries—people like that. But the Bible teaches clearly that *every* born-again believer is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, a servant. If you are a born-again believer, you are a minister of the Lord. You may be saying, “Now, wait a minute I’m not ministering.” Well it’s probably because you have not discovered your spiritual gifts and you are not using them in your ministry, because once you discover what your spiritual gifts are, it won’t be a tedious job. It will be a joy to serve the Lord.

One evening this week Lanny Bridges asked me how my day was. Lanny is one of those guys I can be honest with and I don’t always have to put on a fake smile for him—not that I do for anybody else but I can just be honest with him. I said, “Actually, Lanny I have had a pretty rough day!” He said, “Tell me about it.” I said, “Well, for about four hours this afternoon I had person after person after person come into my office for counseling. Counseling people just drains me like you wouldn’t believe! Three or four hours of listening to people and their problems and talking with them and praying with them just wears me out!” Do you know one of the reasons? It is because I have taken some of these spiritual gift inventories and the gift of mercy—which is a pre-requisite for being an effective counselor—is not one of my stronger gifts and I know that! By the same token I can preach at 8:30, teach my Sunday School Class at 10:00 and get up and preach again at 11:00 and stand up here on Sunday night at 6:00 and preach and just absolutely LOVE it! I enjoy doing it a whole lot more than you enjoy hearing it! If you didn’t even show up, I’d come here and preach anyway. I love to do it! Not once in my ministry have I ever said, “Oh, no, another sermon!” What’s the difference? Why don’t I get as much satisfaction out of counseling as I do preaching and teaching? The answer is very simple. God has gifted me to teach and to preach and I am not gifted in counseling. Does that mean I should not counsel? No, I do counseling, but God uses me most and I receive the most fulfillments from the gift of preaching and teaching.

The same is true for you. If you are trying to do some kind of ministry in which you are not gifted, it will be a frustrating, tiring, draining experience. But when you discover what your spiritual gifts are and then you begin to plug them into the body, you’ll receive such joy and excitement. So, tonight we begin talking about spiritual gifts.

The problem in the church at Corinth if you will remember were three words. All of them start with the prefix *im-*. They had a problem of immorality; they had a problem of immaturity and they had a problem of immortality. We’ve already talked about the immorality about how they were letting sins go on in the church and were not practicing discipline. We come to a section now about their immaturity. They were so immature about the use and the abuse of spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11. “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be

ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of GIFTS, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of SERVICE, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of WORKING, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given [notice that verse does not say to professional ministers or to some Christians] for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

In verse one, the word “gifts” has been added. It is actually the Greek word *pneumatikos*, which just means “spirituals” or “spiritualities” but the meaning is “spiritual gifts.” Before I move on I want to say that probably the majority of Christians are ignorant about spiritual gifts. God says, “I don’t want you to be ignorant!” When you start talking about spiritual gifts, the one gift that caused more problems in the church at Corinth is still causing problems today: It is the gift of speaking in tongues. I will give an entire message a little bit later when we get to 1 Corinthians 14 on the gift of speaking in tongues. But tonight I don’t want to talk about any of the gifts specifically. Instead, I want to talk about the *concept* of spiritual gifts.

I. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN WILL UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Summer Olympics will be held in Atlanta, Georgia this summer and there will be many events and many athletes. Could you ever imagine in your wildest dreams one athlete competing in all the different competitions? Maybe there was a Jim Thorpe once upon a time who could win gold medals in multiple events, but that’s not the case today. People specialize in different athletic events and they train in that one event. The same is true in the body of Christ. There is no one member of the body of Christ who possesses all of the spiritual gifts, who can perform in all the areas of ministry, but in the body in the church God has gifted everybody. I believe in our local body, there is every gift of the Holy Spirit so that the body of Christ can function. The context of this is all the same. He says, “You Christians in Corinth, you misunderstand what it means to be filled with the Spirit. When you were pagans, these dumb idols were leading you astray and the interference is that you are still being led astray! You misunderstand the use and practice of spiritual gifts. So, tonight let me make three statements about a Spirit-filled Christian. A Spirit-filled Christian will understand spiritual gifts.

1. Spiritual gifts are spiritual, not material

Let me talk to you a little bit about what spiritual gifts are. First of all, they are spiritual, not material! When you think of a gift, you usually think of something you can hold, look at and understand what it is. Spiritual gifts are not material. We’re not talking about God giving you money. We’re not talking about God giving you some kind of material blessing. This is talking

about a spiritual blessing.

2. Spiritual gifts are supernatural, not natural

Number two: A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability, not a natural talent. The best definition of spiritual gift I’ve ever come across is this: A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability God has given you to minister in the body. It’s real simple, isn’t it? You look over here at Richard and you think, “Boy! Richard is really gifted to play the piano. I hate to say it but what he has is a natural talent he has developed and singing or playing the piano is not a spiritual gift. Sometimes we think, “Well, I can’t sing and I can’t play the piano.” Richard can use the gifts God has given him. Perhaps the gift of encouragement, and he can express that through his music but you may look at somebody who plays the piano or sings like a canary and you say, “Well, gosh. I’m not gifted like they are.” Many times what they have are natural talents and spiritual gifts are not natural talents they are supernatural abilities. You won’t find singing in any list of spiritual gifts. We could have Robert Goulet singing and he could probably out-sing most of us here, but that’s not a supernatural gift that’s a natural talent he has.

3. Spiritual gifts are given to energize the body of Christ

Number three: Spiritual gifts are given to energize the body of Christ. That’s the key! The body of Christ still exists on planet Earth. Just as 2,000 years ago Jesus Christ walked around; He had legs; He had hands; He had eyes and He had a mouth. We’re going to get into this later in chapter 12. The church is the body of Christ. Today Jesus Christ has legs; He has hands to feed the poor, to help hurting people. He has a mouth to speak His truth today. It’s just His body is this corporate group, all believers; we are the body of Christ. So Jesus Christ was crucified; He was buried; He was resurrected; He ascended back into heaven; He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father; He sent the Holy Spirit to energize His body. So, His body still is active today. But when you as a part of the body of Christ refuse to exercise your gifts, it’s like a paralyzed part of a person’s body. Who is the head of the body? Jesus Christ. And Jesus is trying to give messages to you as the brain gives messages to the body. And you as a member of the body of Christ if you don’t move and minister in obedience to his directive, in a real sense you paralyze a portion of the body of Christ. That’s why I’m sure you won’t need to exercise my gift. You pay me to do that! I tell our deacons all the time. “You guys pay me to be good. Y’all are good for nothing!” You may think, “Well, I’m just a spectator. You’re the pro up there. We pay you to do that so we want you to exercise your gift!” It is a tragedy when members of the body of Christ, not professional ministers, not vocational ministers, don’t use their spiritual gift! What if you don’t know what your spiritual gift is? In this process I’ll be sharing with you what the different spiritual gifts are and also sharing with you how you can discover what your spiritual gifts are. So, if you are spirit-filled, you will understand spiritual gifts!

II. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN WILL UTILIZE AT LEAST ONE SPIRITUAL GIFT

1. There are different kinds of gifts

Number two, if you are spirit-filled, you will utilize at least one spiritual gift. Everyone has at least *one* spiritual gift! How do I know? Look at verse 7. “To each one the manifestation of the

Spirit is given for the common good.” Some of you may think, “When Jesus was passing out gifts, he kind of skipped me.” That maybe you were hiding that day or something and maybe you just thought He missed you. You held out your hand but never got anything. No, if you are a believer, you received spiritual gifts, at least one! When did you get it? You received natural talents or at least the potential to perform natural things when you were born physically. The same is true of your spiritual gifts. When you were born again spiritually, God gave you the innate, supernatural ability to minister. Those gifts may have been lying dormant in your life for years and years, but they are there! When you bring a baby home from the hospital, that baby has within his muscles and his mind the ability to drive a car. It’s just he will not fulfill it for about sixteen years. You don’t dare put an infant behind the steering wheel of a car. When he gets ready to drive, he doesn’t have to go back to the doctor and say, “Doctor, I need some more parts because I am ready to drive now.” No! It’s there in something he developed. When you were born again, the Holy Spirit of God gave you a supernatural birthday present, a spiritual birthday present—spiritual gifts. They could have been lying there covered up for many, many years. Your job is to discover what those gifts are and begin to use them so you will utilize them!

2. There are different kinds of service

I want you to see the diversity of the gifts. Look at verse 4, 5, and 6 again, because you can’t just nail down that spiritual gifts are any one thing. The Bible uses a variety of words. Look at verse 4. It says, “There are different kinds of gifts.” That is the word, *charismaton*, which literally means “grace gifts,” gifts that are given that you do not deserve. Look down at verse: “There are different kinds of service.” It’s talking about the same thing, but it uses a different word. That is the Greek word, *diakonia*, which means *service*. We get our word “deacon” from that. It is a word that literally means “to humbly serve.”

3. There are different kinds of working

Number two, verse 6 says, “There are different kinds of working,” That is the word, *energeia*. We get our word, “energy” from that. That means “working.” The Bible uses these three different words for spiritual gifts, but if you will look over there it says, “There are different kinds of gifts, different kinds of service, different kinds of working but there in ONE God ONE Lord ONE Spirit ONE God!” This is saying there is great unity in our diversity. I am so glad you are not like me, and I know you are glad you are not like me too! Wouldn’t it be terribly boring if we had a church full of David Dykes? Everybody would want to preach all the time! I’m just glad you have different gifts than I do, because you have gifts I don’t have. I need you, and because I may have some gifts some of you don’t have, you need me, and we need each other. Gifts work in a sense of cooperation—cooperation not competition. We never compete in the body of Christ. We always cooperate. That’s how you can tell what your gifts are.

We have people in our church who are gifted to teach the Bible and I believe they do a better job of it than I do. I believe we have some folks in our church who can preach better than I can. But I’m not at all jealous of them. I don’t say, “Well, gosh you preach better than I do!” I just say, “Man, go for it! Do it! I’m proud of you! Do it!” Because when you really understand what your gifts are, there is no competition. There is cooperation.

It’s like these two guys who are out bear hunting and come across a big, ole bear and they empty their guns on that bear but it doesn’t stop him. He just gets madder and starts running after the hunters. They take their guns and throw them at that bear and turn and run for their lives. But the bear is breathing down their necks and he’s about to catch up with them. One of the guys running next to him starts kicking off his hunting boots so he can run faster. The fellow beside him running says, “Man, you can’t outrun that bear! Why are you kicking off your boots?” The guy looked at him and said, “I don’t have to outrun that bear. I just have to outrun you!” I always think about that story, because in the body of Christ it seems like we have too many people trying to outrun each other trying to outdo each other. Gifts are not for competition, they are for cooperation.

Look at those three words that describe what you have. This is talking about you. This is not talking about the people at Corinth. This is you and me: *Charismaton*. Sometimes we talk about charismatic churches. That means one thing to some people, but the Bible word for charismatic is a good word, which simply means “grace gifts.” There are some differences between what we call “Bible Greek” called Koine Greek and the Modern Greek spoken today. This is one of the words, *charismaton*, that they still use in Greece today. If you went to a birthday party and brought a wrapped gift and gave it to somebody, do you know what they would call that today in modern Greece? A *charismaton*, same word. It is a gift. A gift is something you don’t deserve and that’s the nature of grace. If somebody gives you something because you deserve it, that’s not a gift—that’s payment. You’ve earned it! And a gift is something you are given that you don’t deserve. None of us deserves spiritual gifts. God just says, “I’m going to give you this so you can serve!”

The second word there *diakonia* as I have already said is our word for “deacon.” It is a word describing what spiritual gifts are for. They are to serve others. They are to help others. They are never to be used selfishly, but always unselfishly. Then, that last word, “working” it is our word for “energy, energizing.” Some of you have discovered your spiritual gift and are using it right now in ministry. When you use it, it seems you are energized by the Holy Spirit and it seems like good is accomplished and the body of Christ is built up. When you are trying to do the wrong thing, that’s not what is happening and that’s what spiritual gifts are for. Grace gifts service energizing by the Holy Spirit. The diversity that leads to unity.

I’ll never forget a picture I saw in *Life Magazine* a number of years ago; it is a beautiful picture of spiritual gifts. There were two soldiers in the Argentine Army. One of them was a big, hulking, large man and in his arms he carried a smaller man who had no legs. The picture had a caption under it that spoke of these two soldiers who went everywhere together, because the large man was blind! The man with no legs, of course, could not walk. So the large man carried the man with no legs who had eyes and he became the eyes for the big, blind man and the big, blind man became the legs for the man who had no legs. We call that a symbiotic relationship, where we all benefit from each other and we all need each other. That’s what the body of Christ is. When you are not using your gifts and utilizing your gifts, it’s not happening. So, that’s why it’s imperative you find out what your spiritual gift is so we can all work together.

III. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN USES HIS GIFTS TO SERVE OTHERS

1. Spiritual gifts are for employment, not enjoyment

The third statement about spirit-filled Christians is: A spirit-filled Christian uses his gifts to serve others. There is so much confusion about spiritual gifts. Let me make this statement and this is so critical to understanding it. Number one: Spiritual gifts are for employment not enjoyment. That’s why there is so much danger in the gift of tongues and some of the more supernatural-oriented gifts, because some people want to get some kind of gift so they can have some kind of a freakish experience. They want to feel good so they are looking for some kind of enjoyment. Even though I enjoy preaching and teaching, I don’t do it for enjoyment—I do it because God called me to do it and gifted me to do it. That’s my part in the body of Christ. So, you have spiritual gifts and you are to use those gifts to serve the Lord in employment. They are not for your personal enjoyment. They are always to help other people, never selfish always unselfish.

2. Spiritual gifts are by God’s sovereignty, not our selection

Here’s another distinction about spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are by God’s sovereignty, not our selection. Verse 11 says, “All of these,” meaning all of these spiritual gifts “are the work of the one and the same Spirit, he gives them to each man just as he determines.” Not as we desire! Some say, “Well, here are the gifts wisdom, knowledge, teaching, preaching, mercy, giving, and faith. I think I want this gift. I want the gift of wisdom or I want the gift of knowledge. Hey, I want the gift of tongues or let’s see, I want the gift of faith!” They almost use it like a shopping list, saying, “I want that one! I *don’t* want that one! I want that one! I *don’t* want that one.” It is NOT your selection. It is not up to you and it is not up to me. Why? Turn to 1 Corinthians 12:31. “But eagerly desire the greater gifts.” Why does it say that if you say you are not supposed to seek a certain gift? Why does it say, “eagerly desire the greater gifts?” That word, *eagerly desire* is in the plural, very simple. Paul is talking to a church and he says, “You as a church had better pray for and seek the better gifts.” What are the better gifts? Only two of them are compared. We know for certain preaching is a greater gift than tongues. That’s what chapter 14 is all about. So what Paul is saying here is, “If you have a church full of people speaking in tongues, you had better seek those with greater gifts. You’d better seek somebody for your body that has the gift of preaching!”

It is not up to us individually to desire or to seek any one gift or to avoid any gift. It is up to God to give it to us as He determines. There is a list in verse 12:8 and 28. “God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, those speaking in different kinds of tongues.” There’s another list. There’s also a list in Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11-13 and a short list in 1 Peter 4:10-11. From these four different lists, some gifts appear on all lists and some appear only once. There are about 18 different spiritual gifts that are mentioned. The debate is, “Are there other spiritual gifts that aren’t mentioned in the Bible?” Well I never try to confine God and say He can’t do that, but I feel restricted to talk about just these 18 gifts, because to go beyond goes beyond the teaching of scripture. But I believe everybody in this room, every born-again believer has at least one of those 18 gifts that you want to use in service for the Lord. How wonderful it is when all the gifts are working together!

WARNING: It is possible to be gifted without being godly

Paul is really writing all of this as a corrective, because the church at Corinth was confused about it. There are a couple of warnings I need to give you at the close. Here they are. Danger! Danger! It is possible to be gifted without being godly. Did you see the title of this message? “Seek The Giver Not the Gifts”? A Spiritual Gift is a supernatural ability you are given and it can only function best when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, but it is possible for you to exercise that gift in a carnal sense. I have heard horror stories of men who could stand up and preach like apostles and then go out and commit all kinds of terrible sins. They are gifted by God it seems, but then there is no godly fruit in their lives.

The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit are two totally different things. The gift of the Spirit is an ability to minister that God has given you but the fruits of the Spirit are those Christ-like characteristics the Spirit creates in us. Gifts are not the evidence of holiness in your life. Fruit is the evidence of holiness in your life. Sometimes people have some kind of sense of spiritual pride, because they speak in tongues or something. That is not the sign of spiritual maturity. The sign of spiritual maturity is the fruit of the spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, endless goodness, meekness, faith and self control. Just stop on that first one: Love. Right in the middle of this discussion of spiritual gifts, what does Paul do? 1 Corinthians 13:1, He says, “I don’t care if you can pray like an angel and talk like an angel in tongues. I don’t care if you give everything to the poor. I don’t care if you can preach down the stars. If you don’t have love you are a big, fat zero!” You can see being godly is even more important than being gifted. By the way that’s the problem at Corinth. They had all kinds of gifts, but not much godliness.

WARNING: It is possible to seek an experience instead of the Lord

Then the final warning here is: Danger! It is possible to seek an experience instead of the Lord. Anything that has to do with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, anything that is supernatural in nature tends to make people curious and they want to look into it for the sake of the experience itself. I’ll be the first one to tell you that there really is something amazingly supernatural about spiritual gifts. If you don’t believe it, just look at me! If you could have seen me as a twelve-year-old boy, I could not stand up in a church training class and give a part—I was too shy. I was too nervous to speak. The thought of standing up in front of about six or seven of my friends and talking out loud to them was so terrifying, I broke out in a sweat just thinking about it! But once I started preaching and exercising that spiritual gift, I want to tell you there is no fear; there is always that excitement—but there is no fear. Sometimes, people say, “Oh, Pastor. You are a great preacher!” And I appreciate you saying that if you feel that way but I cannot take any credit whatsoever, because the gift is from God. I didn’t earn it. I didn’t conjure it on my own, but in this experience, seeking God must continue to be my first priority. As you discover what your spiritual gifts are, seeking the face of the Lord is more important than seeking some kind of supernatural experience that occurs whenever you exercise your spiritual gifts.

I came across an interesting allegory the other day about how some people in the church are so miserable, because they are trying to do the wrong thing. It’s an allegory taken from a story about some animals. Once upon a time the animals decided they should do something meaningful to meet the problems of the New World, so they organized a school. They adopted an

activity curriculum of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all of the animals took all of the subjects. Now the duck was excellent in swimming. In fact, he was better than the instructor, but he only made passing grades in flying and he was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to drop swimming and stay after school and practice running. This caused his webbed feet to be badly worn, so he became only average in swimming but average was quite acceptable, so nobody worried about that except the duck. Now the rabbit started at the top of his class in running, but he developed a nervous twitch in his leg muscles, because he had to take so much makeup work in swimming. Soon, he was no good at running. The squirrel was excellent in climbing, but he encountered constant frustration in flying class, because his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the treetop down. He developed charley-horses from overexertion. So, he only got a C in climbing and a D in running. Now the eagle was a real problem. He was severely disciplined for being a non-conformist. In climbing classes he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but he insisted on getting there his own way. Well, the story stops there, because you can see how ridiculous it is. You have a duck that can swim, but because he can't run too well, he quits concentrating on swimming to improve his running. You have a rabbit that can run, but he can't swim so he quits concentrating on running to work on swimming. So what's the message? Some of you are gifted in certain areas of the church and you know you are gifted there, but you find something over here that you think needs to be done so do you know what you say? “I feel so guilty about not doing it or it not getting done, I think I'm going to get over there and do it.” And you quit doing what you are gifted to do! You have caused two problems: Number one, you have vacated what you are gifted to do and number two you have stepped in somebody's slot who is gifted to do that. Because you are trying to do it, they are not going to do it. It works so well when everybody knows what their gift is and they use it in ministry.

CONCLUSION

Friday night, Cindy and I went to hear the Air Force Symphony Band. The beautiful thing about it was that there were 40 or 50 instruments: You had your trombones; you had your tubas; you had your flutes; you had your clarinets; you had your percussion; and when you listen to all of that together, you really couldn't pick out one instrument above the other. Everyone was playing their part and the result was beautiful music. What a great picture of the church that is! Sometimes you may think, “Well, the orchestra is up here on stage and I'm the audience.” No! You are part of the orchestra; you are part of the body. Discover what your gift is and then begin to use it in ministry!

OUTLINE

A SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN WILL...

I. UNDERTAND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are:

1. Spiritual, not material
2. Supernatural, not natural
3. Given to energize the body of Christ

II. UTILIZE AT LEAST ONE SPIRITUAL GIFT

There are different kinds of:

1. Gifts
2. Service
3. Working

III. USE HIS GIFTS TO SERVE OTHERS

Spiritual gifts are:

1. For employment, not enjoyment
2. By God's sovereignty, not our selection

WARNING!

It is possible to:

1. Be gifted without being godly
2. Seek an experience instead of the Lord



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes