

Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts – Part 3 “Some Assembly Required”

1. Review
 - a. This is the third week that we have been exploring our spiritual gifts. By now, you should be familiar with what they are and why we have them. If you have been coming on Sunday nights, you likewise would be learning some practical ways to use them.
 - b. In today’s context, I am going to simplify the definition of a **spiritual gift - is the God-given capacity of every Christian to carry out his function in the body of Christ.**
2. Preview
 - a. Let me ask you this... what does your hand and your foot have in common? What about your hand and your liver? What does your spleen have in common with your kneecap? What does your head have in common with your back? Besides hair? What all these body parts have in common is, YOU.
 - b. If we could stand every true Christ follower in the world on this stage, and we could look at their lives and cultures and gifts and perspectives, we would be overwhelmed with their differences. We might even wonder what they all have in common.
 - i. What links us together is Jesus Christ.
 - ii. He is our common ground.
 - iii. He is our bond, he is our tie, he is our unity, He is our Savior, he is our Lord.
 - c. That brings us to our passage for today:
3. 1 Cor. 12:14-30
 - a. *14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*
 - b. *27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.*
4. I want to start off by saying that **The Church Is Not an Organization**
 - a. Christianity has become very organized, so much so that it sometimes appears to be just another religion among many..
 - i. I heard someone say that "When Christians get organized, they get very un- Christian."
 - b. While the church must have some organization, it is fundamentally an organism. That is why the illustration of a body is used in this passage.
 - i. The bible describes the church as: a bride, a vine and, a flock, a family – all living things, organic in nature!
 - ii. So, when God shows us a picture of the church, He shows it to us in organic terms -- in terms that say to us, "Everybody is a living part of it."
 - c. The church was never meant to be a structured organization run by professionals; **It has always been a living, breathing, vital organism.**
 - i. You know that a corpse is organized:.

1. A corpse has all the limbs in the right place, the bone structure is flawless, all the organs are in the right spot and connected to the right things -- everything is there -- but it is not living.
 2. It is an organization at that point, but it has ceased to be an organism because it isn't alive.¹
 - ii. Unfortunately, the church sometimes looks more like a corpse than a living body because we have not understood its purpose or our role in it.
5. Lets look closer at some of these passages:
- a. *For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be?*
 - b. This passage speaks to **a problem that exists in every church, the problem of inferiority.**
 - i. If there is one flaw I see common to almost every Christian it is that of thinking less of ourselves than we should.
 - ii. We mistake the exhortation to not think more highly of ourselves than we should as meaning that we should think BADLY of ourselves.
 1. If I ask how many of you are "saints" very few raise their hands because they think that refers to good people. But it refers to every person who has been blood bought and redeemed by Jesus.
 2. God made you, redeemed you, gifted you, and we dare to call His work inferior?
 - iii. You are important! You are indispensable! If any of you died this week, the church would not only mourn your departure, but also the gift that you were to all of us.
 - c. When April and Dirk left to move into their new home in Hiram Ohio, I thought the world was going to end. Both have been gifted leaders who have served here for years, and I knew the vacuum their absence would create.
 - i. *If you have ever been on boat in the water you will see that the boat leaves a wake in the water that can be seen as a trail for some time after the boat has gone. First there are the waves that ripple out from the bow and sides. Then there is a turbulent area where the prop has stirred the waters fiercely to propel the boat forward. It takes time and the effects of nature upon the water to bring it back into a state of calmness. That same effect is felt in the local church whenever a part of the body moves off to another place..*
 - ii. Whenever anyone leaves our church body, it leaves a vacuum, an empty spot. It is as if someone has torn off an arm or a finger from our body.
 - d. Just this past month, we have had several new people step up into positions of service and leadership. They have done so with fear and trembling, as just about anyone would who is doing something that they have never done before. But would you like to hear a secret? **(lean down as if you are going to speak quietly with them)**
 - i. **(shout)** I am so excited about the difference they are already making with their unique gifts!
 - ii. These folks who have stepped up this year to fill roles and to serve this year have been God's provision for our church.
 - iii. Maybe you haven't stepped up yet.
 1. Perhaps you don't know what God wants you to do.
 2. Perhaps you don't know what you can do.
 3. Perhaps you don't know you are needed.

¹ <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg1860.htm>

4. Perhaps you don't know you are wanted.
 - iv. But you are! And God has something SPECIAL for you to do that ONLY YOU can do!
- e. Don't think of yourself as inferior to someone else in this congregation because you only do this job, or that job, and they do a more important job.
 - i. If the mayor of a city goes AWOL for three weeks, life would still continue and others would pick up the pieces and carry on. There probably wouldn't be too much of a disturbance.
 - ii. But if the refuse collectors went AWOL for three weeks, the city would be in a real mess and it would cause all kinds of problems
 - iii. You are needed. You are wanted. What else do I have to say to you? You can make a difference, here and in the kingdom of God
6. *20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."*
 - a. Can you imagine someone cutting off their own foot or hand because they didn't think they would need it anymore?
 - b. When we begin to cast blame for our church's failures, we are expressing an attitude of superiority.
 - i. **Superiority strangles strength from a body.**
 - ii. When someone says, "You aren't like me...you aren't as good as me. Your gift doesn't produce what mine does, you don't do things the "right" way (my way that is)." They are expressing superiority.
 - iii. Superiority is rooted in pride and self-centeredness.
 - iv. Superiority will drive other gifted people out of ministry and onto the sidelines.
 1. You may remember a few years ago when Snoopy, the lovable beagle in the Peanuts cartoon, had his left leg broken. Hundreds wrote letters to Snoopy or sent sympathy cards. Snoopy himself philosophized about his plight one day while perched on top of his doghouse and looking at the huge white cast on his leg. "My body blames my foot for not being able to go places. My foot says it was my head's fault, and my head blamed my eyes.... My eyes say my feet are clumsy, and my right foot says not to blame him for what my left foot did...." Snoopy looks out at his audience and confesses, "I don't say anything because I don't want to get involved."
 - v. Superiority says, "everyone ought to be a nose like me!"
 - vi. Aren't you glad that your face isn't made up of one huge nose or even a collection of noses!
 - c. Let me take an aside here and tell you a principle that isn't in your notes.
 - i. **Your greatest strength is your greatest weakness.**
 1. Whatever your greatest spiritual gift is will also be your greatest flaw when your flesh is in control.
 - A. If you have a spiritual gift of administration, when your flesh is running things, it will manifest itself as a controlling spirit.
 - B. If you have the spiritual gift of mercy, when your flesh is in control instead of the Spirit, you will let the guilty go free and hold no one accountable for his or her actions.
 2. All of the fruits of the flesh will try to counterfeit the work of the Spirit because the flesh loves attention, loves to take credit, loves to pat itself on the back.
 - ii. Watch your gifts or you will try to make the body a big nose!
7. *22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more*

abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it.

- a. Paul is speaking here of the need for diversity - all not doing the same thing, but pursuing the same goal
 - i. Imagine a football team where everyone played quarterback!
 - ii. The key here is that **The body needs all its parts!**
- b. In verse 22 Paul talks about the members of the body that are "more feeble." That means that they are weaker.
 - i. Now, in this metaphor we are moving deeper into the body. Since verse 21 is dealing with hands and feet and eyes and ears (the outward), this part of the metaphor takes us deeper into the less showy, the less obvious, the less out-front, the less prominent members. They are more feeble, but they are necessary.
 - ii. What are these organs? They are the internal organs of the body -- the lungs, the stomach, the liver, the kidneys, and all the other organs.
 1. These internal organs are completely hidden from view, yet they are vital and essential to sustaining life.
 2. So, in this sense they are weaker. The only protection afforded them is from the other parts of the body. Paul is saying, "There are some members who are so feeble that they are totally dependent on the protection of some of the other members.
 3. They are not intended to be out front."
 4. You wouldn't live very long if you went around with your lungs hanging outside of you. They would not be able to handle the environment.
 - iii. When I think about this verse, I think about the support ministries, particularly that of secretary, grounds and facilities, and those who clean the church
 - iv. Just allow the toilets to stop up and see how much the church will hurt. Just allow the A/C units or the heaters to stop and see how much it hurts the body. Just allow the floors to stay dirty or the dust to gather in heaps and see if the body won't notice. Just let one part of any ministry go undone and the whole body will begin to suffer as a result.
- c. Now what happens when a part of the body becomes ill?
 - i. We go to the doctor in most cases and seek his help. He gives us therapy, medicine, and, in extreme cases, performs surgery to correct or remove the problem with the part of the body that is ill.
 - ii. **Dizzy Dean was one of the greatest--and most colorful--baseball pitchers of all time. He once won 30 games in a season. He and his brother, who was nicknamed Daffy, each pitched two victories for the St. Louis Cardinals in the 1934 World Series, which St. Louis won, 4 games to 3. One day earlier that season, Dizzy Dean swaggered into the opposing team's locker room and told each hitter exactly how he would pitch to him, and then went out and pitched a shutout, winning 13-0. But one day in 1937, Dizzy hurt his big toe--a minor injury, nothing important. After all, it was only a toe, you know? But it was important. He began favoring that toe, which affected his pitching motion, which affected his arm. And by the time he started to consider that little toe to be important, and took his injury seriously, his pitching arm was so severely affected that his career was over. Because, you see, the pitching arm cannot say to the big toe, "You're not important; I don't need you**
- d. Many of us couldn't survive being on the stage or playing a musical instrument in front of others, or teaching a group of people. God made you too fragile for that. Instead, He made you to be a heart, a lung or a spleen (that sounds bad) – you are called to pray, to serve quietly, to give secretly...in a real sense, **be what makes it possible for the rest of the body to live.**
 - i. If that is you...I want you to realize today that you have a vital role in this church.
 - ii. This church CANNOT survive without daily prayer support of its people.

- iii. If God made you a behind the scenes person, then prayer may be the way you serve.
 - iv. **Don't stop pumping blood!** This church will DIE without you!
 - v. This is because **no part of the body can operate alone**
 - 1. You cannot have one organ.
 - 2. The body cannot just be an eye, or an ear, or a nose.
 - 3. One organ, no matter how prominent it is, cannot survive alone.
 - 4. You can't cut off your ear, set it down, and say, "I have to leave. Would you hang around and listen? Maybe you can pick up some information while I'm gone."
8. *24b But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*
- a. **The body operates best when it is united**
 - i. I don't know if you have ever witnessed an epileptic seizure. The entire body loses its coordination and does its own thing because of the way that the brain sends signals to the body.
 - ii. DID YOU SEE HOW WELL WE WORKED TOGETHER WHEN WE DID OUR VBS, AND SOCCER CAMP? United in purpose, working together to reach kids for Jesus!
 - b. Not doing your own thing.
 - c. Vince Lombardi was asked what it takes to have a winning team. He said: *There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game. Then you come to the third ingredient: if you're going to play together as a team, you've got to care for one another. You've got to love each other. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself "If I don't block that man, Al is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his."*
9. *And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it*
- a. If your thumb hurts, the rest of your body hurts. If you have a stomach ache, you can't do much else. This is called interdependence.
 - i. It is the way we were created. It is also the way that the body of Christ is supposed to function.
 - ii. If you are hurting, absent, missing...the rest of us feel it.
 - iii. We cannot do what God called us to if you aren't walking with the Lord.
 - iv. If you got sin in your life, you hurt all of us!
 - v. If you have joy in your life, we all are joyous!
 - b. When the body is ill it is usually because one or more of its members are sick...an unattended cut can let an infection into the bloodstream.
 - i. The local church follows that same pattern as well.
 - 1. The church begins to hurt when someone who is supposed to do a work begins to be unfaithful
 - ii. *The parts of the body work together. The eyes and ears do not only serve themselves, but the whole body. The hands do not only feed and defend themselves, but the whole body. The heart does not only supply blood to itself, but serves the whole body. Sometimes there is a part of our body which only lives to serve itself. It doesn't contribute anything to the rest of the body, and everything it gets it uses to feed and grow itself. **We call this cancer.***
 - c. **ONE PART OF THE BODY** – each gift has a role, each of us has a gift to give.
 - i. If you don't use your gift. . (bad stewardship), you're denying the people in the pew with you! Your gift belongs to them!
 - 1. Give them what belongs to them!
 - ii. Everyone should have received a Lego block before service. (Various sizes & shapes)

- iii. Now, what can you build with one Lego? (NOTHING!)
- iv. Some have received big blocks, others small blocks. . .but still can't build anything by yourself.

10. Invitation/Response - Actions Required:

- a. A baseball team had a game scheduled. It reminds me of what happens at many churches. Just as the umpire was saying, "Batter up," the catcher for the home team arrived and took his place behind the plate. The center fielder didn't show up at all but sent his regrets. The third baseman likewise failed to come to the game, having been up late the night before. The shortstop was present, but left his glove at home. Two of the substitute fielders were away on a weekend trip but said they were there in spirit. The pitcher went to the mound and looked around for his teammates. But his heart was heavy, for their positions were empty. The game was announced, the visitors were in the stands, and there was nothing to do but pitch the ball and hope for the best. But in addition to pitching, he had to cover first and third base, as well as shortstop and center field. When the absent players heard that their team had lost, they were furious. They held a meeting and decided to get a new pitcher.
 - i. Why did this team lose? Was it because the pitcher couldn't pitch a perfect curve ball? Was it because his fastball wasn't fast enough? Or was it because the pitcher just couldn't do it all by himself?
 - ii. You see, we all have a spot, or a position on the field. NOBODY is a bench warmer. But you have to decide to play the game. The first thing you have to do is show up. You have to have the ability to show up. You can't play the game if you're not even in the vicinity of the field.
- b. Get off the bench and into the game of life. There's room for you. No limit on the number of people on the field. We won't get penalized if we have more than 11 people serving!
- c. You may have been hesitating joining this church for one reason or another. God wants to use you here to make a difference.
- d. Maybe you have been here but have been sitting on the sidelines for some reason. Won't you get back into the fight? We need you.

11. There is an action I would like to ask of everyone here today – to make a choice to be a part of the body and not a spectator or watcher from afar.

- a. During our time of invitation I would like you and your family to come forward and add your lego, "your gift" to the legos that are on the altar. Connect it to the others that are here.
- b. It doesn't matter what the finished product looks like...the key is that you make a commitment by doing this to give your gift, whether big or small to the rest of the body. Let God use you.
- c. Decide, no holding back any more. Tell Him "I'll let you use me!"

12. Let's pray.