

Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts – Part I

Pre-Sermon Review: Last week I spoke about our need to be in the world but not of it. I talked a bit about what worldliness looked like, what its effects on us are, and an important way to prevent it overtaking us. I call it focusing on your mission more than your duty. If you recall, duty is the stuff we are supposed to “do” like live morally, tithe, serve others, etc. But duty doesn’t define you, it won’t make a difference in the world. But Mission will. I used an illustration of 5 people who went into a bar...3 went in to get their needs met while the other two went in on a mission...a cop and a counselor. They wouldn’t get involved in the culture of the bar because it would interfere with their mission. You and I are in this world...and this is the important part, not to meet our needs, but to meet the needs of others with Jesus Christ. He is our Mission. His Kingdom is why we are here. So when you go to the store, when you go out to eat...don’t forget the REAL reason you are there. Yes, you are there to get something, but that’s not the real reason, it is to meet someone else’s need with Jesus. I want to show you just one example of how you can approach eating out as a mission instead of just going to get your needs met. (show 2 minute video)

1. Overview and Introduction

- a. Promise of Power – do you want a religion that is just that...a religion? Or do you want to experience the Supernatural power of God in daily life?
- b. Would you like to experience the promise of Pentecost which isn’t found in works and the power of what we can do, but rather in faith and the power of what God can do through us?
- c. God has a plan for each of us to experience first hand His power and supernatural working in our daily lives so that we make a eternal difference here in our world. Is that what you want?
 - i. Or are you willing to simply settle for just enough power, just enough of His grace and His Holy Spirit to get through life?
 - ii. Our lives will be petty and mundane without His power.
 - iii. Our lives will be self-serving and meaningless if all we want is enough of His power to help us just survive another meaningless day.
- d. I believe that we have spent our spiritual capital on ourselves, we haven’t given it away as God has called us to...and as a result we are spiritually impoverished! Look around us and you will see two problems:
 - i. **Too few Christians are involved in any kind of ministry within the local church.**
 1. They conceive of themselves as spectators rather than participants. These ‘spectators’ miss the joy of being actively involved in ministry and of seeing God work through them in the exercise of their spiritual gifts.
 2. They have 100 reasons why they can’t do something but the truth is that they are consumers and not givers.
 - ii. **Another problem is with those who are actively involved in the ministry of the local church, but who are not serving in a ministry utilizes their spiritual gifts.**
 1. Their dilemma is illustrated by the story of a certain sea captain and his chief engineer who were having an argument as to which one of them was the more important to the ship. Failing to agree, they resorted to the unique idea of swapping places. The chief ascended to the bridge, and the captain went into the engine room. After a couple of hours, the captain suddenly appeared on the deck covered with oil and soot.
 2. “Chief!” he yelled, wildly waving aloft a monkey wrench. “You’ll have to come down here; I can’t make her go!”
 3. “Of course you can’t,” replied the chief. “She’s aground!”¹

2. Scripture Analysis:

¹ Bob Deffinbaugh
Bob Higgins

- a. How many of you know pretty well what your spiritual gifts are...and are using them?
 - i. Joe tells me the last time our church did a spiritual gift assessment has been probably 7 years or so ago.
 - ii. How many of you were here 7 years ago for that experience?
- b. Paul says something very poignant in 1 Cor 12:1 *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.”*
 - i. Paul is saying here that he does not want us to be unaware when it comes to our spiritual gifts.
 1. He doesn’t want us to be “in the dark,” uninformed, without understanding, mistaken, without a clue.
 2. We are not to be IGNORANT when it comes to our spiritual gifts!
 - ii. Statistics:
 1. 29% of all Christian adults - and 40% of younger Christian adults - have never heard of spiritual gifts
 2. 69% of Christians have heard of spiritual gifts but do not know what their spiritual gift is
 3. Are you one of them? Don’t feel bad, you are in good company and the church has failed you.
- c. Why did Paul tell the church in Corinth that he didn’t want them to be ignorant or uninformed about spiritual gifts? I found a several reasons, a few of which are still true today:
 - i. The Corinthians had confused pagan worship with Christian worship.
 - ii. They thought spiritual gifts made them "more spiritual" than anybody else.
 - iii. They sought the gift and not the giver.
 - iv. They were misusing the spiritual gifts.
- d. This leads us to the question, **“Why is it important that you and I know our gift?”**
 - i. **The prominence of the subject spiritual gifts in Scripture.**
 1. One of the ways we can measure the importance of a principle or a doctrine is to determine the amount of space devoted to it in the Bible.
 2. Subjects mentioned infrequently should not be regarded as crucial as those which are frequently mentioned.
 3. Using this standard of measurement, the subject of spiritual gifts is a vital one, b/c spiritual gifts are addressed specifically in four major portions of Scripture:
 - a. 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14; Romans chapter 12; Ephesians chapter 4; and 1 Peter chapter 4.
 - b. In addition to these central passages, spiritual gifts are mentioned in passing in numerous places elsewhere in the Bible.
 - c. Spiritual gifts are important to the Spirit of God Who inspired the writing of the Word of God and therefore they should be important to us.
 - ii. **The elementary nature of spiritual gifts.**
 1. When the book of First Corinthians was written, it was addressed to those who were not very mature in the faith.
 2. Most of the things Paul wrote about in this book were not matters of the ‘deeper life,’ but rather dealt with the elemental truths of the Christian life.
 3. **Because of the emphasis on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians, we have to conclude that the doctrine of spiritual gifts is important and that it is foundational and fundamental to the Christian life.**
 - iii. **Spiritual gifts are a matter of individual stewardship.**
 1. When Peter spoke of spiritual gifts in his first epistle, he considered them a matter of personal stewardship:
 2. *“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”* (1 Peter 4:10).

- a. Whenever the word “steward” or “stewardship” is mentioned, it means that we must give account of our use of something that God has placed under our control. In this case, we are held accountable for the use of our spiritual gifts.
- iv. **Knowing your spiritual gift(s) will enable you to find your place of ministry in the local church.**
 - 1. Every Christian has an unique function in the body of Christ, and your spiritual gifts equip you to carry out this function.
 - 2. Wouldn't it be really exciting to discover God's special and unique place of service and ministry where you can make a difference?
 - 3. I spoke to someone in the church who was running some special errands for some shut ins this week. I asked her, “don't you just hate to go out in the rain?” Do you know what her answer was? “Aw, when I see the faces of these people when I show up on their doorstep, I don't care what kind of weather it is!” There is a person operating in their gift!
- v. **Knowing your spiritual gift(s) will enable you to set your priorities.**
 - 1. One of the most common problems we all face is having more things to do than we have time to do them.
 - 2. Paul indicates in Romans chapter twelve, that we should make the use of our spiritual gifts a priority in our lives.
 - 3. Knowing your spiritual gifts helps to establish your priorities.
- vi. **Knowing your spiritual gift(s) will help in discerning God's will.**
 - 1. There is a very distinct relationship between knowing the will of God (Romans 12:1-2) and understanding your spiritual gift (Romans 12:3-8). God will primarily use you in the areas of your gifting.
 - 2. There are exceptions to this truth...which I will go into detail in another sermon.
- vii. *"No local congregation will be what it should be, what Jesus prayed that it would be, what the Holy Spirit gifted it and empowered it to be, until it understands spiritual gifts."*
-John MacArthur

3. 1 Cor 12:4-11 *“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills”.*

- a. The gifts were causing problems in Corinth. There was, apparently, a belief that some gifts were greater than others, giving those who possessed them, an air of superiority, a feeling that they were better Christians because of their special gift. Others without the gift in question would become dissatisfied with their own gift or lack of any apparent gift and, perhaps, consider themselves and others like them to be inferior Christians.
- b. Did you notice how many times Paul said, “by the same Spirit” in this passage I just read?
 - i. He is trying to get across the point that every spiritual gift is of equal value in God's sight!

4. For the common good:

- a. v7 *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*
- b. This verse answers the question of why God gave us spiritual gifts.
 - i. If we were given spiritual gifts to make ourselves feel good, He would have said so.

- ii. If we were given spiritual gifts to help us survive another day, He would have said so.
- iii. But it says they were given for the COMMON good.
 - 1. They are given to us to use so that the church and the world can benefit.
 - 2. **Spiritual gifts are given to us to give away!**
 - 3. They only work the way God intended them to work when we use them for the benefit of others (and not for our selfish goals).
 - 4. Rick Warren said, “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.”
- c. This verse also tells us what these gifts are... **Spiritual Gifts are the MANIFESTATION of the Spirit.** THIS IS IMPORTANT FOLKS:
 - i. When the gifts that we have are being used, when they are active, what happens is the work of the Holy Spirit becomes VISIBLE.
 - ii. You and others see the Hand of God.
 - iii. You and others see the Power of God at work
 - iv. Many times I hear people say they wish they could see the glory of God.
 - 1. I got news for you! The glory of God is made visible, is manifested every time someone uses their spiritual gifts!
 - 2. I get excited when I realize this truth!
 - 3. Whenever Dorothy shares the spiritual treasures that God has shown her in her preparation for teaching with her Sunday School class, when she exercises her spiritual gift of teaching...God becomes manifest!
 - 4. Whenever ...Twila ~ Hospitality; Bee ~ Service; Suzie ~ Administration; we see God at work!
- 5. Paul goes on to describe a short illustrative but not exhaustive list of spiritual gifts, concluding in verse 11 with *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*
 - a. We are not going to examine the specific gifts today, but rather the why and how of the gifts.
 - i. You will want to come tonight to learn more about the specific gifts and to receive your spiritual gift analysis. We are going to learn how to use them and how we can develop them on Sunday evenings for the next few weeks. I encourage you to come tonight so that you can get on page one with us!
 - b. Verse 11 tells us that the Spirit of God gives gifts to each one of us as He sovereignly chooses.
 - i. That means that **there is no room to brag about your gifts.** Why?
 - 1. Trying to take credit for your spiritual gift is like “trying to take credit for the sun coming up in the morning!”
 - 2. Well, you didn’t do something to deserve your spiritual gift, you didn’t earn the gift...if you did, it wouldn’t be called a gift but a reward!
 - 3. When someone compares their gift to someone else’s, as if they haven’t passed the “spirituality test” because they don’t have their gift...that is an exhibition of pride! It is immature and it is sin!
 - 4. Instead of looking at what gift people don’t have, or comparing someone else or ourselves to someone else, we need to celebrate the gift that God has given us or them!
 - c. There is a danger of defining Spiritual Gifts in Terms of the Spectacular
 - i. One of the things which distresses me most about spiritual gifts is the way we define the various gifts by the use of giants of the faith. T

1. The gift of teaching is the gift of A.T. Robinson, the gift of faith is the gift of George Mueller, the gift of giving is the gift of Le Tourneau, the gift of evangelism is the gift of Billy Graham.
 - ii. When we do this, we have made two serious mistakes.
 1. One is that when we focus upon extraordinary gifts, most of us are never going to get close to that person's level of effectiveness.
 - a. A person who wins several to Christ in a year would not dare to suggest that his gift was the same as that of Billy Graham.
 - b. A woman with the gift of faith who is trusting God to get her husband through seminary would not think of claiming to possess the same gift as George Mueller.
 2. In addition to confusing the effectiveness of different individuals with the same spiritual gift, we also ignore the different spheres of ministry which God has for the same gift.
 - a. We erroneously suppose that evangelism must take place in a coliseum, rather than around a coffee table.
 - b. We think teaching must be done behind a pulpit or in a Sunday School room, rather than on the back porch or around the kitchen table with several neighbors.
 - c. It is no wonder that many of us seriously question whether or not we possess some spiritual gift.
 - d. It is because we are trying to measure their gifts against the giants.
 - e. We are to compare our gift to no one!
 - d. This verse 11 also implies that **each one of us has a spiritual gift**.
 - i. You weren't left out when the gifts were given!
 - ii. This isn't Christmas where your name was forgotten.
 - iii. Every born-again believer received at least one spiritual gift when they became a Christian.
 - iv. Now, you may not know what it is yet. But you have one!
 - v. You may not know how to use it, but you have one!
 - vi. You may not understand it, but it doesn't change the fact that you have at least one spiritual gift that God has given to you, intended so that you can do your UNIQUE job in His Kingdom!
 - vii. Too many of us stumble through life with a inferiority complex: We say "I'm not special. I'm not smart. I don't have anything to bring to the table in terms of serving God." But today's Bible passage proves that everyone has a ministry!
 - viii. Every Christian has a gift that they can use to make their mark for the kingdom of God.
6. Let's back up a bit and talk about what Spiritual Gifts are and are not.
- a. **A spiritual gift is a supernatural empowerment, given at the moment of your new birth, that will produce supernatural results through our ordinary, but faith driven efforts.**
 - b. What they are not:
 - i. **Spiritual gifts should not be confused with talents or abilities**, although they may overlap.
 1. Everyone, Christian or not, possesses certain natural talents.
 2. **Talents tend give us our self-identity.**
 - a. When I ask people what they do for a living they don't say, "I operate a forklift. They say, "I AM a forklift operator." (identity is stated in their ability)
 3. Talents are usually physical traits or abilities that we have gotten at birth and developed over our lives. .

4. Eg: If you went to school to be a school teacher, and you have an ability to communicate facts to people, that is not a *spiritual gift* of teaching. It is the talent or ability of teaching. For the spiritual gift of teaching to be evidenced, one would discover that whenever they teach that God communicates His truths through them!
 5. Eg. If you could sing before you met Jesus, singing is your natural (as opposed to supernatural) talent. Yes, you should use your talents for God. But it is different from your *supernatural spiritual gift*.
- ii. **Spiritual gifts should not be confused with the “fruits of the spirit”** which are PRODUCTS of “abiding in Christ.”
 1. The fruit of the Spirit is evidenced in your character.
 2. Your character is defined as what is left after you "*habitually do the right thing in the right way.*"
 3. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance (self control)" (Gal. 5:22, 23).
 4. Fruit is the product of Christ’s work in our lives.
 - iii. **Spiritual gifts should not be confused with ministry or office.**
 1. Ministry is the product of the gift’s use, an office is a title or role one has through which they may or may not use their gift.
 2. I serve in the OFFICE of pastor. But my primary spiritual gift is teaching. I believe God has given me gifting to help me to perform my office.
 3. You can serve in an OFFICE with a different gifting than the title of that office...
 - a. You can teach a SS Class of children without a gift of teaching. You may have the gift of encouragement or mercy which is vital.
 - b. You can work in a kitchen without the gift of hospitality. You may have the gift of service/helps.
 - iv. **Spiritual gifts should not be confused with spiritualism**, which is such things as fortune telling, divination, tea leaf reading, ESP. These things do access the spiritual dimension for their information and power, but they are not accessing God.
- c. **God gave you your spiritual gift for a specific purpose.**
 - i. You can come to church and walk through life, and just sit and receive, like a diner in a restaurant, letting others feed you while you don’t lift a hand to help.
 - ii. But if that’s you... then you’re missing out on one of the most joyous, most rewarding, most satisfying experiences that Jesus offers His followers.
 - iii. Not only are you missing out but we as your church are losing out..
 1. **Because you’ve been placed here to fill a specific need...**
 2. And you may be the ONLY person God has equipped with the gifting to meet that need. If you don’t do it, our church doesn’t accomplish its mission because you are “missing in action.”
 3. **Rick Warren said, “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.”**
 - d. A couple of last minute points:
 - i. We do not all have the same gifts
 - ii. None of the gifts are non-essential
 - iii. No single gift in itself is given to all believers, so no one gift may be used to signify salvation, sanctification or spiritual status.
 - iv. If you don’t use what you have been given, you will not receive any more! (as we can desire other gifts – to be discussed in another sermon).

7. Unwrapping Your Gifts:

- a. Dr. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ tells this story of a famous oil field called Yates Pool:
 - i. During the depression this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates wasn't able to make enough on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch.
 - ii. With little money for clothes or food, his family (like many others) had to live on government subsidy.
 - iii. Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told him there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract.
 - iv. At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, 30 years after the discovery, a government test of one of the wells showed it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day.
 - v. And Mr. Yates owned it all.
 - vi. The day he purchased the land he had received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he'd been living on relief.
 - vii. A multimillionaire living in poverty.
 - viii. The problem? He didn't know the oil was there even though he owned it.
- b. Many Christians live in spiritual poverty.
 - i. They are entitled to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and his energizing power, but they are not aware of their birthright.

8. How do we do it?

- a. There are several ways, and I suggest that you try to do ALL of them!
 - i. Ask God to show you your spiritual gift.
 1. Pray! You have not because you ask no.
 - ii. Consider your desires
 1. What drives you? I have a sticky spot in my brain that loves to collect facts. I can't remember conversations or relational details to save my life. But for some reason, certain details of other things stick like glue.
 2. I love to dig for truth. I have since I was a young Christian. I want to know what the truth is on almost any subject. It is a hunger and thirst for me. These point to my teaching gift.
 - iii. Accept the confirmation of others
 1. I was told as a young Christian that when I shared, that a light came on for some people in a bible study. Later, in a SS Class, I simply shared and the Min of Ed. Came to my house to ask if I would consider teaching an adult class. :Someone had observed my gift and passed on the info, confirming my gift.
 - iv. Evaluate how God has used you in the past.
 1. We will do this tonight.
 - v. Believe you are gifted – part of today's sermon was to help you realize that God has gifted you and that you have a special gift that noone else can take your place
 1. Perhaps you have been wondering how to make a difference. You have been sitting on the sidelines. You don't know what you can do. Or you are waiting for someone to ask you. Your gift will define your service.
 2. Will you commit to discovering anew your gift?
 3. Will you commit to giving your gift away?
 4. let's Pray!