

January 9th, 2021

# What Is My Spiritual Gift?

1 Corinthians 14:1

## We can't 'do Church' however we wish

1 Corinthians is largely a book on ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the church.<sup>1</sup> The first thing that *Christians* need to learn, is that we can't 'do Church' however we wish. That was the Corinthian's issue—they 'did Church' on their own terms. Throughout this letter, Paul rebukes them for their *church sins*: for making divisions (1:12); for disregarding discipline (ch. 5); for humiliating others at the Lord's Supper (11:17-34). Now beginning in 12, Paul began to talk about the spiritual gifts. These became such a point of division and abuse in the Church that Paul takes three chapters—12-14—to address them.

## Two ways to abuse the gifts

Now there are at least two ways to abuse the spiritual gifts: **First**, *We can over-emphasize them*. That is, we can turn the spiritual gifts into the be-all and end-all in the local Church. This was the Corinthian error. They placed the spiritual gifts above love. To this error, Paul spoke some of the most powerful words in all Scripture "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels...if I have prophetic powers...all faith...If I give away all I have,..deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, [I am nothing] I gain nothing." ἀγάπη *agapē* (love) is greater than χάρισμα *charisma* (the spiritual gifts). The fruits of the Spirit *are greater than* the gifts of the Spirit. To overemphasize the gifts—to place the above love—is the first way to abuse the gifts.

But the **second** way to abuse the gifts is to *under-emphasize them*—to ignore them. The Apostle doesn't want that. He says in our verse this morning "...

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<sup>1</sup> Each letter in the NT has different themes that they emphasize. Galatians and Romans are largely soteriological books, that is, they emphasize the doctrines of God, of man, and salvation. Colossians and Philippians are largely Christological books, that is, they emphasize the doctrine of Christ. The letters to Timothy and Titus are pastoral books, that is they teach how pastors ought to shepherd the church.

*earnestly desire* the spiritual gifts.” My goal this morning is that we not under-emphasize the gifts, but that we would earnestly desire them, that we would know what the gifts are, what our gifts are, and that we would use them to build one another up to the glory of God.

### *The Big Idea...*

God has empowered every Christian with a spiritual gift in order to build up the church, therefore we must earnestly desire the spiritual gifts

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

## I. Our Doctrine

### **Unleashing God’s truth one semi-colon at a time**

I know the running joke is that as I have been preaching through Corinthians, I’ve been taking it one semi-colon at a time. Perhaps there is truth to that *since* we’re only looking at half of verse one this morning. But there’s a method to this madness. What good what it be for us to go through three chapters on the spiritual gifts, and not stop and ask: *What is my spiritual gift(s)? How do I discover what my spiritual gift is? How can I use my spiritual gift?* That’s the goal this morning.

### **The first command: pursue love**

So please look with me at v.1. Notice there are two commands. The first command is to “pursue love.” The verb *pursue* means to *aggressively* chase after, like a *hunter* chasing after game. I remember hunting elk with my stepdad when

I was a teenager. On this one trip, my stepdad shot and missed the elk's vitals and shot him in the neck. And that elk took off, because the wound wasn't sufficient to put him down. For you hunters, you know this is a sickening feeling, because the last thing you want to do is to shoot an animal and have it go die somewhere where you can't find it. We spent hours pursuing that elk, chasing it down, following its tracks, its blood trail, we did not rest until we found it. It was all-consuming goal that day. That's the force behind this verb here.<sup>2</sup> Pursue love, as the all-consuming goal of your life. There's nothing more vital, nothing more important than this. If you don't have love, you are nothing, and you gain nothing.

### **The second command: earnestly desire the spiritual gifts**

But Paul doesn't want us to think in either/or categories. So he immediately adds the second command: "...and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts." That verb *earnestly desire* is one word in the Greek: ζήλος *zēlos*. Recall from chapter 13, that word is an onomatopoeia, meaning it is a word that sounds like what it is trying to describe. Zealous sounds like the boiling of water, the sizzling of heat. To earnestly desire is to burn with zeal. We should desire the spiritual gifts with a burning, boiling, sizzling zeal.

### **Is this a contradiction?**

Immediately someone might say: How can we earnestly desire to have gifts *if* God is the One who sovereignly distributes them? Look at **12:11** "All *these [the spiritual gifts]* are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as *he wills*." How do we reconcile these? How can Paul say that God apportions to each one as He chooses, and say that we should earnestly desire them? This is the same situation we find with salvation. That God is absolutely sovereign over salvation, He elects, He chooses (**Romans 9:16**). And man is told to pursue that salvation. **John 6:27** "Do

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<sup>2</sup> It's the same force behind how the seed of the serpent hates, pursues, and seeks to destroy the seed of the woman. Revelation 12:13 "And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he *pursued* the woman who had given birth to the male child."

not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life.”<sup>3</sup> God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. Lloyd-Jones points out that the same principle is at work here: the Sovereign Giver of the gifts and the intense desire we should have to possess the gifts. There is no contradiction. Paul is saying that all of us should have within us a desire to be of value and of service to the body of Christ. We should all be filled with a burning desire to see strengthen and edify each other. You see Paul is rebuking the attitude that says ‘let someone else do it.’ He’s rebuking that consumeristic heart that sits back and reaps the benefits of other’s labors while he himself does nothing. Belonging to a Church *means* that you would keenly desire to help and serve others. Anything less than that is unbiblical.

### Which gifts should we desire?

So then here’s the question: which gifts should we earnestly desire? Well look back back with me **12:31**. He says “But earnestly desire the *higher* gifts.” Meaning the best gifts. Do you see? Paul has made a hierarchy within the spiritual gifts. What are the higher gifts? Well that is what all of ch.14 is about. The higher gifts are those that profit *the whole body*, not just the individual.

### What happened to the sign gifts?

Therefore in our time this morning, we are *not* going to focus on several of the gifts,<sup>4</sup> and particularly the sign gifts—healing, miracles, tongues.<sup>5</sup> Why? **First**, because we are going to address *tongues*—the main sign gift in question—

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<sup>3</sup> NKJV

<sup>4</sup> Now there are different categories of gifts. To over-simplify, think of the spiritual gifts in two categories: **1)** the sign gifts and **2)** the supporting gifts. The *sign gifts* are those gifts which confirm the gospel thru the immediate intervening power of the Holy Spirit. The *supporting gifts* are those gifts which commend the gospel thru the Spirit-empowered works of the saints (Note: the ‘supporting gifts’ are no less miraculous than the ‘sign gifts’ because they come from the same Holy Spirit - 1 Corinthians 12:7).

<sup>5</sup> I think Robert L. Thomas 4 categories are generally helpful: Group 1: The Revelatory Gifts (wisdom, knowledge, apostleship, prophecy, and the distinguishing of spirits); Group 2: The Confirmatory Gifts (faith, healing, miracles, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues); Group 3: The Speaking Gifts (evangelism, teaching, pastor-teaching, and exhortation); Group 4: The Auxiliary Gifts (helps, showing mercy, giving, and administration). *Understanding Spiritual Gifts: A Verse-by-Verse Study of 1 Corinthians 12-14, Revised Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Kregel Publications, 1999), Appendix E

next week. **Second**, because the sign gifts are not the higher gifts—the better gifts—that profit the whole body as Paul makes clear in ch. 14.<sup>6</sup> **Third**, because of *how* the NT de-emphasizes the sign gifts once the local church is established. If you follow the narrative closely in the book of Acts you’ll notice a peculiar pattern.<sup>7</sup> When the gospel is first preached in any region—Jerusalem, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Cyprus, Iconium, Lystra—is accompanied by miraculous signs to confirm it. *But* when the Apostles revisit these cities—now with established local churches—in their subsequent missionary journeys, the reports of miraculous signs stop. Why? *Why* does Luke, the author of Acts, stop talking about the sign gifts when local churches were established in these places? Because the lesser miracles— healings, signs and wonders, tongues—gave way to the greater miracle: the local church.<sup>8</sup> The local church—the gathering of men and women, Jew and Gentile who have experienced the new birth—is a greater miracle than the sign gifts themselves. *That’s not to say* that I believe the sign gifts have come to an end. Think of it like this: when we teach our children to ride a bike, we put training wheels on the bike so they can keep their balance. But the training wheels give way to the greater glory once the child can ride on his own. Loved ones, ask yourself: *what is the greater glory*— healings, miracles, tongues? Or the Spirit-empowered establishment of the local Church? It is the greatest spectacle on earth.

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<sup>6</sup> Also I already briefly covered these sign gifts in ch. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Jamie Dunlop says here: “As you read through Acts, you notice very quickly that nearly always, when the gospel first goes to a region, it’s accompanied by...miraculous signs (e.g. 2:43). These signs beg for an explanation (e.g. 2:12), and the explanation is the gospel. The book begins with the sign of tongues at Pentecost as the gospel is first preached in Jerusalem. Then the gospel goes to Samaria, and Luke tells us that “the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did” (8:6). Peter takes the gospel to Lydda and Joppa—where in both cities miracles *confirm* the words of the gospel (9:35, 42). And Paul’s first missionary journey follows the same pattern, with supernatural signs in Cyprus (13:12), Iconium (14:3), Lystra (14:11), and so forth. But when the narrative revisits these cities—once local churches exist—the reports of miraculous signs stop. Instead, Luke limits his writing to two topics: **1**) the further preaching of the gospel and **2**) the *strengthening* of the church.” [Mark Dever & Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2015), pg. 38-39]

<sup>8</sup> Clearly this is backed up by Paul’s assertion in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

**Hebrews 12:22-24** “...you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,<sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.”

When that miracle of the local Church arrives in any one place, the training wheels—the sign gifts—are no longer needed. And that is consistent with the flow of the NT. Again as Dunlop says “When the gospel first enters a region, the Spirit enables miraculous signs. Once the gospel takes root, the Spirit enables miraculous community.”<sup>9</sup> Now this leaves room for the Holy Spirit to distribute sign gifts *if He so desires*<sup>10</sup> in those regions where the gospel has not taken root.<sup>11</sup> But the gospel has taken root here, therefore our focus is on those *higher gifts* which profit the whole body.

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<sup>9</sup> Dever & Dunlop, pg. 39

<sup>10</sup> Honestly, I’m still working through this theology on the gifts. If we look in history we can see many missionaries (post-early church) who went to places where the gospel was not heard and they were not given tongues, miracles, and other sign gifts. Rather they labored to learn the language, and exercise love and care for those people instead of being able to perform miracles. So I’m certainly not laying down a rule that these sign gifts always accompany a place where the gospel is not heard and a local church not established. But I am open to that possibility. On the other hand, it doesn’t seem to me that the tongues gift have disappeared altogether because in 14:39 Paul tells us *not* to forbid speaking in tongues. It doesn’t make sense to me that Paul would only allow tongues for at best a mere thirty years from when this letter was written to the completion of the canon (which is when many cessationists say the tongue gift went away). Furthermore to be consistent, the logic behind the tongue gift ceasing at the completion of the canon is based on 13:8 which also says “knowledge...will pass away.” If tongues already passed away (based on their reasoning) then it seems to follow that knowledge would pass away also.

<sup>11</sup> I believe this position best avoids the over-emphasizing and under-emphasizing of the sign gifts.

## **Doctrine: God has empowered every Christian with a spiritual gift**

That brings us to **our doctrine**: *God has empowered every Christian with a spiritual gift in order to build up the church, therefore we must earnestly desire the spiritual gifts.* The gifts exist to edify, nourish, and strengthen the saints. Consider how these 7 spiritual gifts<sup>12</sup> have brought untold blessings upon the church.

### **Gift #1: Evangelism**

**Ephesians 4:11** says that Christ has given some the gift of *evangelism*. Scripture says that Philip had the gift of evangelism (**Acts 21:8**). He engaged in public evangelism: **Acts 8:5** “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ;” and private evangelism as he preached Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch (**Acts 8:26-39**). **v.40** tells us that “he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.” This gift is not only the ability to clearly articulate what the gospel is, but also the freedom, power, and unction to do this with anyone: friend, family or complete strangers. Untold millions have been brought into the fold of the church because of this gift.

### **Gift #2: Teaching**

Several places in Scripture call *teaching* out as a gift (**1 Cor. 12:28**; **Rom. 12:7**; **Eph. 4:11**). The Corinthian Church was established because of the gift of teaching. **Acts 18:11** says that Paul “...stayed a year and six months, *teaching* the word of God among them.” Paul’s teaching was very public. But there is also a private gift of teaching. Just a few verses later we read of Priscilla and Aquila who “...took [Apollos] aside and *explained to him* the way of God more accurately.” The gift of teaching is, as one author puts it: the “...ability to grasp, arrange, and present revealed truth effectively and in an organized manner so that recipients have an enhanced understanding of the Scripture under

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas listed 18 gifts from the Scriptural data which I think is accurate. I didn’t include here the 5 revelatory gifts, the 5 confirmatory gifts, nor the 1 speaking gift, namely pastor-teacher—this last one for lack of time (1/2 of it is covered in the “teaching” gift; and 1/2 covered in “leading”). cf. Thomas, Appendix E.

consideration.”<sup>13</sup> This given has been used to give light to those in darkness, to make wise the simple, and to instruct the saints how to live for the glory of God in every age of the Church.

### **Gift #3: Exhortation**

The gift of *exhortation* is found in **Romans 12:8**. The Greek word is παρακαλέω *parakaleō*—two root words *para*, meaning near or next to; and *kaleo* meaning to call. So *parakaleō* is drawing near to someone *by calling or speaking to their heart*. Exhortation is encouragement. It’s putting courage into the hearts of others by drawing their attention off their circumstance on onto the grace of God. In 1553, Calvin wrote to the five prisoners of Lyons that were near to be burned at the stake for being Protestant. Calvin *encouraged* the five young men: “Since it pleases him to employ you to death in maintaining his quarrel, he will strengthen your hands in the fight, and will not suffer a single drop of your blood to be spent in vain...your death [shall] resound more powerfully, so that the name of our Lord be magnified thereby...”<sup>14</sup> This gift has given hope to the hopeless, refreshment to the weary, and bravery to the fearful.

### **Gift #4: Service**

Several places in Scripture call *service* or *helping* a gift of the Spirit (**1 Cor. 12:28; Romans 12:7; 1 Peter 4:11**). This gift meets the physical needs of individual saints or the church’s ministry at large. The gift of service is on display in Acts 6 when the first deacons were installed. There were Greek widows in the church who were not getting their daily distribution of food. 7 men were appointed, men who were full of the Spirit and wisdom, to serve them so that the preaching of the Word could continue unabated. **Acts 6:7** says that because of this gift working “...the word of God continued to increased, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly.” Though the gift of service might be the

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas, pg. 194

<sup>14</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Selected Works, Vol. 5*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Baker Books, Reprint 1983), pg. 406-407. See pg.404-5 footnote two for how these young men met their end.

most overlooked gift, the truth is that no Church could even hold Sunday morning services without it. The ushering, singing, playing, diaper changing, sound checking, snack preparing, cleaning, printing, typing, paying, washing, beautifying, snow-shoveling, counting, is what makes this service possible.

### Gift #5: Mercy

**Romans 12:8** says that those who have the gift of *mercy* should do it with cheerfulness. One author says the gift of mercy "...directs itself in particular to those experiencing some kind of distress, misery, pain, anxiety, or something of that sort."<sup>15</sup> Near the end of Paul's life, he was abandoned by all, and was awaiting his execution in a Roman prison. He needed mercy. One man *with this gift* came to his rescue: Onesiphorus. Paul says of him in **2 Timothy 1:16-17** "May the Lord grant mercy<sup>16</sup> to the household of Onesiphorus, *for he often refreshed me* and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me." The gift of mercy earnestly searches out those who downtrodden, distressed and destitute to refresh, replenish and revive through personal care, fellowship, and sacrifice. The church would be a cold and miserable place without this gift.

### Gift #6: Giving

Paul also speaks of the gift of *giving* in **Romans 12:8** "...if it [*your gift*] is giving, then give generously."<sup>17</sup> Now this spiritual gift is not *merely* reserved for the wealthy. In **2 Corinthians 8:1-4** we read "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia [this grace of God was the gift of giving generously], <sup>2</sup>for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas, pg. 200

<sup>16</sup> So fitting that Paul called down mercy from the Lord on this man who showed him so much mercy. Matthew 5:7 says "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

<sup>17</sup> NIV

can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.” The gift of giving not only relieves the needs of saints,<sup>18</sup> but it supports ministers, missionaries, and all manner of ministry. Without this gift, the entire teaching ministry of the Church would collapse because ministers would have to support themselves.

### **Gift #7: Leading**

Paul mentions the gift of *leading*<sup>19</sup> in **Romans 12:8** “[let] the one who leads, [lead] with zeal.” This gift is primarily (but not limited to) for elders who have been charged with leading the flock of God Paul says in **1 Timothy 5:17** “Let the elders who rule well [or lead well] be considered worthy of double honor.” The the reason why good leaders are worthy of double honor is because of the tremendous blessing they are in organizing, deliberating, planning, shepherding, managing, casting vision, recognizing and empowering others in their gifts, and protecting. Without the gift of leaders, the church would be like children without fathers.

In summary, the Holy Spirit has given us these higher gifts: evangelism, teaching, exhortation/encouragement, service, mercy, giving, and leading to unleash a legion of blessings upon the church so that she might be built up. That’s **our doctrine**.

## **II. Our Duty**

### **What is my spiritual gift?**

Our Christian duty to discover what our spiritual gifts and then use them to unleash blessing on the Church. Is there a way to discover our gift? Yes.

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<sup>18</sup> Also cf. Barnabas in Acts 4:34-37

<sup>19</sup> or *administration* as **1 Corinthians 12:28** calls it.

Robert Thomas in his book “Understanding Spiritual Gifts” has identified 9 steps to discover your spiritual gift.<sup>20</sup>

### **Step #1: Know that every Christian is gifted**

Look at **12:11** again “All these [gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to *each one individually...*” Every Christian is given at least one spiritual gift. It’s impossible to be born again and not have a gift. The Holy Spirit has determined at least one gift for you. But note this vital qualifier: just because you are not particularly gifted with a particular gift doesn’t release you from your general responsibility in that area. For example if you are not particularly gifted as an evangelist, doesn’t release you from sharing the gospel with others (**1 Peter 3:15**), nor are you released from giving, (**1 Corinthians 16:2**), nor from leading your family (**Ephesians 6:4**), etc.<sup>21</sup> Every one has at least one particular gift, but we all have general responsibilities in all these areas.

### **Step #2: Study the gifts**

The gifts are found in **1 Corinthians 12-14**, **Ephesians 4:11**; **Romans 12:3-13**; **1 Peter 4:8-11**. Though the Scripture doesn’t say that other gifts do not exist, it seems that any other gift that could be suggested would fall under one of these categories. A missionary would fall under an evangelist and teacher. Those gifted in hospitality would fall under giving, mercy and service. Now remember, Paul’s command is for us to earnestly desire the “higher gifts” (**1 Cor. 12:31**). So in your study, be constantly asking, what are those gifts that profit the whole body.

### **Step #3: Pray**

Pray that God would show you and help develop your gift. It is sinful to not want to use your gift in the body, to sit back while others do the heavy

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas, Appendix F

<sup>21</sup> If a father concluded that he doesn’t have the gift of leading in the Church, he is not therefore excused from leading his family in the Lord.

lifting, to say ‘this isn’t my thing.’ Paul tells us “earnestly desire”—boil and burn with zeal for these things. This must include prayer. We can’t be earnestly desiring God’s gifts without at the same time praying, asking God to empower us for these things.

#### **Step #4: Know yourself**

What are your natural abilities? What do you excel in? As Thomas points out “...[spiritual] gifts do not always fall into line with a person’s natural background. However, it seems that most of the time, the Spirit chooses to match one’s spiritual gifts to one’s natural situation.”<sup>22</sup> Singing and playing instruments are not spiritual but natural gifts. But if you have these natural gifts, you are positioned to serve. If abundantly blessed with wealth, you are positioned to give generously. Examine what your natural strengths and weaknesses are.

#### **Step #5: Experiment**

You must actually experiment, you must step out and test the waters. How will you know what your gift is if you never experiment? “What if I fail?” you ask. You will. But failure is not necessarily sin. It’s no sin to witness to the lost if you don’t have the particular gift of evangelism. It’s no sin to comfort the broken hearted if you don’t have the particular gift of mercy. These things are general responsibilities that every Christian already has. But it is sin not to be a functioning part of the body. So experiment by testing yourself with these gifts.

#### **Step #6: Ask: what gives you joy?**

Joy is *not* the be-all end-all indicator. There are thorns attached to every gift which hinders our joy. Nor does a lack of joy relieve us from the duties that every Christian has to his local church. But joy is *an* indicator of your spiritual gift. In fact, Scripture tells us to anticipate this joy in using our gifts. **Psalm 37:4** “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas, pg. 206

heart.” As Thomas says here “When you use use your gift for the right purpose, that of building up other members of the body of Christ, as a by-product, you... will experience a degree of [personal] edification.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Step #7: Ask others for feedback**

How do we know if our efforts are being a true profit to the body? Ask other brothers, sisters—ask your pastors. One of the tests of your spiritual gift is if it is having an impact on other people. This outside feedback helps us from self-deception, or an over-evaluation of our own gifts. You can ask questions like “What benefit was this to others? What benefit was this to you?”<sup>24</sup> This does require to be committed to experimentation for some prolonged period of time to get accurate feedback.

### **Step #8: Allow for the possibility of more than one gift**

Why were the Apostles so extraordinary? Probably because they had all the gifts or near all of them.<sup>25</sup> That will not be true of us. But often Christians will have more than one gift.

### **Step #9: Recognize the different degrees of giftedness.**

Not all teachers for example have the same degree of giftedness. Some are acorns and some are oaks. But us acorns shouldn't be discouraged and think that because are more gifted, that we are not gifted. God is not only sovereign over the distribution of the gifts, but the degree of giftedness that each person has.

### **Summing up**

So that's **our duty** dear congregation. We must discover what our gifts are by 1) knowing that every Christian is gifted; 2) studying the gifts; 3) praying

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 208

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 209

for the gifts; 4) knowing what natural gifts you have; 5) experimenting with the gifts; 6) asking what gifts give you joy? 7) asking others for feedback; 8) allowing for the possibility of more than one gift; 9) recognizing the different degrees of giftedness.

### III. Our Delight

#### Ross Dodge

One of the reasons I love doing the funerals of Christians is because of what they reveal about Jesus Christ. Our brother Ross Dodge recently went home to be with the Lord. My calendar popped up this last week to remind me to go see him. I don't have that appointment anymore. I miss him. The reason I loved doing his funeral is because of what **Romans 8:29** says "For those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed to the image of his Son.*" Just as a child derives his looks from his parents, so Christians derive their spiritual "looks" from Jesus Christ. Which means this, all the things that were great about Ross—were great—because they were reflections of Christ. Ross loved his children and grandchildren with tenderness—*because that's how Jesus is.* Jesus said in **Matthew 19:14** "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Ross was funny and had a great sense of humor—*because that's who Jesus is.* The Son of God made spiders to have eight eyes, eight legs, and butt ropes. Ross loved his family and he did everything he could to ensure they were provided for when he was gone—*because that's who Jesus is.* "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> John 14:1-3

## Gifts are reflections of Jesus

How does this relate to the spiritual gifts? Because using the gifts helps others to see who Jesus is. Doesn't your heart long to be with Him? To hear His voice? To see His face? To feel His embrace? Beloved the spiritual gifts build up the saints precisely because they show us who Christ is.

When a **teacher** is gifted at explaining and unpacking and applying the Scripture, and we are just in awe of how they do it—*we are seeing a reflection of Jesus Christ the Teacher of all teachers*. He was called Teacher 60 times in the Gospels. This is what the disciples called Him, it was a term of affection. “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.”<sup>27</sup> When the gift of teaching is being exercised, we can see dimly the great Prophet who came into the world to reveal to us the Father.

When an **evangelist** is gifted at boldly speaking to strangers, having compassion on the lost, seeking to persuade others to labor after the food that does not perish—*we see a reflection of Jesus the Evangelist of all evangelists*. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”<sup>28</sup>

When someone is gifted in **exhortation** and encouragement and they have the supernatural ability to hand out hope like candy from their pocket, affirming gifts, strengthening hearts, lifting up the downcast with a fitly spoken word—we see a reflection of Jesus. “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”<sup>29</sup> If Jesus encourages you, no one, not even the devil can darken your heart.

When someone is gifted in **service**—tirelessly, sacrificially giving of themselves to others without any recognition—*oh what a reflection of Jesus we see, the Servant of*

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<sup>27</sup> John 13:13

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 11:28

<sup>29</sup> John 16:33

*all servants.* “Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, *by taking the form of a servant*, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”<sup>30</sup>

When someone is gifted in showing **mercy**, refreshing the sick, showing kindness to the unworthy, binding the wounds of the broken—*we see the all-merciful Jesus.* “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup>he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, *but according to his own mercy*, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”<sup>31</sup>

When someone is gifted in **giving**—overflowing in generosity, such that they meet the needs of others to their own great loss—*we see generous Jesus.* “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”<sup>32</sup>

When someone is gifted in **leading**—and they do so on principle, fearlessly, without compromise, having the skill and wisdom to handle the tender and the strong—*we see Jesus the Leader of all leaders.* “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He *leads* me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He *leads* me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”<sup>33</sup>

Beloved that is *why* you should earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. Because in exercising them, you are serving up Christ to others. What is your spiritual gift? It is a display of the Son of God. Show others what Jesus is like. Nothing builds up the soul more than that.

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<sup>30</sup> Philippians 2:6-8

<sup>31</sup> Titus 3:4-6

<sup>32</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:9

<sup>33</sup> Psalm 23:1-3