

What Gifts and Skills Do We Have?

1 Corinthians 12:7–11

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For Christmas Lonie and I got goofy sweatshirts with a movie quote on it. She got several books. I got a some tools. It was a good Christmas. We got one grandchild a monster truck, but it went to the wrong grandchild. We got another grandkid, his brother, Lego race cars. When they were told they had the wrong gifts, a melt down occurred. "It's mine, I had it first." That was hard to watch a cute six year old turn into a screaming, angry person. His dad finally removed him from the room. What was supposed to be a good thing for everyone turned into a disaster. I was the one responsible for the mix up. God is much better at giving gifts.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given 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. 1 Corinthians 12:7–11 (NIV)

Everyone is gifted by God so we can mentor one another. This list of Spiritual Gifts is not exhaustive but begins to demonstrate how to mentor one another. This past week I provided an insert for daily study. It is an opportunity to renew your relationship with Jesus. It is an opportunity to declare your spiritual gifts. If you haven't done anything with this devotional, you can still jump in.

Just as important as it is for you to engage with these scriptures, it's also important that you write down your insights. As you were reading through this week's devotions there were four passages listing spiritual gifts. Hopefully, with the use of the definitions found in the January newsletter you are closer to understanding how God has gifted you.

I know that God has gifted me as pastor, teacher, administrator, helper, and encourager. These gifts have been demonstrated over and again throughout my ministry. I could hand out a multiple question survey to help you determine your gifts. I've found it to be cumbersome, and that people already know their gifts, they haven't named them.

So, I want to encourage you to explore, explain, and express your gifts. Please write your gift list on the card we gave you last week and put it in the red box by the window. As Paul writes this letter he is confirming the spiritual gifts given to the church. In this way he is comforting and encouraging people. Although, these gifts are placed in a specific order, every gift is valuable and needed. Every person is important in the church. Every person has a ministry and a mission.

But he is also challenging the people to recognize that their gift is to build up Christians. No one is an island. God has provided each believer with a gift to bring blessings to another. My gift of teaching is useless unless I am teaching. The gift of prophecy is empty unless the words are spoken. This Scripture makes it clear that we are to put our gifts to use building up one another. This may be the challenge, Christians aren't using their gifts to bless others. For a variety of reasons we hesitate to

bleed others with our gifts. We don't need to get a hat with our spiritual gifts on it for everyone to see. We need for people to see us exercising our gifts.

January is the month to decide if we will fade away or make disciples. I've said so many times that in four years I will retire. We are at this decision making time. We can't kick the can down the road. The longer we wait the harder it will be to implement a mentoring ministry, a ministry of building up the church. My wife is forming a team that will examine not only your insights, but also to help formulate a plan for the future. Have I said this before, in four years I can either hand the keys to this building to the next pastor or to a real estate agent?

God has provided us with what we need. God will provide for us the motivation and inspiration. We need to decide what we will do.

1 Corinthians 12:8 (NIV) To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit.

We are living in an independent society but we are united by the Holy Spirit. Regardless of our giftedness in Christ we easily forget our unity in the Spirit. Gifts or skills or abilities come in second to being in Christ. If not for faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection we would never receive the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we would have no gifts. We would be left with our own wits, experiences, and awareness.

I am not a preacher because of who I am, but because of who the Holy Spirit made me. My entire adult life has been the struggle of allowing the Holy Spirit to work in me and through. I am more prone to say something sarcastic than holy if it weren't for the gifting of the Holy Spirit. I am more willing to do what I want if it weren't for the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

We need one another. We need the comfort and encouragement which only comes from the Holy Spirit. We need the challenge that is spoken through our lips, but is the product of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave me a big mouth at birth. He did this because He knew I would proclaim His truth and His grace. My birth stuff, when combined with the Holy Spirit stuff makes the difference of what comes out of my mouth. It is beyond me to understand how God does this. Yet, I know that I am not alone, the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus is working in me and through me. One day after another God's Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus, uses me to make known His grace.

Everyone needs grace. Saints like you and me need grace. Sinners like family, friends, co-workers and strangers need God's grace. The grace that is saving us from our sins is needed. The grace that is encourage us to overcome our daily struggles. The grace which opens windows and doors for us to reach the lives of sinner.

Without unity in the Holy Spirit we won't be able to build up one another. When we are together in this room, at a Bible Study, on one another's porch, and even at a ball game we are able to comfort, encourage, and challenge one another.

Everyone of us has a different gift given to us by the Holy Spirit of God. In God's management of our lives he is giving us opportunities to build up one another. He is providing us with moments to challenge one another, as we comfort and encourage.

Being a Christian in isolation is a contradiction. Every believer needs another believer using their gifts. We are all on the same journey of sharing the grace of Jesus. But each one of us according to our natural birth skills and our spiritual birth gifts will share the grace of Jesus. We are more effective when we are all using our gifts. We are able to be build up believers when we are all using our gifts. We need to decided if we want to build up the body of believers or fade away. We have to determine if we are working with the Holy Spirit or we are doing our own thing.

The pull of our culture is to be independent. An independent Christian is only concerned with self. Christians believing in Jesus life, death, resurrection, and promises are ready to mentor one another through comfort, encouragement, and challenges. If we are pulled by our culture to be individuals then we will fade away. Those who seek to build up one another will live in the promises of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV) 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.

Christians who are united in the Holy Spirit use their gifts to strengthen every believer. I can't do it on my own even though I have been born again. Going alone more often than not is a bad idea. We cheer for the person going alone against the world. Christians are not called to go alone.

I was talking to another pastor this week. We both used the phrase Savior Complex. We both feel as though we have to save the world, save our community, save our churches. It's a dangerous idea for pastors to get that in their heads. When it happens we try to do everything. We do things we haven't been called to do and things we aren't empowered and gifted to do. We deprive other people of the opportunity to serve the Lord. We keep people from reaching their full potential in Jesus Christ. We stagnate the working of the Holy Spirit. The Body of Christ isn't being built up.

This is my confession. I am guilty. The next four years and beyond depend upon Christians using their gifts to build up one another. That means I have to use my gift of administration. I need to delegate ministries to those who are gifted by the Holy Spirit for their ministry. That means you need to see your gifts, skills, and abilities. In the January newsletter there is a list of Spiritual Gifts. This past week there were devotionals speaking to those gifts. Meditate on the passages, pray through the list, identify your gifts. Consider how your natural abilities match up with a spiritual gift. Think about how your spiritual desires and yearnings match up with a spiritual gift. Recognize how the needs of our church and our community can be built up as you use your spiritual gift.

There is one Father, one Son, one Holy Spirit seeking to bring people to heaven, to minister in their lives now, by forgiving their sins. As born again people we are united by our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. We are Kingdom People serving in His Kingdom. We need to see ourselves as one people. We need to build up one another. We will fade away unless we are intentional about making disciples.

In the past I have been caught up in the newest gimmick, that's a bad word, but often that's how it felt. In the past I was always ready to imitate the success of another church. If another pastor was doing something well, I wanted to try it. If another church had a certain program, I wanted to try it.

Three things kept happening. First, they were my ideas for programs. Not enough people believed in the program. The programs didn't grow out of the hearts of the people. Second, when the programs

didn't live up to the expectations of people, including myself, we were discouraged. That's hard to overcome for most people. Too often we get the false idea in our heads that God failed us. When in reality that program or any program might not have been part of God's plans for us. The third thing that seemed to always happen was a failure to make disciples. People were unchanged by the program or ministry.

Even at my age I'm seeking to learn new things. I'm hopeful for God's power at work within me and within you. The Holy Spirit has given you Spiritual Gifts to build up the church. You were born with skills and abilities that have a specific purpose in God's Kingdom. When we are intentional about identifying who we are and what we can do we are enabled to carry out God's plans. We can be disciple makers.

1 Corinthians 12:11 (NIV) All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Knowing your abilities in Christ, now you can become a disciple maker. You have been saved, are part of Christ's body, and in this fellowship to mentor one another. Your abilities, skills, and spiritual gifts are not the same as mine. Jesus brought you to this place, to this ministry. You have been through many things in life. All of this is part of how we make disciples. Our collective life experiences, our various spiritual gifts are the tools for building up one another.

But all of this can be mere knowledge. It can be information stored between our ears. Some of you were intentional about becoming teachers. You filled your head with knowledge. You had experiences in the classroom. Then you got a job as a teacher. You put to use all that stuff and some more in the classroom. There is a difference between having information and doing something with it. As you discover your spiritual gifts you can begin to mentor others. As you become aware of your skills and abilities you will be able to share with others.

What's important is the doing. Scripture tells us that faith without works is dead. We are empowered by Jesus through His Holy Spirit to make disciples. We can comfort people. We can encourage people. We can challenge people.

Our commitment to one another in Jesus Christ holds the future of this congregation. I'm gifted by God and so are you to build up one another. If we aren't making disciples by using our spiritual gifts we will fade away. The only program I'm offering to you is to search your heart and spirit by reading the Bible. As you meditate on the Word of God ask God to take away any doubts or misgivings. Seek to hear the Holy Spirit speak by being still, being open, and being ready.

In God's love for each one of us He became a person, fully God and fully human. Jesus lived facing temptations and joys, troubles and dreams, problems and peace. He lived exactly as God desired according to His nature as God. He died as a person carrying the sin of all people from every moment in history and the future. He rose from the dead and is alive today.

You believe this. You know that your past is forgiven. You know that you have His power for each day. You know that for eternity you will be in heaven. Now, take your knowledge and work in God's Kingdom. Put your knowledge to use making disciples.