

"Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts"

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

When our children are young or when our grandchildren are young, it's always fun watching them unwrap their Christmas presents. Wrapping paper flies in every direction. When they don't know how toys work or if "some assembly is required," they ask for help from older siblings or parents.

Now picture this same scene, only with adults unwrapping spiritual gifts. God has given you certain gifts that enable you to effectively share his love and make your unique contribution to his kingdom. He placed these spiritual abilities within you and waits eagerly for you to discover them. We should be as excited as children on Christmas Day about unwrapping these treasures.

But most of us are not excited about unwrapping our spiritual gifts because we don't understand what our spiritual gifts are and how to use them, which was also the problem 2,000 years ago in the church in Corinth. So in 1 Corinthians 12:1 Paul says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed."

Paul is telling us that if we are uninformed, we will go through life missing out on the gifts God has given us. Our Father wants his children to be fully informed so we can unwrap every single gift we have received.

So let's get fully informed by using scripture to answer 4 questions. (1.) What are spiritual gifts? (2.) Why does God give spiritual gifts? (3.) Does everyone get a gift? And (4.) How do we unwrap spiritual gifts?

First, what are spiritual gifts? A spiritual gift is a God-given special ability which enables you to share God's love and to strengthen the Body of Christ. In 1 Peter 4:10 God is the gift-giver. "God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you."

In our lesson from 1 Corinthians 12, Paul speaks of the "utterance of wisdom and knowledge, the gifts of faith and healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, and discernment."

Our Time and Talent sheets lists the spiritual gifts of administration, finance, communication, education, parish life, property management, social ministry, stewardship, witness, worship and youth ministry. All of these are spiritual gifts that God has given us to share his love and to strengthen the Body of Christ.

Second, why does God give us these spiritual gifts? In 1 Corinthians 12:7 Paul says, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Spiritual gifts are given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church, the whole Body of Christ. The spiritual gifts God gives you are neither for you nor about you. They weren't given to boost your self-image or to serve as some kind of special reward from God. They are yours for the express purpose of blessing the Body of Christ — his church. That is why it is so important to be an active part of a church family in which we can use our God-given gifts to bless others - to serve the common good.

Third, does everyone get gifts? St. Paul assures in 1 Corinthians 7:7 that "each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind."

We may not feel tremendously gifted, but God says we are because he gives gifts to everyone, not just "special" people. There are no special qualifications needed, no special level of maturity required, not even a particular time span needed in your journey with Jesus. If you are a believer, than you have Christ's Spirit living in you. If you have His Spirit in you, then you have spiritual gifts to use for God's glory and the benefit of others - "the common good."

You may not have discovered the gifts you have or begun to use them yet, but you definitely have them. You have God's word on it. What's important is to discover and develop the gifts you have so that people are helped, God is served, and we feel spiritually fulfilled by serving others.

And the best place to explore our spiritual giftedness is in our church, the Body of Christ in which God has placed us.

Fourth, how do we unwrap our spiritual gifts? Understanding what spiritual gifts are without experiencing them, without using them, is like seeing presents under the Christmas tree but never opening them.

The key to discovering your gifts is two-fold: first, checking off what gifts you may have on the Time and Talent sheet, and then second, serving in various roles to see which ones bring the greatest fulfillment for you and the greatest results for God.

Some pastors these days are big on giving their parishioners tests for "spiritual gift inventories" to identify your gifts and abilities so you'll know what ministry you're suppose to serve in. I've never believed in those kinds of tests because they can't take the place of actually experimenting with different types of service that the test may not have identified as your gift. My philosophy has always been the style that Jesus used with his disciples - just

get to it, start serving, experiment with different ministries, and you'll discover your gifts.

Until you're actually involved in serving, until you're actually involved in the ministries of the church, you're not going to know what you're good at.

So let's get out the Time and Talent sheet and take a look at each ministry to see if your God-given spiritual gifts can be put to work in serving God and one another.

In his book "Seizing Your Divine Moment," Erwin McManus says, "Don't look for God to fill in all the blanks. Don't wait for him to remove all the uncertainty. Realize He may actually increase the uncertainty and leverage all the odds against you, just so you will know in the end that it wasn't your gifts but His power through your gifts that fulfilled His purpose in your life."

Seize your Divinity moment and may the peace of God . . .

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