

How a Church Works

Discovering and Implementing Your Gifting Part 5

Ephesians 4:7-8

This morning we want to continue and finish our look at the spiritual gifts. Certainly we have just scratched the surface on this teaching but I believe if you will take it, pray over it and let the Lord direct you, you will be blessed and so with your church family as you discover and implement the specific spiritual gift God has given you.

Our study in Ephesians brought us to Ephesians 4:7-8 where God tells us that each person that comes into a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus receives a special, unique spiritual gift. So we took this scripture and followed it into where the largest teaching of spiritual gifts are found and that is in 1 Corinthians 12-13. As we finish up our look at spiritual gifts we must spend a little bit of time in Romans 12 where we find another list of six spiritual gifts.

Before we take a look at the gifts mentioned here look with me at the lead into the list of gifts, verses 4-6. **Romans 12:4-6a, “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.” (NASB)**

Here we are told that if you have accepted Jesus as your Savior then you are automatically part of the body of Christ. You are a part of the Body that is necessary to the rest of the Body.

Back in Ephesians we read more about this. **Ephesians 4:16, “...the whole body, (body of Christ) being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (NASB)**

I have entitled this series how the church works. Do you know how the church body, this church body is to function? The body of Christ, the church body, can only function properly when each individual part, each joint, supplies what the body needs.

Without each joint, without each person discovering and implementing their special God given gift, then the church falls into disrepair and is not able to accomplish all of the wonderful, miraculous things God has in store for it.

Here is an exercise for you. Scratch the top of your head without using your arms. Cross to the other side of the room without using your legs. Take in air without using your lungs. Read the passage on the screen without using your eyes.

Maybe you could do a few of these things but probably not. You can't walk without legs. Without your arms you are very limited. Without your lungs working properly you would be dead. When part of your body is not working it is difficult and most times impossible for the rest of your body to pick up the slack.

Well, it is the same thing with the body of Christ. God has picked a special place for you in the Body. When you find out what that is and do it then you will be in the sweet spot of His will and you will be ministering to the rest of the body. But if you miss this, then the body will have to pick up the slack and most times it cannot do it. Not only this but you will miss out on the best plan for your life and that is God's plan.

Let's now move into our look at the gifts mentioned in Romans 12.

Romans 12:6-8, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement;

if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” (NIV)

I like the way Paul puts this. If you have a gift...then do it! If you have the gift of prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading or showing mercy, or any of the other gifts that were mentioned last week, if you have it then learn about and” then get engaged in it. Don’t hold back!

1. The gift of prophesying: The gift of prophecy is a direct word from God and can come in multiple ways such as an impression, dream or vision.

This is the gift that keeps showing up in several places. We saw last week that we are all to be asking for the gift of prophesying because it strongly encourages, strengthens and brings comfort to other Christians or to the body as a whole. You can find and read more about the gift of prophecy in the sermon from two weeks ago. It is on our web-site.

The gift of prophecy is a direct word from God and can come in multiple ways. It can come through the inspiration of the Spirit as one studies the word of God. Hopefully that is what I am doing each Sunday morning. The gift of prophecy can come as an impression, a dream, a vision or strong word from God that one has about a situation, a person or the direction of the church.

But like all the gifts, humility is key. Michal and I have a friend who functions in this prophetic area and I love the way he handles himself. He approaches his impressions from the Lord like this. He says, “I think God may be saying this is going to occur. You might consider praying about going in this direction.” Then he says, “Take what I have said, don’t take it, it is up to you. My part is to be faithful and obedient to speak what I believe God has told me.”

You see how he handles himself. He doesn't say, "Thus saith the Lord and you better do it." And he is not offended if what he says is not heeded. Again, He just doesn't want to hold back what he feels God wants Him to say. The results are up to God.

2. The Gift of Serving: The gift of serving is the ability to see how someone or a group needs to be served and do it with a smile in your heart and on your face.

The gift of serving is a beautiful and common gift but there are some who are very, very good at serving. The gift of serving is the ability to see how someone or a group needs to be served and do it with a smile in your heart and on your face.

You know people like that. We have a lot of them right here in this church. Ask them to help with something and they do not hesitate. I have noticed Ray and Elizabeth Meyer and their children a couple of times in this role. Something came up and they pretty much dropped what they were doing to help that person in the moment. Many of you have this gift. You love serving so I would say, as Paul said, serve! Don't hold back. Look for areas on the committees, in the children's ministry, with the youth, Sunday School or wherever and serve. Don't wait to be asked, just show up do it! If a person's gift is serving, let them serve.

3. The Gift of Teaching: The gift of teaching is the ability to impart knowledge and information that instructs the mind and the heart.

Some of you are engaged in this in a secular way. You have the ability to take information and instruct children or others in a very engaging and enlightening way. For others, you have been given the drive and the ability to share spiritual truths in a engaging and enlightening way. A way that makes sense and in a way that those who are being taught are able to grab ahold of a truth, internalize it and live it.

I believe the gift of teaching is not limited to someone getting up and teaching a Sunday School class. The gift of teaching might be one on one or teaching a group of women or men. There are a lot of areas where the gift of teaching can be exercised. The key is, don't wait for someone to come up and invite you to teach. If you feel a prompting of the Holy Spirit to teach, find the occasion, create the venue. Find someone who doesn't know as much about the Bible as you do and teach the what. Again, don't wait till someone comes up and asks you. Just do it!

I think of Jamie Rivera as an example. I knew she had a hunger to teach when she began an on-line bible study. She didn't have a class or even any students but she had a hunger to teach, to share biblical truths so she created an avenue. And guess what? Today she does have a classroom and a class she is teaching.

4. The Gift of Encouragement: Someone who encourages, builds another up, comforts them and urges them on.

This was the gift that Barnabas had. He was called the son of encouragement. He was the one who found Paul and brought him to the disciples. He probably always had his arm around someone, encouraging them, building them up, comforting them and urging them on.

I think of John Lough when I think of this gift. If you have been around John very long chances are you have been encouraged by him in some way. He is always affirming, caring and there to serve. If you have this gift then let it flow. The church needs more encouragers don't they. People love to be encourage.

I would say this. Don't force encouragement. It is easy to fall into the trap of flattery. How many of you know what flattery is? The dictionary defines flattery as excessive and insincere praise, especially to further one's own interest.

Flattery sounds something like this. Oh my, your hair looks good when you know it really looks like a torn apart bird's nest. When a person does this it is because they want to be liked by that person not because they want to encourage them. Be sincere and if you can't find something to encourage someone with, my advice is to just be quiet.

5. The Gift of Giving: The gift of giving is using what God has given them to help others and to further His kingdom here on earth.

This gift show up in a couple of different ways. There are some people who have a special gift in this way, the gift of making money. Michal and I have a friend, a couple, who for them money has never been an issue. They have made millions and guess what? They have given away millions. God gave them the ability to make money and they have been very, very generous to the church. Not just in their tithe but when something would come up in the church or the community, they were right there, providing the means to get it taken care of. And because they were so generous and they understood everything they had was from God, guess what? God gave them more so they could give more away.

Now I know a lot of us would like to say, boy I would sure like that gift, I would give to the church, to the work of God's kingdom. It is easy for us to say that but in reality having money, serious money can be a trap and very few can handle it. But the ones God gives this gift too, He know they will use it for His glory, to expand His kingdom.

This gift is not just limited to those who make a lot of money. In scripture there was the widow who gave a small copper coin to the Lord. What was unique about her gift was, it was all she had. She was moved to give all she had. There are people who are very giving, to a fault.

Someone told me of a lady who lived over by Loveland. She lived in a fifteen foot trailer house and worked at a convenience store there by the interstate. From all appearances it didn't look like she had much or made much money but when she died, the family was amazed at what they found.

When they were cleaning out her small trailer they found drawers and drawers of receipts. As they began to examine the receipts they were for furniture, clothes, food, gas and all manner of things. It seems that whenever a person came into the quick shop and she heard they had a need, she met it as best as she could.

Again, she lived in a small, 15 foot trailer and never spent any money on herself but gave all she had away. From an earthly perspective she was poor but from a heavenly perspective she was rich and is now enjoying her riches in heaven.

The gift of giving comes in many forms and again, is not limited to those who have a lot of money.

6. The Gift of Leadership: This gift is the ability to stand in a group, see the direction God wants to lead the group and articulate in such a way that the group moves in that direction.

Some leadership skills can be learned but God gives these individuals the special ability and hunger to lead. Moses was a good example of someone God choose to give this gift to.

7. The Gift of Mercy: Those who have the gift of mercy see hurting people and they are moved to action and even begin to feel deeply the hurt of the one who is hurting.

There are many people in this congregation who have this gift, the gift of mercy.

Donna Stahley is one of those individuals. She is well fitted to run the food pantry because she sees hurting people and helps meet their needs. Jody Shipman is another. Even before I knew her, she was taking her family to the Denver Homeless Shelters and serving the people there. She sees a need and feels it deeply and moves to meet that need.

The gift of mercy. Not just seeing a person in need but entering into their hurt, coming alongside of them and helping them in some way. A kind word, a hug, a coat or just a listening ear.

In closing I know this has just been a short review of the many spiritual gifts listed in the Bible. I have no doubt there are more and certainly each gift can be exercised in many different ways.

I have said in the previous sermons that I would tell you how you can know what the spiritual gift you have been given and how it should be used.

The first thing to do is to ask God what your gift is, asking Him to make it plain to you. Nothing can replace intimacy with God as you seek direction. As you seek what He has done for you.

The second thing, what are you drawn too? Are you attracted to certain things? Singing, musical instruments, sharing spiritual truths, prayer, leading. Do you have a heart for the lost? Maybe evangelism is your gift. What activities draw you to them?

Third, as you begin to get a feel for certain things you are drawn too, try them on. See if it is a good fit. Michal and I know a lady that taught children's Sunday School till she was in her eighties. She never tired of it and she was never burned out. When you are operating in your gifting you might take a break now and then but it is such a deep passion and drive, that you can't be away from it for long.

Two last things I want to say to end this teaching on spiritual gifts this morning. **When you discover what your spiritual gift is you might need to overcome your flesh in order for it to begin operate.**

What we are called or even gifted by God to do doesn't always come easy or naturally.

Jamie Rivera is one of the most shy people I know. She blushes at the drop of a hat. She does not like to be in front of people. She craves and needs solitude. But she has been given a drive to share spiritual truths with other people so she has overcome her natural human tendency to be an introvert and she is serving as a teacher.

Sometimes, our flesh, our fear can keep us from serving in the manner God has gifted us. Sometimes we need to step out in faith, step out of the boat and allow God to take it from there. Remember, it is His gift that He placed inside of you, it is His power which flows through the gift and it is to His glory when results occur.

2 Corinthians 12:9, "...He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

God's power is made perfect in you when you allow Him to work through your weaknesses, your fear, your trust and your recognition that it is only through Him that anything can be done.

If you have an idea of what your gifting is, or as you find out what your gifting is, surrender it back to Him. He will take it, cleanse it and take it to a whole new level of power.

I can testify about this. I spend an hour in prayer every Sunday morning. I agonize over what I believe God wants me to say on Sundays but when every word is written I put it aside and tell God, these are just words on a page. They have no power, no authority and they will have no impact

unless You take it from me and spiritually energize it in the way only you can.

I take no credit for what is happening in this pulpit for without God, I have nothing.

Let this be a challenge to each and every one of you whether it is singing, playing an instrument, teaching, serving, leading or one of the many other ways your spiritual gift can be exercised.

Humble yourself, give it back to God. Give it to Him and see what He will do with it. You will be amazed.

Well, I know I have just scratched the surface in the teachings of spiritual gifts and how they utilized. Maybe this has stirred you to begin praying and searching the scriptures for a deeper understanding. I hope so.

This morning we are going to move down stairs and have a wonderful time of fellowship and I hope you have made plans to stay. If not, please do, there is always plenty of food.

Then after the meal, for those who would like to stay, we will break off into the different committees and have a time of discussion and planning. I hope you will stay and find your place as a functioning part of this church body, the body of Christ.

Let's pray.