

## **“HAVING GIFTS THAT DIFFER: WHAT ARE GIFTS.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Romans 12:4-8; I Corinthians 12:1-11**

### **Introduction.**

Remember last week and who are you and what are you doing here. Albert Einstein was on a train, when the conductor came by to validate his ticket, he couldn't find his ticket. Finally, the conductor told him, "It's alright Mr. Einstein, I know who you are." Mr. Einstein was still concerned, "Yes, I know who I am too, but I don't know where I am going."

We talked about the value of knowing who you are and what you are doing here and where you are going, about living a more God-centered meaningful life. All of this was very clear to Jesus as we read in John 8:12-14:

**John 8:12-14** Jesus spoke to [the Pharisees], saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." ... 14 Jesus answered, "... **I know where I came from and where I am going.**

When you know who you are and where you have come from, why you are here and where you are going you experience greater peace, joy, rest; freedom from stress, pride, envy, competition and frustration. Knowing about spiritual gifts is a key part of this contentment. They tell us about why God created us and saved us and called us out of the world and into His Church, why we are here now in this place at this time.

### **Concerning Spiritual Gifts, Ten Truths from Scripture.**

**I Corinthians 12:1** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

About spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit doesn't want us to be ignorant, so I want to give you **ten truths** from Scripture concerning spiritual gifts. A printed copy of this sermon will be on the church website tomorrow.

Let me begin with an expanded definition of spiritual gifts.

**A Definition of Spiritual Gifts:** A supernatural (beyond the natural, above normal, God-empowered) gift or ability given at conversion to a Christian by Christ through the

presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to be evidenced in your life (people with gifts find ways to use them), for the building up and maturing of the body of Christ so that Christ is honored and God is glorified.

## **Ten Truths about Spiritual Gifts.**

### **1. Only believers have spiritual gifts.**

**1 Corinthians 2:14** The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Spiritual gifts are gifts given by the Holy Spirit to those who have the Holy Spirit; only to Christians who profess sincere faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord. In Romans 12:5 when Paul says *in Christ* he is referring to a union, a relationship in which all that Christ is and has is yours, you are in Him and He is in you.

Spiritual gifts aren't magic, they only operate in the context of a personal relationship with God. This relationship with Jesus is vital. We must seek the Giver before we seek the gifts, and more than we seek the gifts.

Desire to be in close personal love relationship with the God who called and created and saved you and He gives your life meaning and purpose.

Non-Christians have abilities, skills, natural talents, but they don't have spiritual gifts. Christians have abilities, skills, natural talents, and they have spiritual gifts, and it's common for our spiritual gifts to be matched with or compatible to our natural abilities and talents.

### **2. Every Christian has at least one gift.**

**Romans 12:6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

**1 Corinthians 7:7** Each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

**1 Corinthians 12:7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

God has not overlooked you. If you don't know what your gift is, it doesn't mean you don't have one. Every believer has at least one and most, if not all, Christians have more than one and even several. There are no ungifted believers.

The Apostle Peter preached on Pentecost from the prophecy of Joel. God said in the last days He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. What God did at Pentecost He is still doing. Gifts are not an exclusive privilege for pastors or elders or Sunday school teachers or some class of super saints. There are no second-class citizens in the body of Christ. Everyone, male and female, maid servant and man servant, young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated (Acts 2:17ff; Joel 28ff).

As Paul tells Timothy, fan the flame of the gift of God that is in you (II Timothy 1:6).

### **3. No one receives all the gifts.**

**Romans 12:4-5** 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

**I Corinthians 12:17-20** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ... 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

None of us are the whole, we are all a part. We need each other. The gifts I don't have show me what I need from others. There are no solo Christians, or churches with only one gifted person. God never intends for us to live in isolation, He intends for us to live in community, humbly acknowledging our need and receiving the help we need. This is why our gathering together each week and during the week is so important.

Only Jesus has all the gifts. There are some to whom God gives many gifts, like the Apostle Paul. But there is no one who has them all and needs no help from anyone else. I am a member of you and you are a member of me, we need each other. Our gift is not just for our own sake.

### **4. No single gift is given to everyone.**

**Romans 12:6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

**1 Corinthians 12:29-30** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

**I Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

As God's grace is varied, so there is a variety of gifts and an inter-dependence in the body. Our gift is necessary and needed. We are to depend on one another and to serve one another.

## **5. You can't earn or work for a spiritual gift.**

**Romans 12:6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

**Ephesians 4:7** To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

They're called "gifts" for a reason; we didn't do anything to deserve them. If you have received the grace of God then you have received the gifts of God and they are just that, gifts. This isn't about deserving; it's about receiving.

The main word Paul uses for these gifts is charisma or charismata (I Corinthians 12:4), from which we get our word, charismatic. Charisma refers to God's gracious gifts bestowed by God's grace.

**II Corinthians 4:7** This all surpassing power is from God, not us.

## **6. The Holy Spirit decides what gifts we get.**

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

**I Corinthians 12:18** God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

As we heard John the Baptist say last week, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven" (John 3:27).

The source of all things spiritual is through the Spirit, according to the Spirit, by the Spirit (12:8-9).

We don't decide, we don't get to pick and choose, they are sovereignly ordained and decided. He's the potter, we are the clay. We shouldn't boast or promote ourselves or be envious. We shouldn't be vain or bitter. Don't compare your gifts to someone else's and judge some better or more desirable than others. All are gifts, powers from the same Holy Spirit, all are equal in value and importance and necessity in the body.

**I Corinthians 4:7** What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

## **7. The gifts we are given are continuous.**

“Those to whom He has given the Holy Spirit...may rejoice in the certainty of the continuance of these blessings” (Hodge, Romans on 11:29, p. 382).

That you have spiritual gifts is a given. As long as you have the Spirit, you have spiritual gifts. It is possible for some gifts to come and go according to the needs of the body and for the common good. But you will never be without one or retire from using what He has given. As long as we have breath we can contribute to the needs of the body, whether financially, or words of encouragement or serving or acts of kindness or exercising faith or prayer.

## **8. We are to develop the gifts God gives us.**

**Romans 12:6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

**1 Timothy 4:14** Do not neglect your gift.

**1 Timothy 1:6** I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God.

They come in seed form. Like a muscle they have to be exercised. They can also be neglected.

As our faith and understanding and spiritual maturity increase so our ability to use our gifts increases. My gifts to preach and teach have increased over these many years.

We should be intentional in developing our gifts, through studying Scripture, working with others with our same or similar gifts, experimenting, gaining training through experience, trial and error. Start early, start young. Like what Jonathan Ummel is coming here to do.

## **9. It's a sin to waste the gifts God gives us.**

**1 Corinthians 4:2** Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Since they are for the common good, we hurt and hinder the body of Christ when we neglect or waste what He has given us to be used for the sake of others. Needs go unmet,

burdens are not carried or relieved, salt and light are not given. The body suffers when parts of the body don't do their part. We are saved to serve.

## **10. Using our gifts glorifies God and blesses us.**

**John 15:8** This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

**I Peter 4:10-11** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ... in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

It's a win – win, God is glorified, the body is built up and we are blessed. Our gift is not for our sake, but for the glory of God and the building up of the whole body. When I see people in the church exercising their gifts that I don't have it blesses me. I love seeing the grace of God at work.

The 125<sup>th</sup> celebration was a great example of so many gifts working together for God's glory and our blessing.

This is why we should be informed about spiritual gifts and know ours, to pursue the God-given, God-centered, God-glorifying vision for all of life, our own life, our families, and our church.

Don't be ignorant, don't be slothful. Fan into flames the gift that is in you for the glory of God and the sake of Jesus and His Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit who is in you. Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.

**II Corinthians 9:15** Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

**Prayer:** Father, you are the giver of every good and perfect gift and you delight to give beyond all we could ask or imagine. In the name of Jesus we ask you to pour out your Spirit in abundant measure and by your Spirit we ask you to fan into the flames the gifts you have already given to us. Glorify yourself in your Church and remove every hindrance, every sin, every cause for pride or boasting. Come, Holy Spirit, fall afresh upon us I pray, in the name of Jesus, Amen.