

“HAVING GIFTS THAT DIFFER: SPEAKING GIFTS.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

August 17, 2025, 10:30AM

Scripture Text: Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:8-10; I Peter 4:7-11

Introduction.

We are talking about the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. To all who have received Jesus as their Savior from sin and their Lord for life, to them He has given His Holy Spirit. And to all to whom the Spirit has been given, to each one of them the Spirit gives at least one spiritual gift and usually two or more as a manifestation of His presence and power for the common good of the body, for the benefit of the whole church. It is divine grace.

In other words, being part of a Christian fellowship is not just about me, but about us being in Christ, in His Church family, members one of another.

Notice the things Paul lists --teaching, encouraging, giving generously, serving, showing mercy--aren't these things commanded of all Christians? Aren't we admonished in Scripture to serve one another, encourage one another, show mercy to one another, give generously, share our faith, making disciples by teaching what Jesus taught?

All these things are what all Christians do. So why does Paul speak of these as gifts given to some, but not all? How are we to think about these as spiritual gifts? How are they different from what is an ordinary part of being a Christian? Notice the phrase in vs. 6 “according to the grace given to us.” There is something more going on here. God gives certain believers an extra measure of grace in these things. Spiritual gifts are a specialization in a duty given to all Christians.

Some of these virtues come more easily, joyfully and more fruitfully for some than for others. When that happens we can call it a spiritual gift. Some take unusual spiritual delight in serving, or giving, or doing mercy, or teaching, or leading, or exhorting. The Holy Spirit has shaped their hearts so that they find themselves unusually drawn to these things (John Piper).

Speaking Gifts.

There are at least four chapters in the NT that give partial lists of spiritual gifts. No chapter has them all and each has some that others leave out. There are at least 15 to 20.

In I Peter 4:10 Peter seems to give a summary way of thinking about all the Spirit's gifts. Peter divides the gifts into two categories, the speaking gifts and the serving gifts.

That's how we will consider them. This morning we will consider the speaking gifts first. These are the verbal gifts, gifts that have to do with communicating God's truth to God's people.

After a brief definition of each gift, I will mention some of the characteristics and some of the cautions of each gift. Why do I mention cautions? Because sometimes hearing the cautions will help you recognize that gift in you. Because you have the liability doesn't mean you don't have the gift, it means you have the gift and you recognize it by both its strengths and its weaknesses.

Remember these are gifts, graces, and they come in a variety of styles and degrees according to the Spirit and our faith. So don't think everyone with a particular gift will exercise it in the same way or to the same degree.

All these definitions, characteristics and cautions will be on the church web page tomorrow afternoon, or just ask me for a copy and I will e-mail it to you or print one out for you.

As I talk through these gifts be thinking if any stand out or resonate. And don't be discouraged if you don't have any of these gifts, there are more next week.

Because these gifts are speaking gifts and all have to do with communicating God's truth and love there is some similarity and overlap. I will do my best to distinguish between them.

TEACHING

Romans 12:7 the one who teaches, in his teaching.

Ephesians 4:11 God gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.

Teaching is the Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ giving instruction in relevant ways, enabling people to grow in spiritual understanding, and sound, spiritual education. Individuals who have an extra measure of teaching grace ...

Teaching Characteristics:

- Enjoy hours studying Scripture in order to best apply its principles and truth.

- Enjoy making the Bible clear and understandable to others, particularly in groups.
- Seek out opportunities to speak biblical insight into daily situations.
- They are able to helping others learn to study the Bible.
- They are able to understand biblical truth and to make difficult things more understandable.

Teaching Cautions:

- It is possible for you to appear you have all the answers—no discussion is needed.
- You may cover way too much information way too quickly for the average ‘learner.’
- Because you are so sure of your information—it is possible to communicate your thoughts as truth instead of what the Bible says.
- You can become prideful because of your knowledge. Do you practice what you teach?
- You may view the world as a giant ear and it’s your job to fill it.

Teachers should teach. You may have the gift and are not using it. You may be using it outside of the church, in your job, use it to build up the body.

[Helene Ypma, enjoys studying and learning, and explaining biblical truths.]

EXHORTATION (admonish, advise, counsel, comfort)

Romans 12:8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation.

Romans 15:4 through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Acts 11:23-24 When [Barnabas – which means son of encouragement] came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

Exhortation is the Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by ministering words of comfort, counsel, challenge or rebuke in such a way that they respond. You might have an extra measure of grace for this gift if ...

Exhortation Characteristics:

- You motivate others to practical application of specific Biblical truths.

- You tell others the truth about themselves with encouragement and understanding.
- You challenge people to discover what they can become and point them to opportunities for them to fulfill those possibilities.
- You are more effective in short-term encouragement rather than long-term counseling or support.

Exhortation Cautions:

- You may offer “quick fixes” and appear insensitive to longer term needs.
- You may offer too direct or harsh counsel or be insensitive to the real need.
- You might jump to conclusions before listening to the whole story.

This is a trying gift. Mothers tire of exhorting their children. If you have this gift, don't grow weary, but exercise it in the strength of the Spirit. Use it, help others. Build up the body.

This is taking teaching to the level of application. To encourage and to urge strongly in the direction of the truth being applied, obeyed. To exhort is to press home teaching for application and action and change.

I try to include applications in all my preaching and teaching. The goal is spiritual growth and change.

PROPHECY (preaching)

Romans 12:6 if prophecy, in proportion to our faith.

I Corinthians 12:28 God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets.

I Corinthians 14:1, 3 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ... 3 the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

Prophecy is the Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by speaking God's truth in ways that challenge, comfort, guide, warn, or reveal sin in a way that leads to repentance and spiritual growth. You may have extra grace for this gift if you...

Prophecy Characteristics:

- Love to share strong biblical convictions with others.

- View yourself as God's tool, ready to be used by the Holy Spirit in changing lives.
- Find it easy to confront others' motives when they are not up to God's standards.
- Feel a sense of urgency about calling people to the authority of Scripture.
- Often plead the cause of God to His people and/or to the world.

Prophecy Cautions:

- Being negative, discouraging believers rather than strengthening them.
- Being arrogant because of the authoritative nature of the gift.
- Being too blunt at times or with certain people.

As you can imagine there is a lot of debate about what prophecy was in the early church and what it is and what it means today. Without bogging down in that debate, we can at least say it involved speaking out-loud, publicly communicating on behalf of God the revealed truth and will of God in a manner that convicts, builds up and encourages.

I Corinthians 14:3 The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

Normal prophecy today is opening up and proclaiming the Word of God to increase holiness and strengthen faith. You have to have faith to open up the Word of God.

Prophecy according to faith, means with humility.

Summary.

As I said at the beginning the speaking gifts can overlap, so let me give a summary to help clarify and differentiate.

Teaching instructs the mind, explaining the truth of God's Word.

Preaching proclaims God's Word with Spirit-given authority, pressing it to the conscience, calling for faith, repentance, and obedience.

Exhortation encourages, comforts, and motivates the will and affections to live in obedience.

Prophecy proclaims God's Word for the edification of the church.

- Teaching gives light,
- Preaching gives heat,
- Exhortation gives strength,
- Prophecy gives edification.

Conclusion.

Has the Spirit gifted you in any of these ways? Are any of these gifts in you in seed form waiting to be watered and nurtured through small ways of starting to speak up for the sake of members of the body? Are there ways God wants you to be a blessing to others because of the gifts the Spirit has given you? It's alright to take baby steps. What's not alright is to keep your gift buried out of fear or feelings of inadequacy or comparing yourself to others.

Respond in faith to what the Spirit is doing and step out in faith to what He wants you to do. Pray, ask for help, be humble and be bold in the Spirit.

Don't be looking at what others should be doing, but at what we can be doing for the body. If you see someone struggling to understand, help explain it to them; if you see someone discourage, defeated, down, encourage them, lift them up. If you see a need, consider if God has made you aware of the need so you can meet it.

We all have a voice, we all are able to speak, and we are all able to speak into the lives of others. Don't lose your voice. If you are like me you all have experiences of seeing an opportunity to say something and letting it pass by and regretting it later. Don't lose your voice. Ask God each day to use your words for His glory and the benefit and blessing of others.

You are part of the body, you have a part, the body needs you, you need the body. Satan will try to discourage you or lie, making you feel unworthy, causing you to bury your gift. Get busy speaking according to the measure of faith God has already given you, according to the grace He has given you.

And most of all, know that God has given all of us two high callings for our voice, the highest callings of all, to worship God with praise and thanksgiving, and to pray to God for yourself and others. Start and end your day and each week with worship and prayer, in this God is glorified and His purpose for you on earth is fulfilled as long as you have breath.

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: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.