

## Showing the Spirit

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Spiritual Gifts: Showing the Spirit Series

1 Corinthians 12.4-11

This past year, along with a couple of other pastors here at the Vineyard, I had the privilege of taking some executive education classes at my alma mater, Case Western Reserve. The executive education classes were offered through their management school and they were all in the area of Emotional Intelligence. One of the things that researchers have been trying to get at since the beginning of the discipline of management is, what is it that makes a manager or a leader effective? Why are some of you, or some of your bosses, really great leaders while others are absolutely hopeless? Over the last 20 years or so, there has been some very fruitful investigation about this subject called Emotional Intelligence.

What you often find in large organizations is that the very smartest person in the organization may not be the top leader. Some of the brightest people, in terms of sheer IQ, are in a back room somewhere doing data analysis or research and development. But top management often brings to the table a whole different set of skills – things like the ability to inspire a group with a compelling vision, the ability to persuade others toward a common task, the ability to develop people and release them into a particular activity, the ability to show empathy and an awareness of others' feelings, initiative, optimism, the ability to catalyze change. There is a whole set of qualities that makes for effective leadership beyond sheer IQ and these qualities have been grouped by researchers over the last 20 years under the heading of Emotional Intelligence.

So, along with a couple of other pastors, I've been taking these classes on Emotional Intelligence at Case. One of the things that they discussed in a recent lecture was the need for the emotionally intelligent leader to live a balanced life. Now, the way they defined a balanced life was that a balanced life involved four things:

### SLIDE – Balanced Life Graphic

Then the instructor asked the class to put together their own balance sheet to see how they were doing in the areas of relationships, body, emotions, and spirituality. Well, immediately hands went up all over the room. One man asked: What do you mean by spirituality? A dozen other folks echoed him: Yes, what are you talking about by spirituality?

One person said: Well, I think you are talking about the kind of feeling that you get from running or lifting weights. (Now, this was a room full of folks who are top managers

from some of America's largest corporations. But they were absolutely clueless when it came to attempting to define something as fundamental to the history and experience of human beings as "spirituality.")

NT Wright, who is certainly among the world's foremost New Testament scholars, recently wrote a fantastic book called Simply Christian, which is an introduction to the Christian faith. Simply Christian is a great book for folks who are exploring what the Christian faith is all about as well as for people who are newer Christians. It is kind of an updated, more contemporary Mere Christianity.

In the book, NT Wright shares this little parable in which a powerful dictator ruled his country with an iron fist. Every aspect of life was thought through and worked out according to a rational system. There were thousands of springs of water in cities and in the countryside that people were used to going to, sticking their cups or vessels in, and drinking from. Sometimes these springs of water overflowed the banks and caused floods. Sometimes they became polluted. Sometimes they branched out in different places and damaged fields, roads, and houses. So this dictator decided that many of the water sources around the country were too erratic, in some cases dangerous.

So the dictator made a decree in which he decided to pave over the entire country with thick concrete. The concrete was so thick that no water could penetrate through it. All the water that people needed would be shipped to them via a complex network of pipes. Then the water would have chemicals added to it to insure that the water was safe to drink.

Well, everything worked fine for several generations. People got used to drinking water that was shipped to them through pipes. But then one day, without warning, the springs could not be held back any longer and something that was a cross between an earthquake and a volcano burst through the concrete. All over the country there were springs of water bubbling up from the ground. The people who ran the country were at a loss because suddenly people had all the water they wanted. Some of it was polluted; some of it was great, but the water was no longer government controlled.

Well, as I said, NT Wright wrote this as a parable. For 200 years we in the Western world, have been citizens of that country. The dictator is the philosophy that has dominated the Western world for nearly 200 years – the philosophy of the enlightenment that basically paved over the springs of spirituality so that almost everyone growing up in the Western world has become a materialist by default. Growing up in the Western world we know a great deal about the body.

SLIDE – Balanced Life Graphic – Highlight "The Body"

We send our best and brightest off to medical school to study the body. What makes it work? What makes it stop working? Over the last 200 years, we've gained enormous

insight regarding the diseases affecting the body. We spend billions of dollars clothing and feeding the body. We take photographs of the body and exercise the body. We perfume the body and bathe it.

Over the last 200 years in the Western world, we've also spent an enormous amount of time, energy and money investigating our emotions.

SLIDE – Balanced Life – Highlight “Emotions”

We sent some of our best and brightest off to graduate schools to get degrees in psychology, social work, and psychiatry in order to understand and heal people's emotional lives. Emotional disorders have all been classified in huge manuals like the DSM-4. In a similar way there has been a massive amount of investigation regarding relationships – romantic relationships, family relationships, relationships in the workplace.

But many well-educated people in the west have done almost no thinking about this fourth quadrant,

SLIDE – Balanced Life Graphic – Highlight “Spirituality”

That hidden spring of water called “spirituality” has been paved over. Spirituality has been domesticated. The spring has been tamed and sent through pipes called religion, served up in small safe doses through official channels called the church. But in recent years the springs have not been able to be held back any longer and there has been an explosion through the concrete. There is more and more talk about spirituality. The spirituality could be of the type that we see in The Da Vinci Code, or The Passion of the Christ, or on Oprah, or in the section in the bookstore marked, “Spirituality.” Or it can be Christian spirituality, but the water is bubbling up everywhere.

As a Christian, I believe in a God of love, who knows us and desires to be known. As a Christian, I believe that our Creator made each human being with an undeniable spiritual thirst to know and experience this God of love. Now, we can try to deny the existence of this thirst, by caring for and exercising the body, or through relationships – sexual relationships, family relationships. We can try to meet this spiritual thirst through therapy, self-help, and the healing of our emotional life. We can even try to meet the spiritual thirst by drinking out of polluted streams.

But God has not left us clueless regarding how and where to drink from a pure and clean fountain. The Bible speaks to us of a God whose presence cannot be paved over for very long by any scheme of man. And what we have witnessed over the last century, in particular, is the presence of the Holy Spirit, bursting through our various philosophies and church systems. What we have found over the last century again and again is this God of loving showing himself through something called spiritual gifts.

Over the next several weeks, I want to reintroduce to the Vineyard this very fundamental topic of spiritual gifts. I've called my message, "Showing the Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12.4-11.

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<sup>1Co 12:4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

<sup>1Co 12:5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

<sup>1Co 12:6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

<sup>1Co 12:7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

<sup>1Co 12:8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

<sup>1Co 12:9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,

<sup>1Co 12:10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,<sup>1</sup> and to still another the interpretation of tongues.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1Co 12:11</sup> All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

By the way, in order to maximize the benefit that you might be able to receive from these talks on spiritual gifts, we've got some follow-up seminars. We understand that there is only so much that you will be able to get from a message, or even a series of messages, so we've scheduled some follow up seminars so that you will not only receive additional teaching on spiritual gifts, but also have an opportunity to experience the Holy Spirit.

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- Holy Spirit 2: Spiritual Gifts – Craig Heselton and Sara Carlisle, Friday, June 2 and Saturday, June 3
- Hearing God's Voice – Rick Evans, Sr. Pastor, VCF Cleveland, Thursday, June 8 and Friday, June 9, 7:30 p.m
- Spiritual Warfare and Deliverance – Steve Robbins, Thursday, June 22 and Friday, June 23, 7:30 p.m.

In addition, there are several books that the bookstore has made available to you to learn more about this topic. Some of my favorites are: Know Your Spiritual Gifts by Mark Stibbe, The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then And Now by Max Turner.

Now, my basic thesis is that spiritual gifts are a major way in which God reveals himself to the world. The God of love, the God of truth, the God of power, the real God, the God who revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ wants to be known, and one of the major ways that this real God can be known is through spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are like one of those geysers bursting through the concrete of the modern world. While everyone is sitting around, living safe, utterly predictable lives, up from the ground bursts this spring, a spring of the Holy Spirit's presence through spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are the way that the Spirit is shown. They are the way the invisible God is made visible.

Why is there so much confusion, so much debate, so much controversy concerning spiritual gifts? Certainly, one of the reasons there is so much confusion is that Satan desires a weak, powerless, fearful church and ineffective church. He wants a church that just goes through religious motions. Satan wants a church that relies entirely upon what we human beings can produce out of our own efforts, and out of our own smarts.

Friends, I will tell you, what the world needs most is not a more technologically savvy church. It does not need a better marketed church. It does not even need a better programmed church. What the world needs most is a church filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, the kind of spiritual power that our effort can't produce, and our education can't conceive, and our programs can't strategize. What the world desperately needs is the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's energy, the Spirit's power, the Spirit's presence is manifested to this world through spiritual gifts.

Now, certainly, a second reason for the confusion regarding spiritual gifts is that many people have attempted to write about and teach on spiritual gifts without ever having experienced the gifts, or seen them in operation. You know, there is so much about the Bible and about the Christian life that you cannot understand without first experiencing it. The Bible, and the Christian life, is not something that you can stand out, or apart from, and say: OK, I can understand it from the outside. I've got it all figured out.

There are some of you today who are in the position of standing outside of Christianity. Much of it is very confusing to you. You may have tried to read about it, or argue about Christianity with a friend or family member. You may have gotten into a debate. But the truth is you really don't understand Christianity at all because you are on the outside; you haven't experienced a relationship with Jesus Christ yet.

I've often pictured Christianity as being like one of those old cathedrals with stained glass windows. If you stand on the outside of one of those old cathedrals, the stained glass windows look gray. If you've ever looked at a stained glass window from the outside, you can't make out what the picture is in the stained glass. It is only when you enter a cathedral and look up at the stained glass again that the picture becomes clear as you see the sunshine coming through the stained glass. You say: Oh, now I get it. I'm

on the inside. I see in the stained glass the face of Jesus. I see in the stained glass his death on the cross, or his glorious resurrection.

That is the way the Christian life is, friend. You will never be able to understand it from the outside. You will never be able to completely figure it out by arguing about it, or discussing it, or even reading a book about it. These things can help; but at some point you need to make a decision to step inside.

I know that many of you have had the experience of not understanding the Bible very well before you came to Christ. You tried to read the Bible, but it was this boring, unintelligible book. You lost interest in it. The sayings, the stories were dark and opaque, but then you made a decision to step inside the cathedral. You made a decision to trust in Christ. There was a moment when you knelt down and said: Jesus, I need you in my life. I'm going to welcome you and allow you to take control of me. There was a moment in your life when you trusted in Christ and in his death for you on the cross and suddenly the Bible became alive because the Holy Spirit is now in your life. He is illuminating the Bible.

And friend, if Christianity is for you today just this gray, confusing thing, you know about it, but you don't really get it, it is because you are standing on the outside and looking in. So, let me extend an invitation to you: Why don't you step inside? Today, why not take this occasion while you are at church to trust in Christ, to ask him to take up residence in your life, to welcome his presence? Why not take this occasion to say to Jesus: Jesus, I'm ready to have you take control of me. I guarantee you that if you welcome the presence of Christ in your life and you turn control of your life over to Christ, you will get it. Things about Jesus that didn't make sense before will suddenly become clear to you.

Now, I believe the same principle is operative concerning confusion about spiritual gifts. There are many people who have written books about spiritual gifts and have spoken about them, but they haven't experienced them. They are writing about the stained glass window from the outside and that cannot be done.

So what do the scriptures teach us about spiritual gifts? 1 Cor. 12.4-6,

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<sup>1Co 12:4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

<sup>1Co 12:5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

<sup>1Co 12:6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now, this is a Trinitarian text. Paul mentions three persons of the Trinity as the giver of gifts. In v. 4, he mentions the Holy Spirit

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1Co 12:4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

In v. 5, he speaks to us about the Lord Jesus Christ,

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1Co 12:5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

And in v. 6, the apostle Paul speaks to us about God the Father.

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1Co 12:6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

And in each case, he mentions what would probably be a primary aspect of each of the three divine persons. In v. 4 he speaks about the Spirit and his gifts. 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 are all about the Spirit and his gifts. In v. 5, Paul talks about different kinds of service, but the same Lord. It is particularly appropriate that we connect service with the Lord Jesus Christ because this is the way Jesus identified himself in Matt. 20.28,

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Mt 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

And concerning God the Father, we read about working in v. 6,

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1Co 12:6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Paul is talking about effectual working, or energizing. 1 Cor. 12.4-6 is one of the many texts in the Bible that speak to us about God being a Trinity: The Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father.

Now, let's go through each of the words the apostle Paul uses spiritual gifts. The words that are used here, clear up any confusion we might have concerning the gifts. First of all, in v. 4, he calls spiritual gifts, gifts.

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<sup>1Co 12:4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

Now, the Greek word for "gift" here is "charismata".

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Charismata = Gifts

The word "charismata" has been used to describe the charismatic movement in the church, the portion of the church that emphasizes using spiritual gifts. But the word "charismata" is a derivative of another Greek word, charis. Charis means "grace."

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Charis = Grace

Spiritual gifts are a way that God shows his grace.

Spiritual gifts are a concrete expression of God's grace. The apostle Paul says that in his opening remarks in 1 Corinthians 1.4-7.

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<sup>1Co 1:4</sup> I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

<sup>1Co 1:5</sup> For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—

<sup>1Co 1:6</sup> God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

<sup>1Co 1:7</sup> Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

Now, it is absolutely essential that for you to begin to exercise spiritual gifts that you have a grasp of the grace of God that is available to you. You've got to link in your mind "grace" and "spiritual gifts." Because I have conversations with people all the time about spiritual gifts that go like this. I ask them: Have you ever been given a prophetic word? Has God ever used you to heal the sick? Have you ever spoken in tongues?

The person will say: No, I don't think so. I don't think I've done any of those things.

So, I say: Why do you think that you've never been given any of the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12? Why do you think that God has not used you in any of the ways described here in this passage?



The person will say: Well, honestly, I don't know. I'm a new Christian. I don't know the Bible very well. I haven't been consistent with my devotional life. I struggle with my temper.

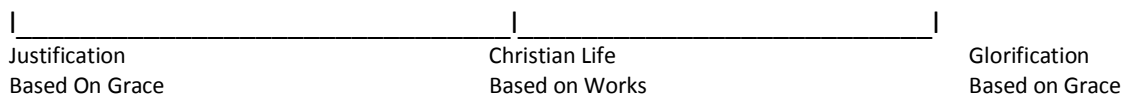
Or one of the common things I hear from people is: Well, I am an engineer. (Of course, that explains it!). I'm accountant; I'm an attorney. I'm not very emotional (in other words, I'm logical and analytical). I'm not very touchy-feely. The way my brain is wired is that it is very difficult for me to function in spiritual things. It would be easier for me to exercise spiritual gifts if I was a musician, or an artist, or a loopy-goopy, touchy-feely type person.

But the bottom line reason why a person is not functioning in the gifts that we see in 1 Cor. 12 is that there is some personal defect, some failure of character, some personality quirk, some temperamental deficiency, some performance failure that renders them a poor candidate for receiving spiritual gifts, especially the gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12.

Do any of you feel this way? That the reason why you have not experienced many of the things mentioned in this list in 1 Cor. 12 is because at the end of the day you are an unlikely candidate for receiving gifts of healing, prophecy, miracles, or discerning of spirits. And if you have any of these feelings that you are an unlikely candidate to receive a particular spiritual gift, it is because you have an inadequate grasp of the grace of God revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

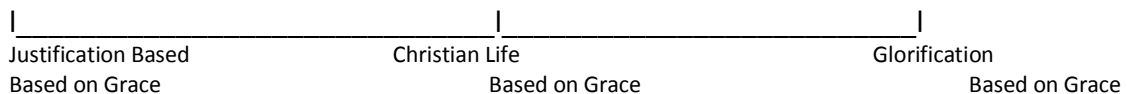
Jerry Bridges, in a very helpful book titled Transforming Grace: Living Confidently In God's Unfailing Love, shares this graphic:

SLIDE – Pg. 20 of Transforming Grace



But a true understanding of the Christian life looks this way:

SLIDE – Pg. 20 of Transforming Grace



You need to understand what the cross of Jesus Christ accomplished. When Jesus died on the cross, he paid for it all. And I mean "all." He not only purchased through his blood the forgiveness of your sins, and your ticket to the New Earth, but he purchased every blessing and every answer to prayer that you will ever receive – every one of them

without exception, including every spiritual gift God may give you. The cross is a revelation of the grace of God.

So when we speak of grace, we are speaking of God treating a person without the slightest reference to your deserving, or your earning, or your merit, but solely according to his infinite goodness and generosity.

If you say that you are an unlikely candidate to heal the sick because of some deficiency in you, then you do not understand the grace of God. If you say you are an unlikely candidate to be used by God to work a miracle, then you do not understand the grace of God. If you say that you are an unlikely candidate to get a prophetic word, then you do not understand the grace of God. You have turned to rely on something in yourself. You are relating to God on the basis of works, not on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ, who purchased every blessing for you including every spiritual gift that God may give you.

Do you understand, friend, the grace of God is not based on how your performance is today or how good your devotions went? When approaching spiritual gifts, forget about yourself and what you've done, and how worthy or unworthy you are. Forget about how much you know, how much you pray, what your personality is like.

John Wimber understood grace. Here is the way to test whether you really grasp the Christian way of salvation: Do you believe that someone is more worthy of receiving spiritual gifts than you? Do you think that there is anyone in the world who is a more likely candidate to be used by God to heal the sick, or to prophesy than you? Do you believe that there is someone who is a more likely candidate for God to use regarding the gift of miracles than you? Maybe it is someone who is more emotionally together than you. Maybe it is someone who has better relationships than you have. Maybe it is someone who knows more Bible than you. Maybe it is someone who is kinder than you; someone who is more empathetic than you.

The Christian way of salvation when you really get it, teaches that God has eliminated all the distinctions we normally draw between men and women in terms of our acceptability to God. You and I, and the thousands of other followers of Christ, who call Vineyard Columbus our church home, and the billions of followers of Christ worldwide, we're all on the same level playing field with God. We're all at the same starting point in the race. No one is ahead of you. No one is behind you in terms of righteousness or acceptability or worthiness. All the distinctions between men and women that we normally draw, all the distinctions regarding our wealth, our knowledge, and our relational abilities, our social skills, our education, our race – all of these distinctions are eliminated in Christ. We are all equally qualified candidates to receive God's gifts. Spiritual gifts are signs of God's grace bursting through. Spiritual gifts are concrete signs of God's grace.

I looked up the phrase “God gave” and “God gives” and “the Lord gives” in a concordance recently. I found the phrases “God gave,” “God gives,” and “the Lord gives” several hundred times in my concordance. There were too many to count. There are hundreds of individual references in the Bible to God giving. You could say that the regular characteristic of God in the Bible is to give gifts. When you think about the God in the Bible, one of the chief things that you would say about the God in the Bible is that the God of the Bible is an extraordinarily generous giver.

We read that God gave the land to the children of Israel. God gave the Jews precious promises. He gave them manna in the wilderness to feed them. God gave the people judges and kings and prophets. God gave Joseph success in everything he did. God gave Moses the law on Mt. Sinai. God gave barren women like Sarah, Rachel and Hannah the gift of children. God gave David victory, wherever he went, over his enemies. God gave Job his children, his wealth, his home, his social standing. God gave Solomon wisdom. He gave Daniel knowledge and understanding. God gave Paul his gospel. God gave John the apostle the prophetic revelation that we read in the Book of Revelation. God gave his one and only Son to us, and through him, God gives the forgiveness of sins and peace and eternal life. God gives, through his Son, new resurrection bodies for all who die in Christ. To all who receive him and believe, God gives the right to be called a child of God.

Friend, are you in touch with how generous God is? This is what I bank on when I address God in prayer – his generosity. For me, one of the chief characteristics of God, the centerpiece of my theology, is that God is extravagantly generous. That at the very heart of my faith is this rock-solid conviction that my Father in heaven is very generous.

Is that what you believe about God? Do you believe that God is generous enough to forgive you for any and every sin that you confess to him and bring to the cross? Do you believe that God is generous enough to answer your prayers, or do you think God is stingy and withholding? Do you believe God is generous enough to give you a gift of healing for someone, or a gift of prophecy? Christian, what is the nature of your Father in heaven? The Bible teaches that God is so generous that he gives gifts even to the utterly unworthy. He is the one whom I’ve labeled in the past the prodigal Father, who gives, in Jesus’ parable in Luke 15, the gift of freedom and forgiveness and the gift of a party and the fattened calf to all who return to him.

God is so generous that he gives success and wealth to people like Paris Hilton, Anna Nicole Smith, and Barry Bonds. Let me tell you how generous God our Father is. God is so generous that he gives spiritual gifts to Christians who don’t even believe in them. God gives spiritual gifts to Christians who teach that the gifts have passed away.

Do you know how generous God is? God is so generous that he gives spiritual gifts even to people who misuse them. We look at different churches where the atmosphere is kind of weird, and the pastor is showy, and there is financial manipulation going on.

And we say: Surely, God would not give any real spiritual gifts in that place, or to that person.

You don't understand the generosity of God. What is amazing to me as I read 1 Corinthians is that here is a church that misused spiritual gifts, that used God's gifts to pump themselves up, to compare and contrast themselves with each other. The Corinthian church is a church that was showy and prideful, it was immoral and divisive.

But Paul doesn't say to them: Stop it. Stop using these gifts. Paul doesn't say God won't give you any gifts. He says to a church like that: Seek even more gifts. 1 Cor. 14.1,

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1Co 14:1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

SLIDE – 1 Cor. 14.39

1Co 14:39 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

He brings correction. But unlike the common evangelical counsel today, the way to deal with the misuse of spiritual gift is not to stop using them. It is to use them properly.

In understanding spiritual gifts, we see a second description in v. 5,

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1Co 12:5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

The Greek word here is

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Diakonia = Ministries or Service

The word "diakonia" suggests the purpose of spiritual gifts. Gifts are given by God to serve others and to serve God. Diakonia is the same word from which the office of "deacon" is arrived. The deacons were servants in the early church. As we ask for spiritual gifts, we are not simply saying: God bless me; that's as far as I can see. Or as we used to joke back in the 1970's: Us four, Lord, no more. (Acts 2.4)

When we pray to God, we say: God, will you grant me a particular gift, a gift of healing because this person is sick; a gift of faith because there is this huge barrier than I need to break through; a gift of prophecy so that I might hear your voice. What we are really praying for when we ask for spiritual gifts is: God, I want to be used by you to serve others better.

The ministry of Jesus was a ministry of servanthood. Jesus said,

SLIDE – Matthew 20.25-27

Mt 20:25 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Mt 20:26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Mt 20:27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—

The servant ministry of Jesus in the world is carried on today by his church, which is his body. As the spirit of Jesus fills the church, Jesus continues to serve people today. When someone is sick, Jesus serves that sick person by healing them through the spiritual gift of healing. When someone is discouraged, Jesus serves the discouraged person through the spiritual gift of prophecy, which is designed to bring encouragement. Jesus serves people who are struggling to understand his word by giving the spiritual gift of knowledge. He serves people who are struggling to understand the meaning of his death on the cross by giving the spiritual gift of wisdom.

There is nothing me-centered about desiring spiritual gifts. The desire, in fact, shows other-centeredness. When you pray for a spiritual gift, what you are saying is: I’ve learned to get beyond myself and my own needs, family, and issues. When you pray for a spiritual gift, what you are saying is: I’ve grown to the place in my life where I am now other-centered enough to want to see people encouraged, counseled, healed, and delivered. When you pray for a spiritual gift, what you are saying is: I have arrived at a place in my life where I really do passionately want to see people set free from their addictions. I want to have people come to know Jesus the way that Christ has shown himself to me.

Friend, the more you desire to help and serve other people, the more you are going to ask God to give you spiritual gifts. If you don’t care about serving others, you will never ask God for a gift. But if you are a person who says: I really do want to be used by God to serve other people; I want to see other people do well; I want to see broken people mended; then you will frequently ask God for gifting.

You say, “I know my spiritual gift. My spiritual gift is music. My spiritual gift is quilt-making, or painting, or writing, or mechanics.” These are talents given to you by God in his creation of you, but they aren’t what Paul is talking about by spiritual gifts. He says in v. 6,

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*There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.*

We need to restrict his “all men” contextually into all men and women who are part of the body of Christ. The key word here is “working.” It is the Greek word “energemata” from which we get the word energy.

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Energemata = Divine Working or Divine Energizing

Paul is not talking about natural talents, plus a little bit. He is talking about the supernatural energy, the supernatural power of God. The same word is used of the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Spiritual gifts reveal the power of God. That’s why I love thinking about spiritual gifts as God’s power tools. A few years ago my garage door was falling. The angle irons that originally attached the garage door were just hanging from the dry wall in the garage ceiling. The angle irons weren’t screwed into any of the wood studs that framed in the garage. They were just hanging from the dry wall and so they pulled loose and my garage door was hanging at a weird angle.

So I took my little portable drill and drilled some holes into the dry wall. I tried to take those tiny hangers, and screw a little screw up into the angle irons into the hangers to pull the whole thing up into the ceiling. After putting 6 or 7 of these little hangers up there and only adjusting the garage door by an eighth of an inch, I called the garage door service man.

Well, he came over with a drill, but it wasn’t like my little portable drill that I ought to put a lacy doll’s dress on. This thing was a power drill, which literally weighed about 10 pounds. He had a drill bit on it that was like the length of my forearm. He drilled three holes into the ceiling of my garage and then put in these bolts that must have been 4 or 5 inches long, and half an inch in diameter and that door just leveled right up. God’s power tools.

Now, God does want to employ your talents for his service. But in addition, he wants to put in your toolbox power tools to serve others and to serve himself. Power tools go beyond your musical ability or the fact that you can help in accounting in the church or ushering.

Some of you have never surrendered control to God. This is the issue holding you up. See, we’re not put on earth to do something great and present it to God. “Look, God, at the great thing I’ve done!” We’re not put on earth to figure out something hugely impressive to do. God has prepared things for you to do to fulfill his purpose. He doesn’t want great things from you; he just wants your availability to him.

The final word Paul uses to describe spiritual gifts is “manifestation.”

#### SLIDE

<sup>1Co 12:7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

You know, by this word “manifestation” we mean something that makes the invisible God visible. Let me illustrate. You can’t see a flow of electrons with the naked eye. What makes the flow of electrons manifest electricity is you can hear a radio that you plug into a wall socket. Or you can feel heat from the hairdryer. Or you can see light come from a light bulb.

God is invisible. People ask, “Is God alive? Does God care? Where do I get to experience God?” Paul says, “Here’s where the invisible God makes himself visible. Here’s where the unknown God makes himself known; here is where people experience the manifestations of the Holy Spirit – through spiritual gifts.”

Here is how the Spirit shows himself. Here is how the Spirit bursts through all of the materialistic philosophies of our world. It is through spiritual gifts.

How are people today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century going to know that God is real? Well, we can give them our best apologetics and arguments – discuss, debate and persuade. Better, we can show them God is real by our good works. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine for men, that they might see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Every time you do a job with integrity because you are a follower of Christ – you are honest, you give fair service, you are a mechanic working on someone’s car and you do an excellent job, when you are done with the job you say to the person, “You know, when I got into this I thought it was this expensive problem, but it was a problem more easily corrected. The problem didn’t take nearly the time I estimated. I’m going to knock some money off the estimate” – you are manifesting the reality of God.

I believe our community center that we will open in late September will be a major way that the invisible God will be made visible. The community center that we are building outside is going to be a manifestation of the Spirit as people are shown God’s love in practical ways by receiving free legal service, free medical services, by getting help finding a job, by learning English, by being assisted in getting a GED, by having kids tutored in after school programs. See, all of these things is a manifestation of God. The invisible God is being made visible. That is a showing of the Spirit.

And friend, every time you practice a spiritual gift, you are showing people that God is alive today. Spiritual gifts are the vehicles God uses to give us spiritual experience. People today can have real spiritual experience, spiritual experience under the lordship of Christ, spiritual experience that manifests the Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit; spiritual experience that sets us free, that brings us health, that brings us wholeness, that connects us with God and each other.

The presence of the Holy Spirit burst through our materialistic world through spiritual gifts. Let’s pray.

## Showing the Spirit

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Rich Nathan

May 27-28, 2006

Spiritual Gifts: Showing the Spirit Series

1 Corinthians 12.4-11

I. How Can We Experience True Spirituality?

II. Why Is There So Much Confusion About Spiritual Gifts?

A. Being Opposed, Yet Still Doing Church

B. Standing Outside, Yet Trying To Understand

III. Who Is Revealed Through Spiritual Gifts? (1 Cor. 12.4-7)

IV. What Is Revealed Through Spiritual Gifts?

A. Spiritual Gifts, Showing Of God's Grace (1 Cor. 1.4-7; 12.4)

1. A Sense Of Personal Inadequacy

2. The Meaning Of Grace

3. The Generosity Of God

B. Spiritual Gifts, The Showing Of Service (1 Cor. 12.5)

C. Spiritual Gifts, The Showing Of God's Power (1 Cor. 12.6)

D. Spiritual Gifts, The Showing Of The Invisible God (1 Cor. 12.7)



