



The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Romans 12:3-8

Speaker: Anthony Ballard

Disclaimer: This transcript was computer generated and may contain errors.

Good morning, you guys all right? All right, good, wasn't sure.

Well, if you don't know me, my name is Anthony Ballard, and I'm our Director of Discipleship here. I lead our discipleship team and ministries.

In the year 1998, I was about to turn seven years old, and my birthday was approaching. Some of you are like, wow, that's young, or old. But when my birthday was approaching, I wanted a particular kind of gift, and I wanted it very, very bad. The gift that I wanted was called a Game Boy Color, and it came with two Pokémon games. Yeah, thank you. So the 90s kids, we get it. If you were a parent to 90s kids, maybe you bought this for them. But at the time, this was the toy to have, okay?

I don't think I wanted any gift more than I wanted this one. I used to make collage cutouts of the Toys R Us and Best Buy ads, just so that I could imagine what it felt like to own it and make it look all pretty and stuff. And shout out to my parents — they actually got it for me. I did not always get it, so yeah, shout out to them.

This particular birthday is marked in my memory as one of my favorites, all because of the gift that I received at that time.

You know, we talk about gifts in a variety of ways in our culture and throughout the world. We talk about gifts as tangible things that we receive, and then we also talk about gifts as things that are innate in people. You know, we say this about athletes, about doctors, about leaders and public speakers and things, but we've all seen people who are so supremely good at what they do that the only explanation that we could possibly have is that they are gifted.

Right — oh yeah, I like that response. But how about, we see that outside, but how about in the church? Have you ever seen a Christian that was just so good at Christian stuff? They were just really good at it. Maybe they prayed over you, and they prayed something that you never even told anyone, but they knew it in their prayer. Or maybe

you've seen someone who taught the Bible so clearly and expertly that it made mysteries clear to you in your mind, and you're like, wow, that person is gifted.

The Bible agrees with us that these people are gifted, but not just any kind of way. These people are gifted with what's called a spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are special endowments or abilities given to Christians by the third person of the Trinity — God the Holy Spirit. They're used for building and encouraging the church and demonstrating God's power to the world.

Maybe you're thinking, hey, I've heard of these things before and yeah, I know this stuff, but those are for Christians of other denominations — not for me or not for us here. And I've got to say, you are wrong.

Our scripture that Becky read says, "Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed." He's saying, I don't want you to be without knowledge. I don't want you to be without understanding or left in the dark on these things. The King James Version says even better: "About the gifts of the Spirit, I don't want you to be ignorant." I like that.

Of the things you may be ignorant about, the gifts of the Spirit cannot be one of them. These are things that we must experience in us and around us, in our community. It's not simply enough to believe in the gifts — they're something our community needs to practice as well.

"They are the power of Christ at work within us and through us." A church that practices the gifts is a church that is unleashed.

There are many types of gifts, and I want to show you them all on the screen here. They're commonly thought to be 21 spiritual gifts explicitly named in the Bible, with others being implied here and there — 21 spiritual gifts.

Since there are 21, I'm going to preach in great detail about each of those. Just kidding. You guys are like, no way, I'm leaving. My purpose in showing all these on the screen is so that you can be overwhelmed — truly overwhelmed — with the possibilities when we are unleashed by the Holy Spirit in this way.

When the Holy Spirit comes to a church, the Holy Spirit comes bearing gifts, and every Christian gets at least one gift. Every one. Not just me, because I'm on stage. Not Pastor Scott, because he's a senior pastor, or Becky, because she's a pastor and gets special gifts that you don't. Not even the elders, because they govern the church. All of us get spiritual gifts that are given directly to us from the Holy Spirit.

They're for the whole church — including kids and babies. Kids get spiritual gifts too. A friend of mine says there's no junior Holy Spirit. It's the one Spirit for all of us.

For some of you, though, this topic of spiritual gifts may bring up some concerns. Maybe you're thinking of televangelists doing wild, crazy stuff, or churches in chaos, people running around speaking in tongues you don't understand. Maybe that scares you. I get it.

But in chapter 12, Paul provides guidelines for how the gifts are supposed to be used. He does not urge us to be cautious in our use of the gifts — he still wants the church to be unleashed, knowing the Holy Spirit will bring order.

In fact, the three chapters — 12, 13, and 14 — are about unleashing the gifts in the church, but doing so decently and in order. Where are all my Presbyterians at? Say amen. There we go. Presbyterians are like, "Yes — decently and in order."

Out of these 21 gifts, there are nine mentioned in this chapter. But what do they do? How do they work? I only have time to talk about three of them.

The three I want to talk about are: one that I think is mysterious, one that seems practical, and one that is misunderstood — and in some cases, controversial. I want to share how I've experienced these gifts around me for my encouragement. I'm not talking about my own gifts, things I can do or have done, but about other people.

And a disclaimer for all my Pacific Northwest people — the gifts of the Spirit are supernatural, meaning they're not from this world. Sometimes there are things we can't quite explain, no matter how smart or intelligent we are. There are things that are miraculous or unknown. So I want to invite you to let the mystery abound. Let the mystery happen.

About that mysterious gift — some of you may know that my grandmother is a preacher and evangelist. She was well known, especially in the 80s and 90s, for preaching all over L.A., sometimes the country, and even the world. She would often take my sister and me with her when she went to preach.

When I was about six, she preached at a large church like BelPres — like this one. After she finished, she was surrounded by a bunch of people. My sister and I were off to the side, being kids. During that moment, a lady came up to us. She had the friendliest face, very kind and sweet, and she knelt down to us and said, "Do you want to see Jesus?" We said, "Yes." She said, "If you want to see Jesus, I can show you his face."

We were good Christian kids, right? So of course we wanted to see Jesus' face. She said, "Close your eyes. I'm going to show you his face." Before we could fully close our eyes, my grandmother stepped in and said, "You stay away from my grandchildren. Leave." The lady backed away into the crowd and disappeared.

My sister and I were confused — what was wrong with seeing Jesus' face? That's what we wanted to see. But my grandmother, a woman mature in the faith, said, "Do not ever let strange people who you don't know pray over you."

Why? What was that lady going to do? What was she about? My sister and I both remember vividly her looking down at us, and I think I can say now, at 34 years old, that she was not going to show us the face of Jesus.

My grandmother in that moment displayed a gift called discerning of spirits. This is more than just discerning God's will or direction. It's how we know if something is from God, or from a human, or from Satan himself — that's in the Bible.

Last week, Pastor Scott talked about listening to the Holy Spirit — it's like listening to a voice that is not your own. The gift of discerning of spirits is very close to that. The person with this gift has to listen to the Holy Spirit, to the whispers that alert you to someone who is not from him.

You could be listening to a preacher, and things sound generally good, but you might feel something in your spirit that's just off. I hope that's not happening right now — because if it is, you've got to grow in that gift!

This gift is so needed in the body of Christ. Not because God is being tricky or trying to fool us, but because the Bible tells us that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Meaning he's looking for ways to fool us into thinking he's on God's side.

Some of you here have this gift — and we need you to grow in it. We need you to use it. People with this gift can alert us as a church and as leadership to wolves sneaking around the sheep in this church.

Now for the gift that seems practical, we look at a different book — Romans, chapter 12. It says, "We have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy according to your faith. If it is serving, then serve."

This one is rarely talked about as a gift of the Spirit because it seems so practical we forget it's still supernatural — the gift of service. It's making strangers feel like family and giving people a taste of God's welcome.

A lot of places have good service or hospitality — Nordstrom has good service, Disneyland has great hospitality. But what takes something from good professional development to being a gift given by the Holy Spirit?

I experienced this gift in a man named Tim. Some of you may have known Tim — he was Jake Meany's dad and Tiffany Meany's husband. Tim could do service unlike anyone I'd ever met. Six months ago, Tim passed away. At his memorial, which was in this room, it was standing room only — packed with people. The things they talked most about with Tim were his music, his relationship with Jesus, and his service and hospitality.

Those are the most consistent things that they talked about. And that there, I think, is the difference between Disneyland and a spiritual gift. A spiritual gift — Disneyland will help make the brand better, but a spiritual gift helps build the kingdom of God.

I think it's proven also, Tim wrote a hospitality manifesto. Who does that? Who writes a manifesto for hospitality? I think someone with a spiritual gift would do that. And here's something that he says in here:

He says, "The reason we invite others into our home is to share the experience of the love that we have for our God, to offer joy that we have in this relationship with Jesus Christ. It is really the main thing that motivates us. It drives us and inspires us. It is the joy that we desire to share with other people as they come into our home."

Tim, at his memorial, had people who were Christians, non-Christians, people who were angry at Christians — they didn't want to be here, but they managed to come, all because they had experienced Jesus through him.

Jake told me, even when I asked him about this, that people actually didn't always like his dad's hospitality and service because Tim was too intentional and too inviting for some people. I know that Tim had purposed in his heart to serve regular, ordinary people as if he were serving Jesus Christ himself.

That very day — the very day that Tim passed away — he sent me a text message. In that text message, he said, "We would love to have you over someday very soon." I can only imagine that it was to get some great service, right?

So if you have this gift, which I know some of you do, I want to encourage you — don't shrink it down like Pastor Scott said last week. Don't shrink it down and make it practical and say, "Oh, it's just normal." No. This is a supernatural thing that is given to the church to witness to the world.

Next one. 1 Corinthians 14 says, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy." Prophecy is a word used in fantasy stories and good storytelling, and it's usually thought of as someone who is just telling the future — almost like a fortune teller type of thing. That's different. The fortune-teller part is not biblical prophecy, but the future part can be.

Prophecy is speaking a Holy Spirit-given message to strengthen, encourage, correct, or comfort an individual or the church.

In August, I preached on the book of Daniel, and I hinted in that sermon that it was a really hard sermon to write — by far the hardest one I've had to write so far, because of the passage it was based on. On top of that, while writing it, my wife, my daughter, and I all got sick. I had body aches, chills — everything going on. And then we were also moving, so our apartment was in disarray. Everything was just not good.

So we were sick, our apartment was crazy, and I had to write a really hard sermon. It was so hard that I actually thought about calling Pastor Scott Dudley and saying, "I got nothing. I think we need to sing songs the whole service." I was really ready to quit. I told my wife, "I think this is my last sermon. I don't want to do it anymore." I was so stressed.

My wife, who is great, actually rebuked me and encouraged me all in the same moment. She's my witness. I was packing a box that day, rummaging through some stuff, and I found something I hadn't seen in a very long time — a cassette tape.

So, young people, a cassette tape is what we used to listen to music on before streaming and CDs. You could record stuff on it — ask your parents or grandparents. I found this cassette tape, and on it, it said "Anthony's Prophecy." I was like, what? I remembered the cassette, but I hadn't listened to it because I hadn't had a cassette player since 2002 or 2003.

So I bought a cassette player. I preached that sermon that almost made me quit, and when I got home that same Sunday, the cassette player was delivered. My wife and I listened to it together just to see what it was about.

The person speaking on the recording was a prayer minister who was praying over me, and they had recorded it. It was in Pasadena, California, at a church I was attending at the time. The date was December 2007, which means I was 16 years old. It was about a three-minute recording of her praying and prophesying over me.

I could tell she was mature in her gift because she would pray, then pause and listen for what the Holy Spirit was saying, then pray again, pause again. Then the next thing she said was, "Hmm, I see a gift of preaching in you."

My wife and I looked at each other like, "What? I was just about to quit!"

Let me be clear — this was not a church I was at for very long. I wasn't serving there. People didn't really know me there. I didn't even want to be there. And the minister didn't know my name — as she prayed over me, she called me "young man." She didn't know my name.

But she saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. Frankly, I didn't even want to see it in myself. That was off the table for me — preaching. So I'm pretty sure I left that prayer thinking, "You're right, lady. You're not a prophet. I'm leaving this church."

But I've listened to that tape now about three times. The thing that amazes me most is not just what she said, but that the Holy Spirit gave me a prophetic word that I received at 16 — but didn't need to hear until I was 34. Isn't that something? That is prophecy.

Prophecy is not because she made a prediction about me, but because she encouraged me and built up the body of Christ.

Some of you have this gift. Some of you don't know if you have it but want it — and that's okay too. You can want a gift from the Holy Spirit. The gifts operate in us out of love.

My grandmother protected me and discerned that spirit because she loved my sister and me. Tim served people like he was serving Jesus because he loved people. And that prayer minister, even though she didn't know my name, loved me as a brother in Christ and was able to hear that word on my behalf.

1 Corinthians 14 says, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy."

So not only should we be informed about the gifts of the Spirit, but we must also practice them in love and eagerly desire them. That means we can want the gifts of the Spirit badly — we can want them like I wanted that Game Boy Color I told you about at the beginning. We can want the gifts eagerly.

If you're wondering how to know what your spiritual gift is — or if you know it but aren't sure how to grow in it — here are five suggestions:

1. **Pray and ask for it.** You can ask for these things. Eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit. The giver distributes the gifts as He determines.
2. **Try to serve in different ministries.** You may serve somewhere and realize, "I'm terrible at this, I'll try another." That's fine. You may teach the Bible to kids and realize, "Wow, I'm really good at this — I think I'm made for this." That shows you have the gift of teaching.
3. **Look to your past.** What has always been true about you? Knowing the gifts and looking to past experience can help you recognize them. Maybe you've had moments where you sensed something "off" about someone — more than intuition — the Holy Spirit speaking to you.
4. **Ask community for confirmation.** Not from hundreds of people, but from your small group community. This is the best place to practice and learn your gifts. If you're not in one already, join a BelPres Community Group or a Practicing the Way group so you can build relationships and grow.
5. **Use the gift you possess.** 1 Timothy says to "fan into flame the gift that is in you." Even if you have a small idea of your gift, grow in it. You can have a gift but need to mature in how you use it.

The Corinthians were a church alive in the spiritual gifts — they were doing all kinds of things, but they were not mature in using them well. That's the role of pastors: to help you and shepherd you in that. Right, Becky? (She wasn't expecting that.)

To be unleashed in this way, BelPres, means we have to be open to the supernatural. The gifts come from a supernatural being — the Spirit of God — meaning there will be things that make us uncomfortable. But there will also be things that excite us — things available to us from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, when He was about to ascend into heaven, "It's better that I go so that the Holy Spirit will come." And when the Holy Spirit comes, He comes bearing gifts. They're available to all of us — young and old.

To end this sermon, I actually want to pray over us. If you're someone who's wondering what your spiritual gift is, or if you know your gift and want to mature in it, I want to invite you to join me in prayer.

Also, I want to invite you to open your hands — like you're receiving something — as a sign. We can't receive something if our hands are closed. So join me in praying over you and myself as well:

Holy Spirit, thank you that you are the giver of gifts. When you give yourself, you give gifts as well. Lord, I pray for every person in this room — young and old — whether we know our gifts or have questions. Meet us in the midst of this. Make it clear, the gifts you have given to us. And Lord, if we know our gift, make us mature and help us grow in it. Thank you for your generosity — that you don't hold it all, but you share it and spread it around. So Holy Spirit, unleash us. Unleash us, Lord. Unleash us and let us use these gifts for your purposes — to build up this church and to witness to your world. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What stands out about the gifts of the Spirit in this text?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What has been your experience with the gifts of the Spirit? What encourages you about them, what concerns you?
- The sermon shared that all Christians have a spiritual gift. Do you know your spiritual gift? If so, how can you begin to grow in the use of it? If not, how can you begin to learn it?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Oct 5, 2025

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.