

2021

Gifts of the Spirit



© Agora Church

8/8/2021

© Agora Church - <https://www.agorachurch.nz/>

Sermons in this Article/Booklet/PDF were given by:

Craig Barrow – Pastor, Agora Church

Dave Tabrum – Associate Pastor

Tina Warnock – Lay Preacher

Tom McIvor – Word of Life - Lay Preacher

Murray Stevenson – Lay Preacher

This Article/Booklet/PDF was compiled and organized by:

Phil Smith, PhD – <https://www.philsblog.online/>

Download the original Gifts of the Spirit PDF, plus the test guide file free from: <https://www.philsblog.online/special-articles>



(Graphic and art pictures were downloaded from royalty free sites.)

(Pictures of the Agora church and its People are included in this Article by Permission)

(This Article/booklet/PDF was Developed with Permission)

Contents

Introduction to the Gifts of the Spirit

1. [Service](#)
2. [Faith](#)
3. [Encouragement](#)
4. [Wisdom and Knowledge](#)
5. [Being a Gift](#)
6. [Hospitality](#)
7. [Administration](#)
8. [Leadership and Teaching](#)
9. [Prophecy](#)
10. [Key Principles of the Gifts](#)
11. [Voluntary Poverty](#)
12. [Giving](#)
13. [Shepherd](#)
14. [Missionary and Evangelism](#)
15. [Singleness](#)
16. [Wisdom, Knowledge & Discernment](#)
17. [Apostleship](#)
18. [Healings and Miracles](#)
19. [Tongues](#)
20. [Mercy](#)

Spiritual Gifts Definitions

Books, Articles and Internet References

Biblical References used in Sermons

Introduction

This booklet/article/PDF contains information and sermons on a series on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. These sermons were delivered at Agora Church over twenty different Sundays. The topics covered in this series include that of service, faith, encouragement, wisdom and knowledge, being a gift, hospitality, administration, leadership and teaching, prophecy, poverty, giving, shepherding, missions and evangelism, singleness, wisdom, knowledge and discernment, apostleship, healings and miracles, tongues and mercy. This booklet/article/PDF is an Agora presentation.

The highlights of these sermons include the fact that a spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. It isn't about you in regards to spiritual gifts but it is about the church. Regardless of the gift, you need to be obedient to God. You have a responsibility to seek God on this. The Holy Spirit enables these gifts within us and we need to be open to that. Without knowing the gift you have, you really don't know how to serve God in the church. These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to build up the church.

Some of the gifts are similar to each other. For example: wisdom, knowledge and discernment. Tongues is important, but if we speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but don't have love, we are simply a noisy gong. Speaking of gifts, the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. The utilization of the gift is up to the one who receives it. We learned that some people are so called by God to show hospitality to others. Often, a spiritual gift simply aligns with what you love to do.

The gifts of the Spirit are like Christmas; at Christmas you give friends and family gifts because you love them. God gives you these gifts because he loves you. God wants to equip you to work within the church. It is like a body working together to help each other. You need to exercise your gift to help you grow in that gift. Definitions are given in each sermon that a specific gifts. There are also Biblical verses provided to help you understand why each gift as they are focussed on. We learn that the gift of teaching, for example, is about transformation. And we see that leadership is about people flourishing in order to become who they are meant to be in Christ. Some gifts are known more than others. For example, we have heard a lot about faith, giving,

administration, teaching and serving, but not so much in regards to prophecy, tongues, healing, poverty, etc. We hear about missions and missionaries who sacrifice the comfort of home and money to go out to serve God. But it is very difficult to actually relate to sacrifice in this way. You need to experience it, in order to understand it. Many gifts of the Spirit are obviously practiced by different people. People see this.

We learned that the gift of discernment is the ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behaviour purported to be of God is in reality divine, human or satanic. What about apostleship? We don't know much about this gift but many people do have it. We have also learned that you can have more than one gift; in fact many demonstrate this. We learn that all of these gifts are available today. As you read through these sermons, pray that God will reveal to you what gifts you have. Remember that these gifts are given through the power of the Holy Spirit. Trust him to lead and direct your life as you serve God and the church.

Dave Tabrum writes that every person who has come to know Christ personally has been "gifted" in at least 3 ways.

- Firstly, along with all people, we are gifted life itself. The breath of life, the times and places we live, the natural make-up of our body and personality (Acts 17:25-28).
- Then the greatest gift has been offered, the gift of eternal life through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This gift is a new life; we receive by faith when we believe that he gave his life for ours when he died on the cross (Romans 6:23; 1 Peter 3:18).
- And lastly having believed in Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit who comes to indwell us and gives us gifts with which to serve each other (Ephesians 1:13-14).

These gifts of the Holy Spirit, or spiritual gifts, are given so that the body of Christ (the church community) would be built up to be healthy and complete. The gifts are also given so that this healthy body would bring glory to God (1 Peter 4:10-11).

These "spiritual gifts" can be seen in two ways. Firstly, they are gifts that each one receives. An example of this would be the gift of

encouragement – this is the Spirit empowered ability to stand alongside others and speak God’s truth as it relates directly to them. Though all followers of Jesus are called to be encouragers, some are gifted at this. But the second way to consider spiritual gifts is that you and I are each given as gifts to the church. Taking our example of the gift of encouragement, the Spirit empowered encourager is a gift to the church. This focus is less on the gift given to the individual, and more on the individual given to the church.

Each person has been made in the image of God and who we are “our personality” matters to Him and is a part of his design. He desires to journey with us and knows just how best our personality combined with our passions and gifts will minister to people. One common way of describing a person’s personality is to plot it out on four different scales. This particular assessment will look at how you relate to others, how you structure your life, how you take in information, and how you make decisions. There is not a right or wrong answer, because God designed you and your personality in a wonderfully unique way and with wonderful purposes in mind!

Remember, all of these gifts are needed at Agora Church. You are encouraged to read through these gifts again, listen to the sermons and pray about how God can use you for his service.

1. The Gift of Service

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow – 2021-01-17

Can I help you with that?

There are some folks who seem to be super helpful - right? They see needs that most of us just walk past and totally miss. For many of us, we don't know what spiritual gift the Holy Spirit has given us. Therefore, we are unable to serve him to build up the church. To me this is a key concern as if I don't know where to serve - which will bring me fulfilment and joy because I am doing it called and empowered by God - then I will miss out on experiencing the Holy Spirit working through me!



Miles is a good friend in Auckland and wow that guy is a servant. Miles works for a company in Auckland but takes most of his holidays to help out at holiday camps around New Zealand. He doesn't just go to be a leader as such, he simply goes to serve. He'll go to a camp where he knows the camp team well and simply says - How can I help you all this week. He will then do whatever they want, anything. Bring them food, sweep floors, wash things. Whatever is needed. As he is a full on Jesus follower, he never wants to be paid or thanked; he is just keen to serve in the background.

Another friend of mine is a pastor down at a church in Wellington by the name of Glen. I was speaking at a large youth camp in Palmerston NZ, a couple of years ago. It was a big camp so the program was pretty full on. About a week before I turned up to speak, the camp organizers put me in touch with Glen and said he would be there to help me all that Easter. I didn't think much of it, but from the moment I turned up until I left, Glen was the man. He hardly left my side and was constantly asking how he could pray for me, did I need water or food or coffee or anything. He'd carry my laptop bag, got me through all the security and backstage madness. A bunch of youth got saved and hundreds renewed their lives at the camp, and a lot of this was because I was free to preach while Glen sorted everything out that I needed.

So let me briefly define the gift of service, and then I'll show you some examples from the Bible. It is an act of service done in genuine love for the edification of the community.

As I'm sure you know, all gifts are given to all Christians by the Holy Spirit so we can serve one another better. There are gifts of service, administration, healing, leadership, etc.



A key verse in regards to the gifts: 1 Cor 12.7 - A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

Each of us who follow Jesus has a spiritual gift. I honestly believe that a key reason why many Christians kind of limp along in their faith is that they don't know their gifting. Therefore, they don't know how to serve and therefore they don't know what it is like to have the Spirit working through you empowering you. Paul is clear about the purpose of spiritual gifts here. It is so we can help each other. If we keep reading in the New Testament, as we will do as we continue to get into these spiritual gifts, it is to help us become more like Christ and more useful to him.

The gift of service, or helps, is seen in a number of places in the Bible. Two different words are used to define this gift. One is the word we all know 'Deacon'. This word has a very general meaning and you could just define it as 'do ministry' - minister or serve one another. It is an act of service done in genuine love for the edification of the community. The other Greek word used is 'antilepsis'. This has a similar meaning but simply means to help someone in need. The gift of service is often a somewhat unseen gift as the core purpose of this gift from the Spirit is to free up others to use their gifts, or to simply show love and care to someone in need.

I love this quote about this gift: Those with this gift do not seek recognition or a position in the 'spotlight,' they just love to help out. They are content with serving in the background knowing that their contribution will bless the church, display the love of Christ to the world, and bring glory to God. (<https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>)

Other examples in the Bible includes Acts 6:1-7. I love the clarity you see in this passage when we are thinking about spiritual Gifts. The twelve apostles here are called to 'teach the word' and 'be in prayer'. So, instead of stopping using the gifts and calling the Holy Spirit has put on their lives. They identify people that the Spirit has called and given the gift of service. As already mentioned, we don't know who has what gift? I have no idea who has the gift of service, so when an opportunity or need arises in church needing someone to serve, I don't know where to look, or who to contact.

1 Cor 16:15-16 - This is a passage we often miss, but clearly shows that this group of Christians have the gift of service. I so love the clarity in this gift in verse 17, They have been providing the help you weren't here to give me. Such a good definition of the gift of service. Helping someone in need. Remember the key verse for this whole series as we look at spiritual gifts?

1 Cor 12.7 - A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

Conclusion – Okay, this applies to us all. Please don't think in terms of those you think should be serving; just go and serve. Go and help others. You may think that you don't have this gift, so you sit back and let others serve you. Just go and help in any situation

Matthew 20:25-28 – But Jesus called them to him and said, 'you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Consider the following: Just because you don't have a certain spiritual gift doesn't mean you don't have to live out that gift. Maybe I don't have the gift of faith, but that obviously doesn't mean I shouldn't live a life of faith and dependence on God. I may not have the gift of evangelism, but that doesn't mean I never share my faith and live to be a light in a dark place. Okay; so, lets pause for a moment and think of one person we could serve, that will bring them closer to Jesus. 'If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.' African Proverb. So, it's not about your abilities

The Gifts of the Spirit

and skills and power. It is about you being empowered by the Spirit of almighty God. It is about you and him. Amen!



Listen to the Sermon:



2. The Gift of Faith

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow – 2121-01-24

'I am so strong I can totally move a mountain.'

Maybe if you gave me a digger and in 50 years I could make a dent in the mountain ... maybe? Jesus said even if we have tiny faith we would do amazing things in his name. How come some people have incredible faith in God, while others kind of have a 'sort of' faith in God? Is it how strong I am, or how strong someone else is?



Remember our key verse for this whole gifting series this year is 1st Cor 12.7. 'A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.' And the two key points from this verse are 'each of us' and helping each other.' Actually there is a third point from here that is key for us, 'given'. It is not all about you when it comes to spiritual gifts. It doesn't matter how long you have been a follower of Jesus, how much Bible you know, how many cool theology words you can say. It just matters that you are connected to the Trinity because of your faith in Christ and therefore the Spirit will gift and empower you to serve God. The gifts have less to do with us and more to do with the object of our faith.

Okay, the gift I want to unpack today is the gift of faith. This is one of my most favourite spiritual gifts, and as we look into this gift I think you will see why.

Here is a good definition of this spiritual gift - 'to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.'
(<https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>) Someone with the gift of faith has this deep confidence that God has them and those around them. In regards to circumstances and obstacles - what might look like a nightmare to us, or even an impossibility, just looks totally fine to them as they look at the situation with a confidence that God will sort this!

Let me tell you another story that happened over in India. Many years ago now, a group of Christians came and took over part of the grounds of the orphanage. From the sounds of the story they were Christians, but rather on the shady side of things. They were very well armed with guns and so on and had been very aggressive and forceful saying they had claimed this land and it was now theirs. The person who was in charge called the police and although they came to the orphanage they didn't really want to get involved. So she spent some time in prayer and knew the Lord was with her and was calling her to take back the land. This person was tiny, super skinny, only about 5 feet tall. So with Jesus beside her she marched down to the back of the grounds to confront these men and tell them to leave. Don't forget that in India women really have zero authority and standing - especially in Kerela state where they were. This person's faith in God was so strong that she said although she was afraid, she was strong. Anyway, she marched up to the men, told them what they were doing was wrong and told them to leave. After some heated discussion they basically gave in to her and packed up and left. I talked to some of the Indian men there and they said this is quite bizarre. A non-Indian lady just cannot tell Indian men what to do, especially not in that kind of situation. But her faith in God was so strong she overcame! Amazing!

The word for faith in the New Testament has the meaning of confidence, certainty, trust, and assurance in the object of faith. This is not just someone who is confident in themselves or strong willed. The key here is confidence in the object of their faith!

Let's look at a couple of examples of this gift in the New Testament And as we look at these, stop for a moment and realise that both of these people are not who you would expect God to use to display such a gift of faith. One is a leper, and one is a Roman Centurion. Matthew 8.1-4 - A Leper with full confidence in Jesus. We see that he has complete confidence that Jesus can heal him. Notice again what he says to Jesus. 'A man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. 'Lord', the man said, 'if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.' Do you see that total confidence here? There is no maybe here, no doubt but I know you can if you want to. Awesome. There is only one account of a Jewish person being healed of leprosy in the Old Testament and that is Miriam, Moses sister. Jewish people considered leprosy a disease that could not be healed

at all. Yet, we see that this man's faith is extremely great. Note that Jesus ignores the social customs of the day and touches the man before he heals him. You were not supposed to touch lepers. Agggghhhhh! When was the last time this man was touched? When was the last time this man was touched in love? He is unclean by Jewish law; he is an outcast and not only disgusting in people's eyes but terrifying as his disease may be contagious. Yet, Jesus in love, reaches out to touch him before he heals him. So often the way we see ourselves is not the way Jesus sees us.

Here is our definition of the gift of faith again. Look at how well it fits with this man's actions and words here. 'It is to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.' <https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>

Another illustration comes from the story of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-13. This man had full confidence in Jesus' authority. This is a pretty amazing story. As you know, the centurion had such faith in Jesus' authority over sickness, he simply asked Jesus to heal the person from where Jesus was.

Remember, the gifts have less to do with us and more to do with the object of our faith.

Another definition of the gift of faith is this: 'the Holy Spirit distributes this gift to some in the church to encourage and build up the church in her confidence in God. Those with the gift of faith trust that God is sovereign and He is good. They take Him at His Word and put the full weight of their lives in His hands. They expect God to move and are not surprised when He answers a prayer or performs a miracle.' <https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>

I want to remind you that just because you don't have a certain gift, that doesn't mean you don't need to be obedient to God in that. Or just because I don't have the gift of evangelism, doesn't mean I can't tell someone of my faith in God when the opportunity arises. Or just because I don't have the gift of service, it doesn't mean that I can't serve someone in need or pick up trash or take out someone else's coffee cup or whatever. This is the same with the gift of faith.

Matthew 17:20, 20:21 show us what we can do when we have full confidence in Jesus. Remember again, that the gifts have less to do with us and more to do with the object of our faith.

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit distributes this gift to some in the church to encourage and build up the church in her confidence in God. You are so needed in the service of God. There are those who do doubt God. We doubt him in all sorts of areas in our lives. You are needed to be encouraging to others, those around you. You are needed to be a people of faith in almighty God. You are needed to help others in developing their confidence in God individually and corporately. You are needed to speak into tough and scary situations reminding everyone that God is indeed great, loving and almighty. His will for us will be accomplished. You are needed to remind others again and again that it is not the size of faith that matters, but the power of our God that moves mountains!

Consider the times that God has moved a mountain in your life. Remember these - record these and remind yourself of them often. When we remember the power and love of God in our lives, it will build our faith in his actions in the future. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



3. The Gift of Encouragement

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Tina Warnock – 2121-02-01

Who doesn't need encouragement these days.

The passage in Ephesians talks about our position in Jesus and the inheritance God has for us. This is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit when we believe in Jesus.

The gift of encouragement is made for giving away. When we give it, we will always get it back. The closer to the heart, the more effective it will be. We should all be using this gift; every Christian should be encouraging to one another. But how would you know if it is your gift? You will be excited about encouraging others. You will have a heart and mind that sees into other people, As with all of the gifts, when you use and grow it, you will be using it with God and for God and to see what God does with it.

Some definitions include: to inspire with courage hopeful confidence. Another definition is that of a spiritual gift. It means to come alongside of someone. With words of encouragement, comfort, consolation and council. To help people be all that God wants them to be. So it can either be inspiring to be doing something better and higher. It can also be challenging to us as well. Think about someone who has really encouraged you in your Christian life. Someone that has encouraged you to be all that God wants you to be. Think about what they encouraged you in. Another definition in the original Greek means to strengthen by someone that is close to you. One of the names that Jesus gave to the Holy Spirit is 'paracletos' which comes from the same root word. This is translated as helper such as a legal assistant. So the Holy Spirit is our ultimate encourager. He is the one who is close beside us because he actually dwells within us. When someone is using the gift of encouragement, the Holy Spirit is at work.

Let's look at the process of encouragement. I call this, what goes around, comes around. The letter 'e' for example, is a letter that



goes around and comes around. From 1st Thessalonians, a letter from Paul, Silas and Timothy to a baby church they had planted in Thessalonica in modern day Greece. There is lots to learn about when Jesus comes back in this letter. I discovered that it contains a process of spiritual encouragement.

This begins in Acts 17 when Paul was travelling around on one of his missionary journeys sharing the Gospel and planting churches, they came to Thessalonica. They came to this town where there was a Jewish synagogue. As was Paul's custom, he went to the service and for three Sabbaths, he used the Scriptures to reason with the people. He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. This Jesus that I'm telling you about, Paul said, is the Messiah. Some of the Jews listened and was persuaded and joined Paul and Silas along with many God fearing Greek men and women. But some of the Jews were jealous. So these Jews gathers some trouble makers from the market place to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of Jason searching for Paul and Silas. Well, things went from bad to worst. Paul and Silas managed to get away in the night. They left this baby church and carried on with their missionary trip. We learn here that Paul was really concerned for this baby church leaving them like they did. He sent Timothy to visit them and encourage them as they were still under persecution. After a while, Timothy returned to Paul and reported back to him. So then Paul wrote this letter after that to encourage them to keep going.

This letter can be summarised: don't give up; you are doing great in the faith. Look out for one another as a church family and don't forget that Jesus is coming back. In chapter 1, Paul begins by reminding them who they are. In verse 3, he says as we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds and the enduring hope that you have because of our Lord, Jesus Christ. We know dear brothers and sisters that God loves and he has chosen you to be his own people. So, he really speak to who they are. He reminds them of when he was there telling them about Jesus. This is 1st Thessalonians 2:11-12. He said, you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. We pleaded with you and encouraged you and urged you to live lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you to share in his kingdom and glory. He reminds them about how they had been separated by the

riots. Paul was so concerned that he sent Timothy to them to see how they were doing.

In chapter 3:2-5, it says: and we sent Timothy to visit you. He is our brother and God's co-worker in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith and to keep you from being shaken by the troubles you were going through. But you know that we are destined for such troubles. Even when we were with you, we warned you that troubles would soon come. And they did as you well know. That is why I could bear it no longer, I sent Timothy to find out whether your faith was still strong; I was afraid that the tempter had gotten the best of you and our work had been useless. You can really see how much Paul cared about them. He talks about when Timothy has returned and the effects of his report. This is in chapter 3:6-9. But now Timothy has just returned bringing us good news about your faith and love. He reports that you always remember our visit with joy and you want to see us as much as we want to see you. So we have been greatly encouraged in the midst of our troubles and suffering dear brothers and sisters. It is because you have remained strong in your faith; it gives us new life to know that you are standing firm in the Lord.

So Timothy was able to report back to Paul that the faith of the church was strong; they loved one another and were growing and progressing and they missed Paul and his team. Taking the news back to Paul, not only reassured him that they were doing well, but actually encouraged Paul and gave him great joy as well.

The 3rd part of the process; now that they are doing well; they now need to go and encourage one another. The reason for this is that Jesus is coming back. Chapter 4:18, so encourage each other with these words. He then described how Jesus will return; there will be a trumpet sound; the dead are going to rise that know Jesus and all of us will join Jesus forever. The end of verse 17 says that we then be with the Lord forever. So no matter how bad it gets; no matter how messy the world is, we are going to be with Jesus one day forever.

But there is more from Paul. Chapter 5:10-11, Christ died for us so whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. Encourage each other and build one another up just as you are already doing. In verse 14, he says, brothers and sisters, encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are

weak. Be patient with everyone. The message version puts it this way: gently encourage the stragglers, reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs and be careful that when you get on each other's nerves that you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other and always do you best.

A summary: Paul and Timothy have encouraged the Thessalonians. When we heard how great you were doing, you encouraged us. So go and encourage others. Encouragement can be the same for us; when others are encouraged, I get encouraged back. When this happens were are both encouraged to go on. I have also had the opportunity to encourage others, especially students at Word of Life. Recently, we had four baptisms at the church and we were all encouraged by that. I certainly was! I was blessed by hearing what God had been doing in their lives. So I think effective encouragement target the heart. This is when God can use it the most. I see three levels of encouragement that we might use: A. when we make a comment based on appearance; commenting on how someone looks or what someone does. B. Other encouragements can centre around behaviour, about what someone does. C. the third level is the impacting one; it is around character; something they are causing to happen. It is things we do to make people feel included. So practice the ABC's of encouragement. There are people here who have beautiful hearts and encourage others at the church. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



4. The Gift of Wisdom and Knowledge

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow – 2021-02-07

Are you wiser than a 5 year old?

So, what does it take to be wise when it comes to the important aspects of life? How can I be someone who is knowledgeable in the things of God and therefore be able to truly help guide people? It's actually not as hard as a lot of people think.

As we have been doing, let's quickly look at the key verse for this series - 1 Cor 12.7 – A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. Again, there are three key points from this verse.



1. A gift, or gifts, are given to each of us. Without knowing what gift you have, you really don't know how to serve God, and therefore how to serve him to experience the power of the Spirit in your life!
2. These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to build up the church. Yes I receive joy and blessing in using the gifts I have received, but that is not the core goal - the core goal of the gifts is to help each other in this church
3. Given - these are gifts from the Holy Spirit to you and CBC. So, because they are gifts it is more to do with the giver than with the receiver. The receiver is empowered by the Holy Spirit to use this gift so it doesn't matter if you can quote the whole Bible, or none of it, it doesn't matter if you are a leader here or just joining CBC - what matters is your desire to connect deeply with Jesus and serve him with all you are.

When Jose and I lived in Chicago we were both studying at a large university doing our undergrad degrees in theology. I'm such a nerd I actually did a BA in theology. We had Greek language classes with an ex-marine. He still had a flat top and was a legend around campus. He

kept getting in trouble with campus security for teaching a late night class, sleeping on the floor of his office, and then teaching the next day.

He had a strong southern accent and would look at me terrifyingly, and say 'barrow -parse that verb'. This meant to break down the person, number, tense, voice and mood of the Greek verb. Half the time Jose would quietly whisper the break down for me which the class, and sometimes the lecturer, thought was hilarious. Anyway - This lecturer - Dr Sawyer - had a clear gift of knowledge. His Bible knowledge, especially of the New Testament was amazing. Besides that, he also had the gift of wisdom.

He would start every Greek class with the most amazing devotion taken from a key Greek word or phrase. He would take 10-15 mins of class time to do this and everyone would leave most of the class overwhelmed by God's goodness or guidance or wherever the Spirit had taken Dr Sawyer with the devotion. They were the best intro to Greek ever!

So, knowledge is a lot more than being smart. In 1 Cor 12.8, it says that to one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. You can see that both these gifts have a strong focus on sharing wisdom or knowledge. Again, the gifts are not given to us so we can walk around looking all smart and wise! Let's look at a definition for the gift of knowledge - To seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible through the gathering of much information and the analysing of that data. A word of knowledge is a Spirit-revealed truth.

<https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>

There are two parts to this gift of knowledge; first - someone who has a great understanding of the Bible and is able to teach that. Keep in mind that these gifts are not so much for the individual as they are to build up the church. So someone with the gift of knowledge is able to teach about the Bible and God well in different situations. They may also have the gift of teaching and preaching, or they may be great at passing on this information in a one-on-one situation or in leading a life group. Second, this is not just knowledge they have gained from study, this is a Spirit-revealed truth. This doesn't mean they suddenly know something about someone or about the church, that is a different gift - the gift of prophecy. It means that the knowledge they have

gained through study and prayer and seeking the Lord, is empowered by the Spirit to be applied to a certain situation.

Let me illustrate this gift like this. Will has a great knowledge of the Bible and is continually seeking to understand the Bible and God more and more. One day he is talking with someone here at church and knows they need some encouragement as they are in a tough situation. Some verses he has memorised and studied come to mind, and he strongly feels the Spirit is bringing these verses to mind - not for him - but for the person he is meeting with. He shares those verses and some of the knowledge he has gained around those verses while trusting the guidance of the Spirit. Next thing you see the person he is speaking with totally change as they get a much better perspective on their situation and are uplifted and encouraged.

So, It is not just Will being smart and quoting verses at people. It is Will having done some hard study AND listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit within him. A key with any of these gifts where we are trusting we are speaking from the spirit is to test what is said.

This verse is general and applies to anyone who claims what they are saying has been guided by the Spirit. For it says in 1st John 4:1: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. Then in 1s Corinthians 14:29, It says to let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weight what is said. This totally makes sense. So when I hear an encouragement or challenge from Will, and he is using his gift of knowledge, it is crucial I check that what he is saying does indeed line up with the Bible. I can do this by doing my own study, by going to wise people I know in the church, and by praying and asking the Holy Spirit to guide me. Like you over the years I've had a number of people with the gift of knowledge, or prophecy or wisdom give me a word from the Lord. I always pull out my phone and write down what they say so I can pray over it later, and check in wise people I know and the Bible.

So the gift of knowledge is certainly a gift we need today in church. People who know the Bible so well, and are able to be guided by the spirit to encourage people or challenge using the word of God!

As I mentioned before, another gift that is closely related to the gift of knowledge is the gift of wisdom. Understand that wisdom is a lot

more than just saying deep phrases. I have a good friend who is really funny and likes to say things in an extremely wise sounding way using as many huge words as he can. Often he will say some phrase that sounds amazing, but I'll have no idea what he is saying. I'll then say bro - that sounds good but I literally have no idea what you are saying. This is not what the gift of wisdom means. Let's look at the main verse mentioning this gift again. 1 Cor 12.8 - To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.

As I've mentioned, the gift of wisdom is similar to the gift of knowledge. The key difference is simply the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge can be described as more academic, while wisdom is more connected to the realities of life. Here is a definition for the gift of wisdom. To apply knowledge to life in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision-making and daily life situations. These key words show what this gift can bring to people in the church - relevant and practical. I so love that. Let me go back to my illustration about Will having the gift of knowledge. If Will also had the gift of wisdom, he would not only be able to share the verses the Holy Spirit has bought to mind, and not only able share some of the learning he has done around them, but he is able to give guidance and insight into the situation the person has found themselves in.

The church desperately need both of these gifts. We need people who know the Bible and have studied deeply. We need them to be able to speak biblically into all situations. And we need people with the gift of wisdom. People who are close with God and can come alongside someone in a good or tough or scary or lost situation to guide them practically.

Conclusion: In 1 Cor 13.1-3, we read that if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but don't have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but don't have love, I gain nothing.

The Gifts of the Spirit

These are two gifts that can be worked on only to bless ourselves. I can want to study the Bible not so much to help others, but to look knowledgeable and wise in my homegroup or when meeting with Friends. I want to be able to walk around church saying large Bible truths so people look at me in awe! But Paul's whole point here is - gifts are good - but they are to build up others - not just to build up me! Gifts are important, but unless they are done in love, they are a total waste of time! Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



5. The Gift of being a Gift

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow – 2021-02-21

You are Gifted to Be a Gift

If you are a follower of Jesus, you are literally gifted by the Holy Spirit to be a gift to the people here at the church. You are not a part of CBC to just hang out or 'do church' or whatever. You are here because HE wants you here, and HE has gifted you to be a gift to those around you. That is pretty awesome.

Each of the people you are looking at are literally a gift from the Holy Spirit to you! God has gifted you to be a blessing to others, to build others up, encourage and strengthen others.

When you look at all these people the Holy Spirit has put around you; you have to stop and thank him. You have to go - wow - God so cares about me, my life, my whanau (family). They are not here by chance. The other side of this thought is that you are a gift to all these amazing people. That is such a huge encouragement - right? New Zealanders are pretty good at minimising themselves. At saying 'oh, I'm just Craig. I'm not that great at such and such'. The Holy Spirit looks at you and goes 'NOT!' You are awesome, called, gifted and empowered by Almighty God himself to be a blessing and an encouragement to the family of God right here in our church

My sermon this morning is simply called - 'Gifted to be a gift'. Kind of a weird Title - but you all know what I mean by that. Turn to someone and say 'you are gifted to be a gift'; I know some of you hate the old 'turn and say', and a bunch of you love it! The reason for it is simply teaching reinforcement. We all know we only remember a small percentage of what we hear, we remember much more of what we hear and see, and much much more of what we hear, see and do in some way. Along with all people, we are gifted life itself. It is good to pause and remember that life is a gift from God. None of us would be alive unless God had gifted this to us. Yes our parents did the wild thing and that was needed for us to arrive, but the Bible makes it clear that life is a gift from God. I think we often forget this. We are quite self-obsessed humans when we are honest. We see ourselves as somewhat self-sufficient and therefore we forget that not only the origin

of our life is a gift from God, but that every day and indeed every breath is a gift from God.

Psalms 139:13-18 – You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous – how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me! It is not only that God created us - literally knitted us together - but that he is constantly thinking about us in love!

You know how when you are first in love; all you do is think about that person? Maybe you still do that but I think for some of us it kind of wears off a bit. But when you are first in love you think about that person all the time and they are thinking about me. God is so in love with you he thinks about you all the time - all the time! There is not a moment that goes by that the all-powerful creator of the universe is not thinking about you and desiring to empower you and disciple you...

Acts 17:24-25 – The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. Again there is a link between God's creative power and action in love. Not only does God give us life, he is with us and in us to satisfy our needs - not our shallow wants, but all that we desperately need. We are offered the gift of eternal life. What greater gift can be offered than the gift of eternal life through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This gift is new life; we receive by faith when we believe that Jesus gave his life for ours when he died on the cross.

Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. I love how Paul writes this 'the free gift'. But as with any gift you need to receive it.

To illustrate, if I offered my computer to someone; I can tell them and I can hold it out to them, but until they actually take it from me, it is still mine. It is the same with our salvation and the removal of

our sin. God can tell us about it and hold out the offer of salvation to us - but until we humble ourselves and accept this offer we are still dead in our sin and still heading to hell for ever.

Psalms 103:1-5: Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

I just love that last line. It is not just that God removes our sin and draws us into a relationship with himself - he blesses us deeply! John 10:10 – The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Now - to the focus of this series. Not only does God gift us with life, and then offer us the gift of eternal life, also we are gifted by the Holy Spirit with gifts to be a gift to others. That is a lot of gifts right there. The utilization of the gift is up to the receiver! Adam York writes - 'My kids love getting gifts. (I guess that whole 'blessed is the giver' thing hasn't caught on yet.) My son likes Legos®, light sabres, and baseball bats. He could care less about getting clothes. In a big stack of presents, he'll open a package of socks, nod politely, and then quickly throw them aside in search of a new action figure. But my little girl? Well, clothes are an entirely different story with her. She'll open her socks and squeal with glee. She doesn't see clothes as a necessary evil that has to be dealt with every morning; she sees them as something to be used and enjoyed. In fact, after she opens up her socks, it's only a matter of time before she's walking awkwardly around having grown by about four inches because she's put them all on at the same time. The value of a gift has everything to do with the perspective of the one receiving it, as my kids' very different responses to clothing gifts demonstrates.'

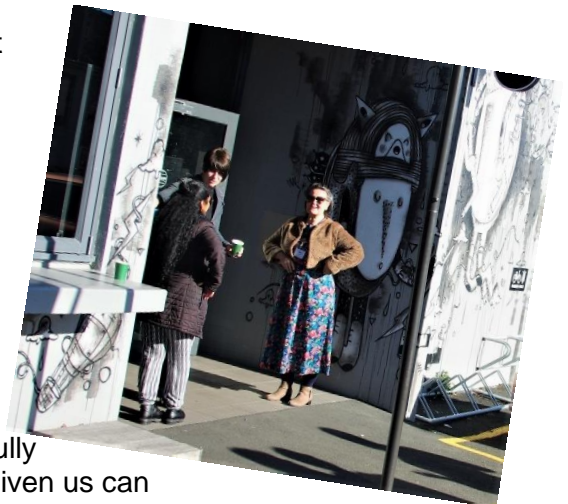
This is such an important point for us to reflect on. The Holy Spirit has given - or in a sense - offered - to every one of us a spiritual gift with which we can bless others. As with any gift though, it is up to the receiver to choose to receive and use the gift. If you are a follower of Jesus you have a gift from the spirit. But whether you use it or not is totally up to you. God always amazes me like this. He is so generous and patient in not forcing his will on us. Even when he knows the gift he

has given us is desperately needed by others in the church he never forces us to use our gifts. Amazing. Like Adam's son - he receives the gift of socks and is less than excited and basically throws them aside. His daughter though - receives the gift and leaps straight into using them - in a rather bizarre way. Spiritual gifts remind us of our dependence on one-another.

I have a few verses here: Romans 12:3-5 – For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Philippians 2:3-4 – Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Also look at 1s Thessalonians 5:11 and Hebrews 10:24.

I read a quote this week that explains this well. 'As our understanding of the spiritual gifts matures, our appreciation for all the members of the Body is magnified. For example, if you have the motivational gift of mercy, God has given you a heightened sensitivity to the hurts of others (so that He might express His compassion to them through you). Until you understand that everyone else is not supposed to be as sensitive to

others' hurts (to the degree that you discern them and want to respond to them), you will probably be tempted to condemn others as callous and heartless.' (<https://iblp.org>) The point here is that no one believer has all the spiritual gifts. Therefore each of us can only see, and help, with the small window through which we see each other. Only when we serve God together, fully utilizing the gifts the spirit has given us can



we FULLY serve and bless one another to the extent which God desires. Only together, using all our gifts, can we bless each other as God desires! This forced dependence on one another naturally draws us better together. The sooner I realise I cannot be all God is calling me to be without you the better for you and I. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



and sprinted out and realised he was on the wrong floor. Terrifying. He told me all this in the morning at breakfast and I nearly died laughing.

The gift I'm talking about today is the gift of hospitality. A hotel is basically hospitality - but it is not the gift of hospitality - because you have to pay. Even a cafe is literally the hospitality industry - and people host you, and welcome you in and feed you and care for you - but although this is similar - this is totally not the gift of hospitality.

Before we look at what the Bible says about hospitality, check out this great quote: the art of hospitality is to make guests feel at home, even when you wish they were. Ha - that is totally not the gift of hospitality!!!!

Let's look at a key verse about this gift. 1 Peter 4:9-10 - Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.' The Greek word Peter uses here for Hospitality is simply translated 'love for strangers'. A pretty good word choice by him. An easy way I can show love to a stranger is totally to invite them for a coffee, or to my house for a meal or simply catch them before or after church and get to know them.

A bit of background to this gift from Kate Shungu. In the time that the Bible was written, it was much more common to invite a stranger into your home. Inns were scarce, and travel was long by foot. The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, for example, was 80 miles (that's the route that Mary and Joseph took right before Jesus was born). So understandably, people in Jesus' time would have needed a place to stay as they travelled. Housing complete strangers for a night was common.

Interesting - right. In Jesus day hospitality was such a key part of society that travellers could often simply turn up at the town centre or the town gate and wait for someone to invite them home for a meal and lodging. Amazing.

Here is a slightly larger definition of Hospitality: to warmly welcome people, even strangers, into one's home or church as a means of serving those in need of food or lodging. I love this definition - it is not just welcoming people into your home, but also into your church. Our greeters out the front are showing this gift of hospitality. Our people making coffee, or connect desk folks- these are all people with the gift of hospitality.

In 1 Peter 4.9, the ESV tells us to show hospitality to one another without grumbling. The NLT translation encourages us to



do this cheerfully. I love this 'without grumbling'. To me this would be totally nuts! To invite someone for a coffee or to your place for a meal and do it all ticked off!

My dad used to be a traveling preacher back in the day. Although he stayed with a lot of lovely people he also told me some horrible stories. Some of the people he stayed with down south had a freezing house. He had preached at their church three times that day I think and got back to their house late that night super tired. The night before he hadn't slept well as he had been so cold. So this night he asked them for an additional blanket so he wouldn't be so cold - but they refused and said something quite horrible to him - which I won't repeat. Wild - this is showing hospitality - WITH GRUMBLING.

Another place he had preached and visited folks all day. He got back to the people's house not very late; I think it was around 9 pm. He asked if he could boil the jug for a cup of tea and the lady sternly told him they had already had their cup of tea for the evening, but she supposed it would be okay for him to boil the jug again. Again - Peter calls us to use the gift of hospitality cheerfully, and without grumbling.

For a happy story though - Dad often went to Invercargill to preach. The people he stayed with owned something to do with the Bluff Oysters down there. They knew Dad loved oysters, so he said

whenever he stayed with them they always had a mountain of oysters every meal. That is showing hospitality cheerfully.

If you don't like showing hospitality to someone then you totally don't have this gift. You will have other gifts; so figure out what they are and use them well. This is not a competition where the hospitality folks are the coolest and best Christians and the rest of us are like second class gifted people.

Let's look at some other verses that talk about this gift of hospitality. In Romans 12:13 – when God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. Sometimes hospitality is shown to someone we simply want to get to know, but as Paul points out here, sometimes we need to show hospitality to someone who is in need.

The 'take them a meal' ministry that Sarah over-sees here, is totally this. When someone is in need, Sarah leaps into gear and notifies us all. Then a bunch of us leap into gear and help that person and bless them with meals and love and care. Such a simple practical way to care for someone. Josephine has been talking with Annette and Elizabeth about having a time here at church once a month where a bunch of us can come together and cook a pile of meals to then be frozen and given to CBC folks in need. Some people with the gift of hospitality leap at a chance like this, while some of us without this gift still want to be involved - but maybe in a slightly more chill way.

Often a spiritual gift simply aligns with what you love to do. Just to step back for a moment and see the words Paul and Peter have used around this gift - cheerful, eager, not grumbling. An easy way to start seeing what spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit has given you is simply to ask - what do you like to do. As I've said, God loves you and knows you are awesome. He doesn't hate you and detest you and think 'bwahahahaha - I am the God of the universe. I shall judge you by giving you a spiritual gift you hate using!' haha. No, he loves you and gives you a gift you will love using.

If you really don't like having people around to your house, or if the idea of catching someone new to church for a coffee, makes you go 'agghhh, run away run away' then this is not a spiritual gift you have. We still have an obligation to be nice to folks here at church and care for people in need, but we need to remember that the Spirit has

called and gifted a bunch of awesome people in church with this gift and they LOVE doing this. Yah .

A further note here is to be aware of seasons of life. If you have a pile of babies and little kids at home, now might not be the best time to say to your husband - 'you know. I think i have the gift of hospitality. Let's start inviting people around for a meal each week'. It may be a great season to do this, but it may not be....

We see in Luke 10:38-42 that hospitality is not what's most important. The last verse I want to look at this morning is kind of an interesting one. Hebrews 13:1-3: Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies. OK - a few points from these great verses.

1. The core of all this has to be love. If you don't actually care for the person then any act of hospitality will totally not be done eagerly or cheerfully, but will be done with grumbling.
2. Angels - what?

This is a clear reference to the time when Abraham showed hospitality to Angels in Genesis 18-19. If you have not read that story lately then take time to read it - such an interesting story.

Paul's point here is simple - the person you are showing hospitality to might well be an Angel - so treat them well.

I was thinking about this earlier this week - the person might be an angel - and that is pretty awesome. But, if they are not, they are still a person created in the image of God and someone who Jesus Christ died for - whether they realise that or not is not the point - the point is you know that so treat them with love.

3. There are so many different ways to show hospitality. It is not just the old 'come around for a meal'.

Greeters, coffee team, connect desk people, saying hi to someone here after church and just saying hi, meeting someone for

The Gifts of the Spirit

coffee, providing a meal for someone in need, having someone around for a meal, visiting someone. This involves hospitality. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



7. The Gift of Administration

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-03-07

Can you pilot a ship?

I can't even drive a boat, let alone a ship! I've watched lots of videos on utube where someone piloting a ship has messed up and another ship is taken out of the wharf or a crane or something. Sad - but hilarious. The spiritual gift we are looking at is closely linked with the idea of piloting a ship, especially when things are somewhat chaotic. These gifts are kind of ones you miss as these gifts often work behind the scenes to keep everything working smoothly.



It is often also a gift heaps of people hope they don't have - I always find this kind of funny. As I said last week, God loves you and is not this evil being scheming on how to make your life horrible by giving you a gift you don't want.

It's like Christmas time. Usually, you love the people you live with - if not then maybe you need to come and have a chat and a prayer with me after the service. You love them so you buy them gifts that you know they will like. You don't go to the store on Christmas eve to buy them a present thinking - I love this person sooooo much, but I am going to give them a gift they totally hate. That will be awesome!. NO -you buy them something you know they will love - because you love them - same with God.

We love the gift he gives us. The gift I'm talking about this morning is the gift of Administration.

The meaning of Administration: to steer the body toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and supervising others. You can totally see how this is often a gift that works behind the scenes to enable others to use their gifts more effectively.

When I used to work at the college I always had a personal assistant. My PA would work closely with me sorting out so many aspects of the college and speaking into all sorts of situations. As I've

said before, often I'd go to a city to have a bunch of meetings and I wouldn't really know who I was meeting with or where I was meeting them as my PA had set up the meetings and locations. This kind of logistics always takes a bunch of time - especially as I was often meeting with pastors and all they do is sit around drinking coffee and stuff so they are hard to nail down.

Someone who with the gift of administration can have quite a different style of this gift from others. I had one PA who was amazing at sorting everything in the office. The previous PA was awesome at other stuff, but this person loved to tidy and sort. They'd only been at the college a short time and every drawer and cupboard had been totally unpacked, sorted and stored clearly. When we would turn up at block course with the students all the lecturers notes and books and student information was amazingly sorted and labelled! Everything at the block course ran so smoothly because this person had the gift of administration and loved to use it to serve the lecturers and students.

Another PA I had at the college was amazing at organizing people - especially me. They worked so well behind the scene to make sure my time and the time of my staff team, was used as effectively as possible. She was always sorting small and large aspects of the college to make everyone else's jobs more effective and impactful.

The gift of administration is sooooo much more than email or spreadsheets or tidying the office. In 1 Cor 12:28, The Greek word Paul used here is super interesting. As this is the only place in the New Testament this gift is mentioned. So it is important to understand his word choice. The reason the definition used the word 'steer' is that this word is usually used of a captain steering a ship. The Greek word for the spiritual gift of administration is 'kubernesis'. This is a unique term that refers to a shipmaster or captain. The literal meaning is 'to steer,' or 'to rule or govern.' It carries the idea of someone who guides and directs a group of people toward a goal or destination. We see variations of this word in verses like Acts 27:11...'

In Acts 27.11: But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul. It is the same Greek word that Paul used in 1 Cor 12. With this gift the Holy Spirit enables certain Christians to organize, direct, and implement plans to lead others in the various ministries of the Church. This gift is closely related to the gift of leadership, but is more goal or task oriented and is

also more concerned with details and organization. Super interesting right?

As I was working on this message this week I kept thinking of awesome people in our church who have this gift. People who are so good at organizing people and bringing direction to a group. You are so needed here at church.

Now don't forget this is a gift from the Holy Spirit, and often he will super empower a natural ability you have. You may naturally be good at this kind of administration, but when you use it to serve God it will be so different - so much more enjoyable and so much more effective.

A friend I have who has a strong gift of admin often says to me how much they love having this gift and using it to empower God's people. They love working behind the scenes to help other people serve God better and grow in their relationship with him. It is not just you being good at organizing and steering things - it is you being good at this and doing it empowered by God. Wow!

Luke 14:28-30 – For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'this man began to build and was not able to finish.' Although not actually linked in the Bible to the gift of administration, a number of commentators will link to this verse when thinking about this gift. A key here is simply setting aside time to think and plan.

Here is our main definition again for Administration: to steer the body toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and supervising others.

So many initiatives in life, and in the church, fail simply because we don't plan. The old saying, 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail' is kind of cheesy, but so true. As a group of leaders, and in talking to people here in church, we have so many plans..

We now have a lady taking over the prayer ministry. Wow - does she need wisdom in planning and organizing others in this ministry. A million times more crazy than that is the Men's ministry. We have someone with the help from some awesome men, has stepped up to start and lead the men's ministry. Oh my - 'planning, organizing and supervising' men is going to be a

mission. He needs empowerment from the Spirit to plan well, pray he will find someone amazing with this gift to come alongside him and support him.

Will has taken over the youth ministry here at church. So awesome! Will is a fantastic motivator and teacher of the youth. But, he is also super smart and is working with Richard to plan and organize the ministry.

Okay - hopefully the gift of administration is somewhat clear to you now. The other gift I want to look at briefly this morning is the gift of service.

As I covered this when we were back introducing the series in February, I'm just going to recap what we discussed there. Titus 1:4-5 says to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. This is another passage that doesn't directly mention the gift of administration, but shows what this gift can do.

If you have read much of the New Testament, you know that many of the churches Paul planted can be a bit of a mess. For example, the church in Corinth has a huge number of issues He is trying to sort out. You can totally see that this makes sense - right. A group of people, often Jewish and non-Jewish, are trying to serve God together with only a tiny bit of information on what this new church is to look like. Can we eat food offered to idols? Do people joining the church need to be circumcised? What happens when we come together and everyone wants to read out scripture or pray? Chaos – right?

So Paul asks Timothy to step up and do exactly what the gift of administration calls for - bring order out of chaos - plan, organize, supervise. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



8. The Gift of Leadership and Teaching

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Dave Tabrum - 2021-03-14

This morning we are continuing in our series on the Spiritual gifts and I have been given leadership and teaching to unpack. When I spoke last about leadership we looked at the story of Jesus reinstating Peter after he had denied Jesus 3 times pre-Jesus being crucified. As Jesus journeyed with him and showed him the power of another form of leadership, we see how Peter goes from an being an overly ambitious, impulsive and self-assertive individual to a servant leader following in the footsteps of his rabbi, friend and Saviour, Jesus.



The definition we drew from for the spiritual gift of leadership is: The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gift of leadership to some in the church to care for God's people and lead them into deeper relationship with Christ and each other. They base their success on how well they help others succeed and grow in their spiritual walk with Jesus. They are able to accomplish many different tasks and objectives as they lead, but they will always lead relationally and with a deep concern for the well-being of others. (SpiritualGiftsTest.com)

The spiritual gift of leadership, is leading in a way that sees individuals flourish as they become those who they were meant to be in Christ. Making sure they are well nourished, equipped and empowered, growing in their maturity and faith as their roots go down deeper into God's life and love.

One of my friends said that growing up at another church I had a leader who became a mentor who also had become a friend: Dale came alongside me, encouraged me, challenged me, held space for me. He walked with me and by his example showed me what a Jesus life looks like. He showed up, he invited me along, he asked if I wanted to try. But the number one thing he did was he regularly encouraged me to lean into Jesus both by word and his example. DALE IS A LEADER AND GIFTED IN SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, and I am so very thankful for his influence in my life. And that is an important point

when it comes to leadership and one that can leave us feeling a bit uncomfortable. As a leader I should be able to say 'follow my example'.

The Apostle Paul writes some pretty bold words along these lines throughout his letters to the early church. Look at these verses:

1. 1 CORINTHIANS 4:16-17 - So I urge you to imitate me. That's why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.
2. 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-2 - And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ. I am so glad that you always keep me in your thoughts, and that you are following the teachings I passed on to you.
3. PHILIPPIANS 3:17 - Join one another in following my example, brothers, and carefully observe those who walk according to the pattern we set for you.
4. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:5^B-6 - And you know of our concern for you from the way we lived when we were with you. So you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. In this way, you imitated both us and the Lord.
5. HEBREWS 13:7 - Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

Throughout these passages Paul is saying follow me, imitate me, live like I live, pay close attention that your life looks like mine... But Paul also adds a key disclaimer 'follow me, because I am following Jesus'. I am walking in the way of Jesus, so it is safe to copy me. You see, how you live is how you lead. And all sorts of things go wrong when those two are separated and partly why I think we see so many Christian leaders fall so seriously. When there is dissonance and disconnect between how I live my life and what I say is important, things will eventually disintegrate and fall apart sooner or later. So, if you think that you potentially have the gift of leadership can I encourage you that the most important thing you could ever possibly do is TO BE WITH JESUS! Intentionally and regularly creating rhythms and making space in your daily living to be with and be loved by the

one you follow. Everything else will flow out of that... Now that in of itself really is a whole other message, so if you are wondering what that could look like for you then come find me and let's chat.

But, let's now chat about the gift of teaching and we come back to some leadership stuff: The gift of teaching is to instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way so as to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth. (MinTools.com)

Those with the spiritual gift of teaching love to study the Word of God for extended periods of time. They consume the Scriptures as food for their hearts, souls and minds with the expressed purpose of knowing Him and then making Him known to others. They want to know what God has revealed of Himself and what He requires of us as people created in His image. They take great joy and satisfaction in seeing others learn and apply the truth of God's Word to their lives. (SpiritualGiftsTest.com)

The person with the gift of teaching will love to study God's word and allow the word of God to dwell richly in their life, affecting every part of it. But they will also be able to gather what they have studied, forming thoughts and ideas as the Holy Spirit leads them and communicate those effectively. But what does that mean? Communicating effectively that is... You see teaching isn't about the information, teaching is primarily about transformation. You can know a bunch of stuff and it not change you, but when things are communicated in such a way that there is an increased awareness that God is present and at work, and people are feeling invited and drawn into that, well... that is holy ground.

Teaching is about transformation not the transfer of information. Look what EPHESIANS 4:11-15 has to say about it. Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

I want you all to stop now and think about someone whose teaching changed you? It could be a school teacher, it could be someone who trained you in your job, helped you gain a new skill, empowered you in some way. The teachers who have affected us the most are the ones who have enabled change the most; that we have grown. But the spiritual gift of teaching is so much more than that, in that it is not just about a new skill or feeling empowered. It is about the individuals life becoming increasing permeated with God's life (that is every part of it) as they become more like Jesus and whom they were meant to be, both for building up of the Church and being a blessing in the world.

So... leadership is about people flourishing as they become who they are meant to be in Christ, and teaching is about the transforming work of how people become that, as they understand more of God, and how to engage with Him, His word and His Kingdom. Let's look at Ephesians 4:16 - He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

In a society that is so enamoured with celebrity leaders and obsessed with information hoarding I think that it is both a good and healthy thing to ask what these spiritual gifts look like when we function in them properly. And to not mistake other definitions of good leadership and teaching with God's definitions. When you think about leadership, do you think about position or people? When you think about teaching is your focus on transformation or information? Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



9. The Gift of Prophecy

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-04-11

Can you hear me now?

One of the most frustrating things about mobile phones is that they seem to still drop connection every now and then. You think you are talking to someone - then - silence. 'Can you hear me now'? God never drops connection - YAH!!!!!!!!!!!!!! But sometimes it is hard to hear him, which is why someone coming to you with a message they believe is from God can be incredibly encouraging and uplifting. On Sunday we are talking about the gift of prophecy - such an exciting gift. After a great Easter service last week, we are back into the gifting series. Today is one of the more interesting gifts to unpack. The gift of prophecy. Before I unpack this gift let me give you an example where I have seen this gift used so well.



I was at a conference at the end of last year with a bunch of pastors. All pastors normally do is sit around drinking coffee, downloading sermons and occasionally visiting someone. So the conference involved a lot of coffee and sitting - Jokes!! Anyway - there were a lot of people there I didn't know. On the last day of the conference a pastor came up to me who I had never met. I don't even think I had talked to him over the three days. He asked if he could tell me something pretty significant, and I was like 'umm, sure'. He said 'I have no idea if this is really from God or not, and I want to make sure you test what I am about to say.' I pulled out my phone to take some notes, because if this really was from God I didn't want to miss it - right. He said 'I think God is wanting me to tell you 'blah blah blah'' and he shared a thought with me. What he shared was so accurate around what I was currently wrestling with and talking to God about it was incredible. I got pretty teary and thanked him and went off for a walk to process what he had said. Later on I talked through this with Josephine and one of my mentors and we all felt it was so accurate it must be a message from God for me.

I've been a Christian for a number of years now, and something like this is very rare for me. I've also had people say they have a message from God for me and when they give me the message I'm like 'hmmmmmm, maybe not' as it is way off base. But, they were faithful in bringing the message to me. Personally I have always found the accurate and true messages from God through someone have been very encouraging, not 'telling me off' or anything, but very uplifting.

So what exactly is the gift of prophecy? People have many different understandings of this gift, so let me begin by giving you a simple explanation. It is to speak forth the message of God to His people. Pretty simple right? A key we will talk about though is the need to test what is said.

I know people differ on this, but the Elders and I strongly believe a person can never be 100% sure that their message is from God. They may believe very strongly it is from him, but they could never say 'I know this message is from God'. You would have to always say 'I think....', or 'I strongly believe ...'. You would then always be wise to encourage the person to test what you are saying. We will see this in one of the verses we are going to look at shortly.

Okay - let's look at some verses around this gift. Romans 12:6-8 - for doing certain things well. That is such a good explanation of spiritual gifts - helping us, or empowering us to do things well. No matter what gift the Holy Spirit has given you, and no matter what he is calling you to do in the church he wants to help you do it well. You can see here that Paul lists this along with a number of other gifts. With all of them basically all we see Paul say here is that prophecy is a gift that involves speaking out. He really doesn't define it much more than that. Over in 1st Corinthians though he gives a much more full explanation. Then we have 1st Corinthians 14.3; that says, but one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. (NLT) The ESV says it slightly differently, On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. This is what I was saying before about this gift being for the encouragement of others, not to correct, rebuke or challenge them.

As I have talked about a bunch, all the gifts are given to build up the church.

A key verse for this whole series is 1st Corinthians 12.7 which says that a spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. A core reason for the Spirit giving these spiritual gifts is so we can help each other - so we can build each other up.

When I was at Pathways college we had block courses all over the country. During one block course we were in Wellington and were having a kind of worship and prayer time with the students. One of my staff took one of the older students off to the side during the worship and spoke quietly to him. Next minute, the student burst into tears and just sobbed and sobbed. The staff member had felt strongly that God had wanted them to say something to this student, so they had been faithful in that and had said 'you need to test this and check this is from God' etc etc and gave the person the message. They were so accurate in the encouragement they gave to the student it was incredible. So back to one of the key verses on this gift of prophecy. 1st Corinthians 14.3 says that but one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. (NLT)

It is not hard to see what a great spiritual gift this is. I mean, all the gifts are awesome, but I so love this one. To have someone quietly come alongside you and strengthen you, encourage you, comfort you by giving you a message they believe is from the Lord is amazing. Notice nowhere in this verse does Paul say something like 'the one who prophesies tells people off, and points out their sins or anything like that. It is all about building up and encouraging. Is this New Testament the same as in the Old Testament? A key question to ask is 'is this the same as in the OT where a prophet literally would say 'Thus saith the Lord' or something like that? When someone who has the gift of prophecy comes to me and says 'You need to test this, but I think the Lord is asking me to say to you' should I write that in the back of my Bible like the next book after Revelation? The key difference between Old Testament prophets and the New Testament gift is that in the Old Testament prophecy was a role, rather than simply a gift. You see it mentioned many times in the OT that there were three leadership roles - Prophet, Priest and King. The King rules the people following God's guidance - or is meant to! The Priest represents the people before God. The Prophet represents God to the people in bringing God's messages to them. The role of Prophet in the OT is never called a gift. So the primary role of the prophets in the

Bible was to speak with the people about the words and will of God in their specific situations. The prophets served as God's megaphones, declaring whatever God commanded them to say.

What's interesting is that God Himself defined the role and function of the prophets at the beginning of Israel's history as a nation: Deuteronomy 18:18-19 - I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything which I command him to. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.

When Isaiah spoke, or when Daniel spoke, they declared that they were speaking the words of God. When someone now speaks with the gift of prophecy, they cannot say 'I know what I am about to say is from God'. They just simply cannot know that. They may believe it very strongly, but they must ask you to test what they say.

So how do I 'test' a prophetic word? In 1st Thessalonians 5:19-22, it says - Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil.

First, before you share a word you should ensure you are in a humble place where you are hearing from God. Think through the word yourself first and consider if you truly believe this is a word God is asking you to share. Those with this gift are sensitive to both the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the needs of the church body. They should be humble and continually study the Scriptures in order to test these revelations before speaking them. When they do speak, they should allow and even expect others to weigh what is said against the Scriptures and interpret the message accordingly. In this way the church may be continually built up together in unity.

<https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>

Super simple really. Check in with God. Take some time to check in with God about this. Does what this person say align with where he is leading and guiding you. When you are still and quiet with him, what do you believe he is saying to you about this word of encouragement? Check the Bible.

What this person has said to you, align with what the Bible says about who you are? Do their words line up with what the Bible teaches? God does speak to us through his word all the time, so we

can trust that if someone speaks a prophetic word to us that they believe is from God, he will guide us as we check it out with his written word.

Look at this verse in Hebrews 4.12 - For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Check with wise friends. This last one is so important. There are a lot of wise people in this church - like super wise. If someone came and said a word to me that they thought was from God there are a bunch of people here at AGORA that I'd run to. As I mentioned before, When someone says something to me like this I always write it down. Then I can easily pray over it, check to see what they said lines up with the Bible, and go to wise people to see if they believe this message if from God.

Check with the Elders if the word is for the church. What if the word you have been given is for the church, and not for an individual? The way the elders here would like you to share this word is simply to go to one of them and ask them to pray over this and share it with the other elders. If the Elders think this is indeed from God, then we will bring it to the church. We may choose to simply share the word and explain it on a Sunday morning or may change the sermons to focus a whole sermon on it. We so need people who have this gift to use it. I don't think any of us would question that God speaks to us today. He may not speak audibly, but we know he guides and directs and encourages us all the time.

Look at what John says in 10.27 - My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

The Bible makes it clear that there is a gift of prophecy, so we need people who are keen to step up and use this gift. Josephine and I were at a small conference in Te Aroha a number of years ago. The speaker there had a very strong gift of prophecy and after one of the sessions he invited people to come forward and receive a message from the Lord. So, a bunch of us lined up and I was feeling super sceptical. I had never seen the gift of prophecy in action and I was totally expecting him to give some super general 'God will use you to do great things, and God loves you so much' or something like that. He was from American. When Josephine and I got to him the words he

spoke over us were so incredibly accurate about who we are, about our past, and about where we saw God was taking us it was incredible. Absolutely incredible.

We both walked away quite stunned! About 10 minutes later I went and talked to him and I said 'someone must have told you about us. There is no way you could know that and speak so accurately about where God is leading us'. He just laughed, looked at me and said 'the Holy Spirit knows everything brother'. So true. Amen!



Listen to the Sermon:



10. Key Principles on the Spiritual Gifts

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-04-18

Who is the Best?

We had a working bee and there was no one there that thought themselves to be better than one another. The concept of who was the best would just be a stupid idea. At a Hillsong conference in the States, they had a special worship leader to come for a special session. The worship leader had asked that everyone kneel with her as she read Scripture. We were the body of Christ, all worshiping the Lord. So, the idea of who is the best in the church is just ridiculous.



When it comes to Spiritual gifts is isn't all about you but it is about the Lord. Again 1st Corinthians 12:7, a spiritual gift is given to each of us so that we can help each other.

It is given to each of us. This is very exciting as a pastor of a church. Every single one of you that is in a relationship with Jesus are here because the Holy Spirit wants you to be here. There is a place that only you and I fill. So we as individuals have a responsibility to know what that gift is. At the same time, the church has a responsibility to help you know what that gift is. You are not here just to be at church, to tick your Jesus box for the week. We are here to grow closer to Jesus and to be part of a community. We are here because the Spirit has called and gifted us to be here. So we have this obligation to figure that out. If you don't use your spiritual gift then you are ripping us off! So, you are here for a reason. The Spirit has gifted you uniquely to fill a hole with in the church. If you choose not to use that spiritual gift then we all miss out.

The whole reason for spiritual gifts is so that you can build up and encourage and strengthen others. Yes, you get blessings and joy when you use your spiritual gift; because the Spirit of God is empowering you to do something that you love doing. The number one reason is not that you feel empowered and lifted up, but it is so that you

can bless a whole bunch of cool people. If you choose not to, then you miss out and the church misses out.

So it not like you lead worship and then go home thinking how amazing you were leading worship. It is for us to be blessed.

A gift is given to each of us. This is the most important part. At Christmas time it is usually about the giver who defines how good the gift is. But it is the Holy Spirit of God, the one that loves you way more than you ever understand. When he gives you a gift, it is going to be phenomenal. In using that gift you will sometimes just stop and think how great the Holy Spirit is in you. It is because you are being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Many of us miss this. When was the last time that you have felt overwhelmed because of how God used you. So what is the gift that God has given you?

Often, even in worship, you can see God dealing with people. So, it is not about you.

It is also not about the Holy Spirit; it is team work. It is between us and the Holy Spirit. We have an obligation to use and develop the gift that he has given us as we draw on his empowerment.

In Romans 12:6-12: This has to do with team work. You have a responsibility to find out what your gift is and once you understand that, you have a responsibility to develop it well. 'In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. If you have the gift of prophecy, speak out with as much faith God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If you gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, then give generously. If God has given you a leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. If you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. Use your gift intentionally! Don't just pretend to love others, really love them. Hate what is wrong, hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection. Take the light in honouring each other. Don't be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord with enthusiasm; rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble and keep on praying.

If you got his gift, you got to develop it; you got to grow in it. Never be lazy but work to serve the Lord enthusiastically. The word enthusiasm in Greek is a bit tricky to translate. Serve the Lord with a zealous spirit. Let the Spirit excite you as you serve the Lord. This is so cool; God doesn't hate us and he doesn't give you something that you

don't like. So, if I have the gift of encouragement, whenever I do these surveys, encouragement is like way up on the scale. I am just naturally a fairly positive person. I just love encouraging people. Seven or eight years ago, I was listening to a sermon on spiritual gifts and it was talking about the need to develop them. It is really easy to rest in them. I just felt like that was me. Yes, I am a naturally encouraging person but what would it take to develop this gift?

I love hospitality people because I love to eat. Such a person just loves to cook food for people. You love to have people around. This is what you love doing. What would it be like for you to develop that, to step into that more?

We would never say to someone who has the gift of preaching; you just have to show up and talk! No, you need to develop that. But, often with the other gifts, you just kind of wing it. No, you need to work at it. If you have the gift of leadership, you need to work at that. What does it look like for a leader reflecting Jesus? You need to develop the gift that you have.

So, it isn't about you but about us. It isn't all about the Holy Spirit, it is about him and you. It's team work. It is never just you going; you need to prayer and ask God to guide you. It is always about us.

Let me read this again in a different translation. You can see how this thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts, but no matter how many parts you have, you are still one body. We are one body and none of us are more important than anyone else. By means of his one Spirit, we all said goodbye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We used to call our own shots but then we entered into a large integrated life in which he has the final say in everything. This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptised. Each of us is a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain, his Spirit where we all come to drink. The old labels that used to identify ourselves are no long useful; we need something larger.

Think about how this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part, it is parts that are arranged and functioning together. No part can think they are better than another. God has placed each part right where he wanted it. This is not self-important. No matter how significant you are, it is only what you are a part of. What we have is one body with proper parts in their proper place; no part is

important on its own. You give each part dignity just on its own without comparison. The way that God made the body is the way that God made the church. Every part depends on every other part. If one part hurts every other part is involved in the hurt and in the healing.

Listen to the Sermon:



11. The Gift of Voluntary Poverty

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Dave Tabrum - 2021-04-25

Spiritual gifts – Voluntary Poverty

As you know today is ANZAC day:

- We remember, consider and honour the few who sacrificed so much, for the many.
- Not just those who gave paid the ultimate price but those who came back never the same.
- And so today we are thankful for those who sacrificed so much for us...



Today in our spiritual gifts series, we are talking about a gift that requires sacrifice. It is a gift that I believe is potentially the most neglected gift, but also one of the most deeply needed gifts, both in the Church and this world. Today I am talking about the gift of 'Voluntary Poverty' and potentially in saying that, I have now lost the attention of everyone in the room which is understandable. But if I could ask you to just stay with me I think we will discover some deeply transformative things by taking a look at this gift. It is important to remember that the Christian faith and tradition isn't a stranger to sacrifice, the intentional giving up things for the sake of others. And so, I want to start at the beginning and really ground our understanding of this gift in the example of Jesus, through His teachings and life.

In today's society, it can be easy to think that Jesus isn't that relevant when it comes to economics and money seen as He lived 2000 years ago. But when you add up all that Jesus had to say about money and possessions, it tallies up to 25% of his total teaching. Which is the largest percentage given to any topic that Jesus taught on... Clearly Jesus has something to say and as followers of Jesus we need to listen. Look at the following verses:

1. Luke 12:15 - *'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'*

2. Luke 12:33 - *Sell your possessions and give to the poor.*
3. Matthew 6:25, 33 - *'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*
4. Mark 4:19 - *but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.*
5. Matthew 19:24 - *Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'*

I don't know what your experience has been in church, but I grew up thinking that God had very little to say about money and didn't really care as long as He got His cut (as bad as that sounds) ... I'd occasionally hear about tithing or the mysterious 10% figure and try to figure out how much of my \$2 allowance that was and what that left me. But in reality, Jesus shows us a radically different way of spending and living.

But we not only have Jesus' teachings but also His life and example. In him we see what it means to voluntarily become poor for the sake of others. Jesus didn't limit the act of giving and self-sacrifice to the world of finances, but incorporates all parts of life and living in to this practice. Paul when writing about Jesus' example to the church in Corinth, writes in 2 Corinthians 8:9: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.* Paul here isn't talking about money matters, that through Jesus we have gained a bonus at work. But that through the grace of Jesus, His voluntary death on the cross we have been made rich in relationship with Him. Being able to know Him personally and experience His abundance and eternal living because of His sacrifice.

We then see in the books of Acts, how Jesus' teachings and example directed the early Church and the Holy Spirit empowered the Church in this. We see the Church continuing to live out this example of radical generosity and willing sacrifice (Acts 2:44-45, 4:34-35). We can see these practices are a part of how Jesus intended His Church

to function. And we see this not just in the early church but right through out Church history and up to this day. This morning though, we are talking about the spiritual gift of voluntary poverty. *So what is that gift and where do we see it as a gift?* It is important to state that the teachings and example of Jesus about money and possessions are not just limited to those with the gift of voluntary poverty.

So, let's start with a definition from MinistryTools.com: *The gift of voluntary poverty is to purposely live an impoverished lifestyle to serve and aid others with your material resources.*

A few things from this definition:

To purposely live an impoverished lifestyle - (Those with the gift choose to live this way in solidarity with those they come alongside, and do so with a specific intention. *It's not a mistake its intentional.*)

To serve and aid others with your material resources (Those with this gift use what they have and earn to radically bless others, not accumulating things themselves. *People not possessions are the focus.*)

So where do we see this gift referenced in Scripture (apart from the many examples of this)? In 1 Corinthians 13:3 we read: *If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.* Isn't this verse just describing someone's actions? In the two verses beforehand Paul speaks about Tongues and Prophecy, gifts of the Holy Spirit. And the very next chapter, chapter 14 is one of the key passages where Paul teaches on the spiritual gifts, what they are, what they look like and how to practice them. And this verse sits right in the middle of all of this. Another thing that I want to point out from the placement of this verse about the gift of voluntary poverty, is that it sits in a chapter all about love. This of course relates to all the spiritual gifts in that they are about the building up of the church and being a blessing in the world.

But what I want to draw out from this is that: the gift of voluntary poverty creates space to love God and others more fully. Because those with this gift aren't focused on possessions or money, the pursuit of careers or the new shiny. And because of this they have more time, more resources, just more in general, to give out, because their goal isn't accumulation. In voluntary poverty we see love being expressed in a very practical and tangible way. Not just, that those with

this gift give away what they have, but that they do so as a way of drawing closer to the poor because they also don't have much. And in doing so, they build bridges by living in solidarity with those with less.

As a church this isn't something to be shunned or shied away from, especially in a society where we see the gap between the haves and have nots growing. This is a beautiful gift that both the church and world desperately need.

Victoria - works with refugees and immigrants.

- o Doesn't have much, out of choice. What she has she uses to bless.
- o When first starting to work with refugees, she struggled to be accepted into their lives.
- o Always giving gifts and asking how she can help.
- o A deep desire for those she is doing life alongside to come to know Jesus and experience Him.

Another definition: The gift of voluntary poverty is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to renounce material comfort and luxury and adopt a personal lifestyle equivalent to those living at the poverty level in a given society in order to serve God more effectively.

1. Renouncing material comfort and luxury, not work... Those with the gift of voluntary poverty still work, but they work so they have what is needed to live and whatever extra they have they use to share and show God's love with.

2. They do this to serve God more effectively... Not to be martyrs or hero's but because they have a calling on their life and are being empowered by the Holy Spirit to share God's love with the last in society.

St John Chrysotom: It is the poor's wealth of which you are trustees even in cases where you possess it through honest labour or inheritance. And is not the earth the Lord's and everything it? Everything which belongs to God is for the use of all.

C.S Lewis: 'I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare.'

In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving too little away. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small.'

This morning we have talked about how those with the gift of VOLUNTARY POVERTY have a deep desire to connect with those who are poor, that they might experience the fullness and abundance of life with Jesus. That they intentionally and with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, reject comfort and luxury for a life of simplicity which frees them up to be able to be more present to and share with those who have little or nothing. So how do you know if you have this gift... here are some things to consider: Do you have a deep desire to see the poor and marginalized in society come to know and experience Jesus and His life? Do you find joy in intentionally living a simpler lifestyle (or considering doing so) so that you can be more available and a help to those with less than you? Do you ever consider living in community with other Jesus followers with the intent to bless your neighbourhood? Are you quick to recognize and meet the material needs of others. Do you ever give in faith (or consider giving) what you had reserved for your personal needs

The church and this world desperately need followers of Jesus who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to practice this gift. To live in solidarity with the poor not separate from them. To intentionally move into communities that have less so that they can experience the wholeness and healing that comes from being in relationship with Jesus. Is that you? And finally, church let's take Jesus' words seriously whether you have the gift or not. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



12. The Gift of Giving

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Tina Warnock - 2021-05-02

Pay it Forward

Before I tell you about today's gift I want to tell you about a funeral I watched online a few weeks ago. It was in the States and I hadn't met the person whose funeral it was but she was the younger sister of a friend I had flatted with many years ago. There was also a Facebook page set up where people shared memories and stories and videos about this woman's life. I'm always amazed at what you learn about people at their funerals. I heard from lots of the tributes and that came through clearly from the parents; this woman had been off the scale being generous all her life.



Her Dad told a story about when she was really young, when he was an itinerant preacher travelling New Zealand, living by faith, and they would often struggle financially. Sometimes they would have garage sales to get the money to be able to pay their bills. He said at one of these times they found an envelope on the bench one morning from their daughter. On it she had written 'As from the Lord' and inside was \$1.43 of her own money to help her parents out. Her parents were really touched by her generosity and sacrifice and prayed that somehow God would bless her for that. The next week it was her older sister's birthday and a neighbour brought over a birthday present, they didn't want the younger sister to miss out so gave her \$2.

There were stories after stories on the Facebook page about how as she had grown, this woman was not only entrepreneurial but also extravagantly generous. When working as a doctor at Starship Hospital, she once shouted her Mum a helicopter ride for her birthday, but also paid for a young boy from the hospital who never got visitors, to also come, including the two doctors that were needed to accompany him. As a med student she had been on a volunteer trip to India and was so impacted by the needs and lack of resources of the Indian hospitals. She worked to set up a Medical business in the States

with the purpose of giving a percentage of the profits to fund medical resources in India. There were many other stories and I think she was pretty outgoing and kind of a bit crazy...

There was one story on Facebook from a friend from primary school on how they ran a business breeding and selling mice to classmates as kids. Females were 80 cents and males \$1... and if they weren't sure then profit was maximised and of course they were sold as a male ... even if occasionally suspiciously their tummies looked a bit ...well... pregnant!

But the key things about her that stood out to me from so many people was this woman's generosity and how she treated everyone as special.



So the spiritual gift I'm going to be telling you about today is the gift of giving. I want to tell you a bit about what the gift is, then share some stories from the Bible where we see this gift working, then some more recent stories of people with this gift. Giving is another one of the gifts that at some level is something all of us are called to do. We are all called to give; right? As part of God's family we are called to help the poor and those in need, and support those whose work is sharing the Gospel and spiritually caring for us and others.

There are laws in the Old Testament of giving a tithe, which just means a tenth, of the best of a crop or a flock to be used in sacrifices or for provision of the priests. In the New Testament this law was replaced for us by a principle of generous giving towards the needs of the poor and

God's work. We can all give freely and cheerfully, as an ongoing offering to God and his work. I'd call this a thankful response and act of worship for all that God has done for us and given to us. And that should be for everyone.

Remember when GST was 12.5% and shops would have GST off sales – who ever worked out ‘what’s 12.5% of \$36.99’ in their head in the middle of Briscoes – no one! Who actually buys anything from Briscoes unless its half price anyway? Also no one!

I think God was onto something with the whole tithe idea because working out a tenth or 10% is easy maths and makes it pretty straightforward to work out how much to give on an ongoing basis. So, many of us use the principle of tithing or 10% as the easy maths way to work out our giving. Money is the most obvious resource that we trade in today so it is most often what is given these days so that others can spend it on what’s needed, but it doesn’t have to be money, it could be something like food or clothing. If you have a skill or resource or product that you can give that is totally legitimate too. When we give time or material resources that usually means there is money that someone doesn’t have to spend on that thing.

So if we are all called to give, what does the spiritual gift of giving look like that is different to general giving? I think it looks like Supercharged Joyful Generosity. Those who have giving as a spiritual gift get to do it extra big or extra often or at times extra sacrificially.

In the three main lists of spiritual gifts in Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians, only the Romans passage talks about giving as a spiritual gift. Here’s what Romans 12:8 says: ‘if [your gift] 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.’ This is the ENTIRE instruction in the Bible for giving as a spiritual gift, so there is something we need to pay attention to here. With giving, it doesn’t just say ‘if your gift is to give then give’. With giving we are told that if you have this gift, don’t just give, but do it this way – ‘generously’. Since the word generously is our only instruction on how to operate in this gift we should really understand what it’s trying to say. It turns out that this word ‘generously’ used here has 3 parts in its original meaning:

- Abundance – giving in the sense of giving copiously and bountifully and liberally – its big giving
- Simplicity - giving with no thought other than to freely give, a purely given gift, in good faith

- Sincerity - giving without being self-seeking or attention seeking, without any ulterior motives

When you put all that together the gift of giving is Supercharged Joyful Generosity.. From all of that here is the definition of the spiritual gift of giving; to share what material resources you have with liberality (abundance) and cheerfulness (simplicity) without thought of return (sincerity). (<https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>)

Here is a longer definition that gives a bit more clarity: The Holy Spirit imparts this gift to some in the church to meet the various needs of the church and its ministries, missionaries, or of people who do not have the means to provide fully for themselves. The goal is to encourage and provide, giving all credit to God's love and provision. Those with this gift love to share with others the overflow of blessings God has given them. <https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>

So what is the practical purpose of giving? It to meet needs of God's work and people and/or to meet the needs of people who cannot provide for themselves. And what's the motivation for giving? To provide for others, but underneath that the motivation is to give God the glory, and to be a channel of God's blessing to other people.

If you were here last week, Dave talked us through the gift of Voluntary Poverty which can also involve giving. I want to be clear how these gifts are different in their purpose. Voluntary Poverty, Dave explained, is when someone gives away most of what they own or earn with the purpose that they can live in a way that they can relate to, and have connection with, others that have very little. The gift of giving, is also about giving away finance or resources, but the purpose of this gift is to build God's kingdom and God's work, or to provide for people in need. So people with the gift of giving may continue to be blessed with having a lot, but they use what they have to be able to continue to give a lot. Note that what we give is just an overflow or outflow of what God has already given to us.

I've been thinking as we go through this series that each of the spiritual gifts in some way captures something of God's character or what he does and he is always the best at each of the spiritual gifts or our example. He's the source of the best wisdom and discernment, he is the best prophet speaking to us through his word and to our hearts,

his Spirit is the best encourager, he is the ultimate healer, helper, leader, administrator etc.

And so it's also true that we can never out-give the way that God gives and all that God has given to us.

- 'For God so loved the world that he GAVE his one and only son, so that whoever believes in him shall ... have eternal life.' John 3:16
- 'And God is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself GIVES everyone life and breath and everything else.' Acts 17:25
- 'God.. has blessed us... with (GIVEN us) every spiritual blessing in Christ ' Ephesians 1:3

So I think the gift of giving is a reflection of, and response to, God and how he gives.

Examples: I just want to spend the rest of the time sharing stories of examples of people or groups with the spiritual gift of giving, first from the Bible and then some recent ones.

Women who supported Jesus

Luke 8:1-3 After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

These women were providing the funds presumably for food and other provisions for a large group of people as they travelled round. We know there were at least 13 men, probably many more, and the three women named plus 'many others' so this would have been an expensive ongoing need. It's noted that the three women named had been cured by Jesus of evil spirits and diseases. Their giving was an overflow of their thankfulness for what Jesus had done for them and their faith in him.

I love that we get told about these women and just a little of their background. It's an insight into the practicalities of how things worked when Jesus was travelling around teaching and healing. Chuza must have been a great guy to recognise what a privilege Joanna had to serve Jesus and to let her have the freedom to do that in that time and culture. Don't you think Joanna CHOZA (chose a great guy)?

Each of the women had made the choice to follow Jesus. Their act of thankfulness and service to him for what he had done for them was to support them out of their own means. I'm looking forward to hearing so much more about that one day. Luke records that the same Mary Magdalene and Joanna and other women were still providing for Jesus at the tomb bringing the costly spices for his body. The first to find him gone, the first to be told by angels that he had risen, the first to go and tell the apostles of the resurrection. They gave to Jesus and Jesus gave them an honoured place in his gospel and the telling of it.

Tabitha

Acts 9:36-42 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, 'Please come at once!' Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, 'Tabitha, get up.' She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

Tabitha is pretty special. Notice Tabitha is just casually referred to here as a disciple? Disciple technically means a learner or student. This is a unique mention in the Bible of the word disciple in the feminine form applied to a woman individually rather than

collectively as a group of disciples. She was a follower of the teachings of Jesus.

How did that lead her to live?

- Giving and service seem to go together here for Tabitha
- Tabitha gave to the poor. This story shows specifically giving of material resources not just money - she gave the robes and clothing she had made. It's likely I think that the widows who were mourning her death were amongst the poor that had received her generosity.
- Tabitha gave of her time, talent, and possessions as a follower of Jesus. She was so honoured and respected that when she died it was worth sending for the Apostle Peter. And in God's will by a miracle she was gifted new life and new opportunity to continue serving. Note that because of this happening many people believed in the Lord.

Macedonian Churches

2nd Corinthians 8:1-5 This is Paul writing to the Corinthian church encouraging them to give and using the Macedonian church as an example: And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

This story really shows how the spiritual gift of giving is supercharged joyful generosity!

- Notice that this whole church seems to have the gift of giving.
- Note that they weren't giving because they were super comfortable and well off and had surplus funds - they were in the midst of a very severe trial and extreme poverty

themselves. You don't have to be rich, just willing, to use the gift of giving.

- And yet they felt urgently compelled to help the Lord's people - they saw it as a privilege and as service to the Lord. Here giving and service kind of combined here.
- And notice all the super charged ways Paul describes their giving - it resulted in rich generosity, they gave as much as they were able, and EVEN BEYOND their ability, their giving even exceeded Paul's expectations.
- Notice the attitude they gave in - it came from overflowing joy, they gave themselves first to the Lord - it was an act of worship - and then they gave to the Lord's people.

What a beautiful and amazing example the Macedonian churches were of Supercharged Joyful Generosity. No wonder Paul used them as an example to the Corinthian church to encourage them to also give to God's work. Imagine if we became a church like that.

Just a caution about these verses though. I don't want you to read them and think, if I have the gift of giving then I have to give beyond my ability and exceed others expectations. Actually giving beyond your ability is generally not really very wise... mainly because you then run the risk of not being able to pay your own bills or not being able to support yourself and needing help. So it kind of defeats the purpose of giving, except maybe in special circumstances like the gift of Voluntary Poverty.

Now we don't know what happened after this to the Macedonian church who were in poverty but, it seems like in many situations, the more givers give, the more God blesses them with more, and they have more ability to give even more back to God. There is a principle of reaping and sowing in the Bible which we often look at from the negative as in reaping consequences for bad choices. But it can also work the other way that those who sow resources through giving may receive blessing or success from God. I wouldn't say that is always financial blessing, and it would not be giving with simplicity and sincerity if you were giving with the ulterior motive of wanting God to make you rich and successful. But if someone is a willing giver to the work of God it makes sense that God would give them heaps to give to

his work. Its like being a funnel through which God's blessings and resources flow – the more God gives the more God's work receives.

And giving should never be to meet or exceed another person's expectations – that should never be your motivation. What you give will be between you and God, maybe sometimes God will call you to give in a way that seems nuts to other people but that makes you super excited to see what God will do. Paul thought what the Macedonian church gave was more than they were able but remember they did it joyfully, and even pleaded to be able to give as a privilege.

Recent Stories. Now it's kind of tricky when it comes to recent stories of giving because givers like to fly under the radar and give in secret. Part of the reason for this is that, when giving, their purpose is to give glory and attention to God in the giving, not to draw attention for themselves. It's that bit about giving with sincerity and simplicity - giving to fill a need in someone else not to gain reputation for themselves. I think the reason for this is in Matthew 6:1-4, Jesus gives this warning. 'Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'

Imagine walking down Victoria Street looking for homeless people and handing out sandwiches with a megaphone making an announcement each time you do. That's the ridiculous picture Jesus is painting of the attitude the hypocrites had that he's talking about. That's not giving that's advertising. Its like a business that gives to a cause but wants their name plastered over everything – maybe they care about the cause but it's all about the advertising and hope of getting more business back than what they have invested. That kind of giving is self-serving not God serving.

The heart of true giving is so humble and secret that it's as ridiculous as your left hand not knowing what your right hand is doing. God sees and he's the one who will reward you.

I don't think I have the spiritual gift of giving but at times when Simon and I have had some extra we wanted to give in addition to our regular giving, it's been fun to decide where to give that to, and sometimes to have creative ways to give to people in need around us in a way that they hopefully won't find out it's from us! It's part of the joy of giving I think. I won't tell you how we've done that, or I might lose my reward!!

So, it's tricky to find recent stories of those with the gift of giving because they either keep it secret or not many people know about it, or you don't really find out the true extent of their generosity until they are gone like at the funeral I watched a while ago.

Robert Laidlaw

Anyway, here's a cool story. There was a businessman Robert Laidlaw who died back in 1971 at the age of 85. So this story is from a while ago but his legacy lives on today. Robert Laidlaw was:

- Founder of Farmers Trading Company, which you will recognise today as the Farmers Department Stores. It actually started out as one of NZ's first mail order catalogues!
- Founder of the Postal Sunday School Movement
- He was a lay preacher in the Open Brethren movement
- He wrote a short gospel book called 'The Reason Why' which you can still buy online for \$1.95 by the way!!
- He was also one of the founders of New Zealand Bible College which in 2008 (more than 35 years after his death) changed its name to Laidlaw College in recognition of him being one of the founders and because of 'his significant influence in both society and church'.

Here's what Wikipedia said was one of Laidlaw's best-known quotes and it was about giving: 'From the earliest stage of my business, I tithed and received God's blessing and wisdom... initially my tithes were small and gifts of love and I felt God's blessing on my work. Later, when my business was a success my tithes were bountiful and I was blessed again.' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Laidlaw)

The way I had heard the legend told was that Laidlaw started out giving 10% of what he earned to God's work. Then he decided to

change that and worked out what income he needed each year and gave the rest to God's work so that as his success and earnings increased so did his giving until he was giving away half of what he earned. Here's a quote from a biographical essay which gives a bit more insight about what Laidlaw's giving was like:

'When Laidlaw was 18 years old he made a tithing contract with God in his diary, committing to tithe 10% of his income. Two years later in 1906 he edited this commitment, creating a scale that increased his tithing alongside the increase in his income. Eventually, in 1919 at the age of twenty five, he scrapped this scale in favour of tithing the greater amount of 50% to various organizations and charitable trusts. The relevance in these facts is the illustration of his values and commitments which were to become a major part of his legacy throughout his life. In his success he blessed many organizations, groups and families that he encountered.'

<https://fairlightwilliams7.wordpress.com/2013/05/31/robert-laidlaw-a-biographical-essay/>

He worked his way up over 7 years, and just the age of 25, to giving half of what he earned to God's work.

- That's 60 years of giving and generosity
- He talked of his giving as acts of love and how HE was blessed by God, that sounds pretty joyful to me
- The impacts of his work and generosity continue on today in our country and in the church in NZ
- His life was characterised by Supercharged Joyful Generosity through the spiritual gift of giving.

Another example I heard about over the summer, it's kind of sketchy details through family members and people that know them, so I won't give any revealing details. But there is a bunch of about 5 young Christian guys currently in their late 20's or early 30's who grew up in church together in another city in NZ and have all stayed friends. What I understand is that when they were all just starting in their careers in their early 20's they decided to form a joint Trust fund. And into that trust they all put funds from their earnings or businesses. They are all doing pretty interesting jobs or running businesses. I don't know exactly how it works but these friends all get together once or twice a year for the purpose of deciding who to give money to. Once money is in the Trust, it's there for giving away. And they are excited to do that and share the money in ways that will make an impact.

I may never know but I'm excited to think how that trust could grow and the impact those friends could have through their giving. You may have heard of some big farming trusts years ago that were set up to give back to God's work and what an impact and input they have in the Open Brethren church network – I wonder if these young guys could end up growing into something similar over time.
City Bible Church

And what about right here at our church – I am pretty sure I know of people here with the gift of Supercharged Joyful Generosity. You just hear little snippets every now and then over the years.... A generous gift made to the church finances here, a debt paid off there, someone providing their skills and not charging for it here, some new piece of equipment turning up that was donated. It's done in secret and in the quiet and with no fuss or trumpets. And often we don't hear who has done the giving and that's exactly as the givers would like it.

If your gift is giving, or you are wondering if it might be, then give it a go. Do it on the quiet and trust God as you watch what he does with that. If you find that God blesses you with more, then trust him some more - trust, give, watch repeat. Increase your trust by increasing what you give. If you have a little, start with stretching what you give from your little. If you have a lot, ask God how he might be challenging you to expand your impact in his kingdom through your generosity. Make it Supercharged and Joyful and Generous. Consider

this question: Who is missing out if you don't use your gift of giving in the way God has enabled you? Those God wants to bless and help through your giving may miss out. And You will be missing out - on the joy and blessing that God wants you to know from giving. And if giving is not your spiritual gift, giving should still be your regular humble thankful response, in proportion to what you have, for all that Jesus has done for us.

Like with all the gifts even if it may not be one of your main spiritual gifts it doesn't mean we don't have opportunity to use those other gifts once in a while. So if God is leading you to do some Supercharged Joyful Generosity, some time in addition to your faithful regular giving, then go for it, do it in secret, enjoy knowing God's kingdom is being advanced by your kindness and then watch what God will do. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



13. The Gift of Shepherding

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Tom McIvor - 2021-05-09

Reading: Psalm 27

The gift of shepherding or pastoring. This gift really resonates with me a lot. The picture in the New Testament is a lot different from what we do here in New Zealand as shepherds. I have an illustration of sheep being called by name. Working as a shepherd is like dealing with people. You have to look out for them; you have to feed them and you have to keep them safe. I want to pass on some principles of what it is to be a shepherd.

Acts 20:28 – Therefore take heed to yourselves to the flock who which the Holy Spirit have made you over-seers, shepherds of the church of God which he purchased with his own blood. For I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock. Men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves.

You can see that the job of the shepherd, Paul is writing to the leaders at the church in Ephesus. In 1st Peter 5, writing to the elders of the church, the Christians that have been scattered because of persecution. He says, the elders here among you I exhort; I who am a fellow elder and witness of the suffering of Christ and partaker of the glory that will be revealed. Shepherds of the flock of God among you, serving as over-seers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; not as being lords over those entrusted to you but being examples of the flock. When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. This is done willingly, out of our heart of desire to help others. And it is out of a desire to protect those around you.

So the definition of a pastor or shepherd: it is the one who attends the flock, the one of guides, feeds and nourishes and looks after the flock. You might think that this is or not you.

I want to share some principles that you need to take a hold of because you are one of the sheep in the flock. Yes, God gives shepherds and pastors to us to help us. I love to shepherd the flock of God. I have a book called the *Way of the Shepherd* by Calvin Lyman and William Pentac who give us seven principles.

The gifts that were given by the Spirit was given to build up and strengthen the church. There is a sense that all of us need to put into practice some of these things. John 10:11-18, which I love, speaks of Jesus Christ being the great shepherd. Jesus says here that he is the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep, but he who isn't the shepherd, one who doesn't own the sheep sees the wolf coming and flees. The wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. Jesus says, I am the God Shepherd. I know my sheep and I'm know by my own. As the Father knows me, even so, I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep.

As we think of the Great Shepherd, Jesus is the ultimate of everything that we want to be. He is the ultimate one who cares and who gets around us and nurtures us. You might be disappointed in people around you but you can never be disappointed with Jesus.

As we think of the gifts of the shepherd or pastor; one of the first things I would say: as a shepherd, we have to know the condition of our flock. Some practical things in regards to this; knowing the flock means that we get to know people. We need to ask questions in order to get to know these people. Always ask questions; don't talk about yourself. Find out their names which is very important. The name is a part of you, it is your identity. When you want to shepherd someone, use their name. It is a very important part of who they are. Find out what their likes and dislikes are. What gets them motivated in life. Make sure you listen to them. Be slow to speak, but quick to listen. When I had four thousand sleep to look after, I had to stop and listen. As you listen, look

them in the eye. Remember what they talk to you about. If we are to be shepherds to others, the gift of a shepherd is to remember others. Prayer is also an important part of this. So you need to know the condition of your flock.

Secondly, discover the shape of your sheep; people don't think the same. In Matthew 9:36, when Jesus saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion for them. The heart of the shepherd is to be moved by the heart of people. Thinking about what their needs are. How can I listen to their hearts; how can I strengthen them and how can I pray for them. When we think of heart, we think of attitude, we think of personality, we think of experience. All of these things encompass a person. When I discover the shape of a person, I think about how best I can minister to them. How best can I listen to them? How can I best support them? How does that person respond to life? How do they respond to the difficulties in life? All of us respond differently. I don't know how some people respond to certain pains in life. What is causing changes in the lives of people? You can often see whether there is pain or joy in the face of a person. This takes time, actually stopping and taking a moment. Proverbs 27:19 says, the man's heart reveals the man.

Thirdly, help your sheep identify with you. John 10:11, Jesus says, I am the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Make sure you identify with the sheep as they flock together. When I was farming, we would always give the sheep an ear mark. The mark showed that they belonged to our flock. Sheep want to have an identifying factor. What identifies us with this church; with our life group? Why do we come to this church. What is the commonality amongst us? It is really important that we make people feel safe with that identifying factor. It is important to understand what makes people stay at church. All of us need to know the Great Shepherd. We come and listen to the Word of God. It is important to make friends with this book. If you want to know the Great Shepherd, the Bible is the book you need to be in. It is the great book you can ever own.

Fourthly, we need to make the pastor a safe place where people come and find their food. Psalms 23:2, it says, he makes me lay down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. What a beautiful thing. This talks to me about peace and quenching my thirst. For many people are broken because of the sorts of things in their lives. There are a lot of weeds in the world that choke us.

As a shepherd, one of our roles is to actually uncover those worldly things that people are gravitating toward. If you are gravitating toward the weeds of the world today, you need to stop this and come back to the Word of God. These weeds could include false doctrine, even pornography that men get drawn into. There are things on television and media that can draw you away from what God wants you to be focused on.

We need to encourage the flock. There can never be enough encouragement of the flock. We all want to be encouraged. We love to be encouraged, having good words spoken over us. There is a catch phrase that I often use, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. This has been the motto for my ministry life. The flock needs to know that we care before we speak to them. It is what we have in our hearts towards people that matters.

As a shepherd, we need to use the staff of direction. We don't use a staff or rod like they used in the Old Testament. In Psalm 23:4, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; your rod and staff, they comfort me. The Biblical shepherd would use his staff to direct the sheep. Sheep are really good at following the leader. There are always things that sheep get caught up in and we humans are not much different than that. We sometimes, get ourselves into dangerous places, not even knowing how we got there.

Always keep your hope in Jesus Christ, not this world and not people for people we let you down. When you fail, it isn't the end. As shepherd, our role is to bring people back from feeling a failure. There was the rod of correction. Correction is really hard especially for parents. In 2nd Timothy 3:16, the Word of God is profitable for

instruction, correction so that the man of God be thoroughly equipped for every good work. So the Word of God is there to correct us. Correction is like presenting a new road map. It helps us to see clearly that the path ahead is the right path. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



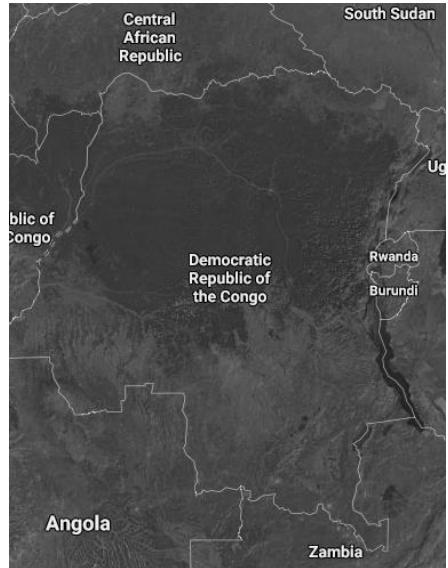
14. The Gift of Evangelism and Missions

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Murray Stevenson - 2021-05-16

Murray and Joy were Missionaries in the Congo for many years.

There are seven languages in the Congo which I work in with translators translating along beside me. This country used to be called Zaire and it is a massive country. We worked in a province located in the southern end, the Katanga province. There are over 1,500 churches that are part of the network we work with. Last year we 'roofed' twenty two new churches. God is doing an exponential work to people in that land. When we arrived, we followed others who had already done amazing work back in 1886 before colonialism came to Africa.



In those days, the area was run by a despotic slave trader. It took the missionary back then five years to see the first convert to Christianity. There have been huge sacrifices made in order for people to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Today there 1,500 churches in that province alone. All of these churches are indigenously run by Africans. There are over 500 Christian schools; schools for the deaf and also for the blind. There are eight major hospitals and dozens of clinics, all indigenously run. There are also training hospitals. The Gospel has the power to save the soul. He uses us to take that Gospel to the ends of the earth.

If you have Jesus as your Saviour, then you are made for mission. As we have entered into the Grace of God, as he has saved us and brought us into a living relationship with him. He is saying to us, please

be my hands and feet in this world. We are currently working in 34 countries around the world. We are also linked with 41 other mission agencies also. We are large in embracing our missionary endeavour. We have 114 missionaries engaged in missions.

I want to share with you what it means to be an ambassador for Christ as all of us being called to that role. 2nd Corinthians 5:11-20 shows us what it means to be a missional church. What does it mean to be involved in this church and how does it play out in missions. 'Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.' This is of itself a mission's verse. V13, 'if we are out of minds, as some say; it is for God. If we are in our right minds, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all of us. Christ died for all so that they should live for him. He died for them and was raised.' V17. Even anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone and the new has come. All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. God was reconciling the world to himself not counting people's sins against them. He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors. It is though God was making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf to be reconciled to God.' The first truth is found in verse 20; his role is one of representing Christ. We know that the object of a Christian faith is Christ. Our mission is to represent Christ in our lives and our work and our play and study.

Why? John 14:6, I am the way, the truth and the light; no one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father and from now on, you do know him. You have seen him.

Romans 3:23. For all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. I stand before you as a missionary and a sinner, saved by grace. In Romans 6:23, The wages of sin is death; separation from God, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The only antidote to all of this, is the mission of Jesus. When we are called to be representatives of Christ, we are equally challenged to become

like him and embrace him. We are ambassadors working together. 1st Corinthians 12:12 describes the church as being heads, hands and feet; what Paul is saying that we ought to be involved in a plural engagement. We need each other. Paul understood that the members of the church needed each other, to work together in order to fulfil the mission of Jesus. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



15. The Gift of Singleness

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-05-23

A Book by John Mark Comer - Loveology

As I begin, I want to give credit to a book by John Mark Comer called 'Loveology' for a lot of the teaching this morning. I highly recommend this book.

Much of the church in recent history has been overly focused on marriage. I was talking to a friend this week who was a youth pastor for two years when they were in their early 20's. They said it was basically two years of people trying to set them up with someone, asking them if they liked so and so, or just blatantly asking them when they were getting married, and why they were not currently married.

The church historically has done a bad job of almost talking like marriage is the pinnacle of service to Christ, and that you aren't really a Christian if you are single. There are a number of reasons for this, but I always find it interesting that Jesus was single. We are called to be like Him in everything we do, so therefore how important is marriage? Further, the Apostle Paul was single - he was most probably married at one point - but clearly single during all of his service years to Christ. 1 Corinthians 7.7 - 'But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another. Paul uses the same Greek word for Gift, that he uses when giving us the gift lists in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. When you see this verse like this, it looks like the church has actually had marriage in a very incorrect place of priority. Marriage is good and important and a gift from God, for sure, but it is certainly not the pinnacle of being a follower of Jesus - far from it!

Being single is not easy - but many of the spiritual gifts are not 'easy'. I believe I have the gift of preaching and teaching. I have to really work at my sermons. I don't just sit down and pray and watch my fingers fly across the keyboard typing out a sermon. I know people with the gift of hospitality. Although using this gift fulfils them in their service to God, it takes a lot of work and mental energy to welcome people into

*Being single isn't a
"problem" to be solved.*

*It's an incredible
opportunity to create
your own happiness.*

your home and bless them with a loving accepting environment and meal. Now please hear me clearly here - singleness is not easy. Writing a sermon is simple compared to many people who hold this gift. Some people who have this gift wish they did not. Others who do not have this gift wish they did. Some will have the gift for a time, but not forever. Or, like Paul, you may be widowed or divorced and receive this gift later in life.

I think the most important thing I want to communicate this morning is that marriage or singleness or whatever gift you have is certainly not the most important thing about you. The most important thing about you is whether or not you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and how intentional you are about that relationship.

We can get so hung up about getting married, or not getting married. What Paul writes towards the end of chapter 7 is very powerful. 'But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away. 1 Co 7:29–31. We all read this and go - yea - possessions. A good thing to have, but certainly not something to be absorbed by - certainly not something to find my meaning and identity in. Right? But do you notice how Paul includes marriage in this list? Is Paul saying it is time for me to become a terrible husband and forget about my wife? Totally not- read the rest of the chapter and you see how importantly Paul holds the love of a husband and wife.

Paul is saying the most important thing in life is not possessions or the things of the world- OR marriage. The most important thing is always a connection with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Only he can bring true fulfilment and purpose to our lives. If you are married, you will never find fulfilment or true happiness in your spouse. They will never complete you - no matter what Tom Cruise says! They just can't. Only Jesus Christ can fulfil you, only Jesus Christ can bring meaning and direction to your life - not your marriage partner.

OK - let's unpack more of this gift from the words Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:29–31. To do this I'm going to work through a number of questions John-Mark Comer asks in his book. Do you have the gift

of singleness? Here is the definition of this gift from the workbooks that amazing Dave produced. '1 Cor. 7:7-8 - to voluntarily remain single without regret and with the ability to maintain controlled sexual impulses so as to serve the Lord without distraction'

(<https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>)

I've talked to a number of friends over the year who have talked about how nice it would be to have a break from being married. Not to go and do evil sex stuff, but just to not have to think about someone else for a while. They could go and live at the beach and sleep all day and not shave or shower daily - or weekly. Ha. They'd be able to use the floor as the perfect clothes storage place - which most of us guys do anyway, and live on a healthy diet of meat and meat and maybe an occasional potato.

Is this what Paul is talking about with the gift of singleness? No - totally no! The last part of the definition is the key 'so as to Serve the Lord without distraction'

'Do you have the calling and ability from God to live single in order to serve God in a greater capacity?

Make sure you get that last part. For followers of Jesus, the point of singleness isn't freedom from responsibility. It's freedom for more responsibility.' Comer, John Mark. Loveology

When I was at the Bible College we would regularly have students in their mid to late 20's who had chosen not to marry because they wanted the freedom to serve the Lord during that part of their life. Many of them would have loved to have been married, but they knew the Lord had called them to live a celibate lifestyle for that period of their life to serve him without distraction.

This is what Paul says here in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35. 'I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married



woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.' Pretty clear what Paul is saying - right?

Okay - are you ready for a huge question, for those of you who are not married? Will marriage help me or hold me back from God's calling on my life? That has to be the key question- right? If I claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ, my desire must be to serve him with all that I am. The key question then is not - 'should I get married' but 'will marriage help me or hold me back from God's calling on my life?' Wow - if you are single, and if that question just hit you, you need to find someone to process this with. This is a huge call God is putting on your life, and not one you take easily or lightly.

A friend of mine feels called to take the Gospel to Afghanistan. Seriously. And this friend is a woman. So at present, she believes God has given her the gift of singleness so she can focus on that call to serve God and is preparing to head over there. I hear that and I just go 'Whoa. Amazing'.

That is the core of this gift right. Do you burn?

I've said a few times that I grew up a long time ago, and I remember hearing lots of youth group talks on this. I really had no idea what Paul was on about back then, but now that I understand what he is saying, this is a key point.

1 Co 7:8–9. 'So I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust.'

1 Co 7:36–38. 'But if a man thinks that he's treating his fiancée improperly and will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes. It is not a sin. 37 But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry. 38 So the person who marries his fiancée does well, and the person who doesn't marry does even better.' I'll get back to the burning comment in a moment - but you can clearly see here Paul's argument that singleness enables one to serve the Lord with more freedom.

OK - burning. It's not rocket science here. If you burn with desire, then get married . I love what John Mark writes here. 'But Paul's no Stoic. He says, in essence, 'If you're in love, and you can barely keep your hands in your pockets, then get married. Go ahead.' In fact, that's one of the ways you know you don't have the gift of singleness. You 'burn.' 'To burn' is a Greek euphemism for raging sexual desire.' Comer, John Mark. Loveology

So let me summarise what I believe Paul is saying here.

- If you burn - you need to marry.
- Is the call God has on your life going to be better met if you are married or single?
- Single - could you serve God better if you remain single.

I want to pray for anyone in our faith community who is single right now. Some of you are single but would love to not be. Some of you are single because you know you can serve God better like that at this time. Both of these positions are hard.

A Prayer: Almighty God. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments. . . . I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. . . . Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. . . . Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me. (Psalm 119:10, 15, 37, 133) You are the only one who could ever truly make me happy. No spouse, no friend, no job, no amount of money could ever fill the space inside of me made for you. You are more than enough for me, and yet my heart is still prone to wander. Order my loves according to your surpassing worth and beauty, and guard my eyes and mind from being preoccupied with anyone or anything besides you. Capture my heart again, and secure it against all of Satan's lies. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/nine-prayers-for-the-not-yet-married>)._Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



16. The Gift of Wisdom, Knowledge & Discernment

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-06-06

What would you rather be: knowledgeable, wise, or discerning? Well - I have good news and bad news; the good news is the Holy Spirit distributes these gifts to people in the church as he sees the need. It is amazing that he may give you one of these gifts to bless the other awesome people at church.

Yah! The bad news is - ha - there is no bad news as these gifts are amazingly powerful. We'll be unpacking these gifts on Sunday. I want to begin by reminding us of one of the key passages we keep going back to 1st Corinthians 12.7: 'A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.' There are three key points from this verse.



1. A gift, or gifts, are given to each of us. Without knowing what gift you have, you really don't know how to serve God, and therefore how to serve him to experience the power of the Spirit in your life!
2. These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to build up the church. Yes I receive joy and blessing in using the gifts i have received, but that is not the core goal - the core goal of the gifts is to help each other in this church
3. Given - these are gifts from the Holy Spirit are to you and the church. So, because they are gifts. it is more to do with the giver than with the receiver. The receiver is empowered by the Holy Spirit to use this gift so it doesn't matter if you can quote the whole Bible, or none of it, it doesn't matter if you are a leader here or just joining the church - what matters is your desire to connect deeply with Jesus and serve him with all you are.

I covered knowledge and wisdom back at the beginning of February, but so we can see how these three similar gifts are

different, let's do a quick recap. The gift of knowledge is based on the Bible. You see this gift, and the gift of wisdom here in 1 Corinthians 12.8 - To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. You can see that both these gifts have a strong focus on GIVING. As we saw in 1 Cor 12.7 these gifts are to bless the church, not yourself, hence the focus on giving. The gifts are not given to us so we can walk around looking all smart and wise! :) Although that would be super cool, that is not going to bless the church.

Let's look at a definition for the gift of knowledge 'To seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible through the gathering of much information and the analysing of that data. A word of knowledge is a Spirit-revealed truth.'<https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm> So as you can see in that definition, there are two parts to this gift of knowledge. First - someone who has a great understanding of the Bible and is able to teach that. They may also have the gift of teaching and preaching, or they may be great at passing on this information in a one-on-one situation or in leading a life group. Second, this is not just knowledge they have gained from study, this is a spirit-revealed truth. This doesn't mean they suddenly know something about someone or about the church, that is a different gift - the gift of prophecy. It means that the knowledge they have gained through study and prayer and seeking the Lord, is empowered by the spirit to be applied to a certain situation.

As I've talked about a bunch during this series, the Bible is the core of our faith, and our reliable guide. Whether someone speaks a word of knowledge to me, or some spiritual wisdom or whatever, the Bible is the key place I go back to check what they are saying. In 1 Corinthians 14:29, we must weigh up what is said - the best way to do this is with the Bible.

This is a bit of a crazy story and I've changed the facts a little to protect people, but this is a true story. A number of years ago I had a friend who was always sick. She was usually very weak and struggled to get out of bed and so on. She would sometimes be able to work a few days a week, but other times she couldn't do much. She went to a Christian doctor who did a bunch of tests on her and then said 'you are allergic to your husband'. True story.

The Doctor said it was clear that she was allergic to her husband and so they needed to separate'. Now this is a pretty extreme story - but you know what I said to my friend. This is interesting - let's see what the Bible has to say about this. ...Funny as it may sound, we couldn't find anywhere in the Bible that you can leave your husband or wife if you are allergic to them. Wild. Marriage is for life - according to the Bible, except for some exceptional circumstances. Funny - they stayed together, she got better a few years later and now they are amazing and serve Jesus. Yah.

The Bible is the core of our faith, and our most clear guide. I'd always put the Bible before prayer or experience or someone's word or anything. Wisdom is making spiritual truth relevant and practical. As I've mentioned, the gift of wisdom is similar to the gift of knowledge. The key difference is simply the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge can be described as more academic, while wisdom is more connected to the realities of life. Here is a definition for the gift of wisdom: 'to apply knowledge to life in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision-making and daily life situations'

I used Will to illustrate these gifts last time, so this time I'll use Annette. Annette is awesome and super wise. I love her so much and I am so thankful to the Lord for bringing her and Ross and the clan to CBC. If Annette had the gift of knowledge we would see Annette studying her Bible a lot. She would be reading it and studying it and wrestling to understand the text. Then, she may be talking to someone after church and hear of a tough situation they are in. She would use her knowledge of the Bible, and be empowered by the Spirit to share a truth or story from the Bible that speaks to that person's situation. From the study I've done it needs to be both of these parts - it is not just the Spirit giving Annette knowledge, and it is not just her study of the Bible that gives her the knowledge. This is a gift from the spirit so he is the one who will guide her and lead her to use the study she has done to bless this person with biblical knowledge. Okay - so what if Annette had the gift of Wisdom. If Annette also had the gift of wisdom, she would not only be able to share the verses the Holy Spirit has brought to mind, and not only able share some of the learning she has done around them, but she would be able to give guidance and insight into the situation the person has found themselves in. That is the wisdom

part - being guided by the Spirit to guide the person in a certain situation, and give them practical advice.

It is easy to see the difference - right? Someone may have one of these gifts, or both. It is totally up to the Spirit on how he does this. In a church like CBC we desperately need both these gifts. We need people who know the Bible and have studied deeply. We need them to be able to speak biblically into all situations. And, we need people with the gift of wisdom. People who are close with God and can come alongside someone in a good or tough or scary or lost situation to guide them practically. So needed!

Before we get into the gift of discernment, I want to look at these key verses. Proverbs 1:7 and Psalm 110:10 – knowledge and wisdom: ‘One cannot gain knowledge of spiritual things if he begins at the wrong point, refusing to fear the Lord (i.e., to recognize God’s character and respond by revering, trusting, worshiping, obeying, and serving Him).’ The Hebrew word translated ‘beginning’ means the essence. The essence of true knowledge is fearing God. Apart from Him a person is ignorant of spiritual things

Sid S. Buzzell, ‘Proverbs,’ in The Bible Knowledge Commentary says that this has to be the core of these gifts right - someone with deep respect and awe of God. Someone who trusts Him, obeys him and serves Him with all that they are. This is the kind of person God will give these gifts of knowledge and wisdom to, through his spirit. To me this seems kind of obvious. I have a good friend who is incredibly wise. He clearly has the gift of knowledge, and I think wisdom, and definitely has the gift of discernment. But he is a bit of a weird Christian. He doesn’t really watch TV, but spends heaps of time reading his Bible. He’ll often have dinner with his wife - their kids are grown and left home - then she will read or work on a craft and he will just read the Bible. He is so funny in this. He’ll say to me ‘man, last night was so good bro. I read through Corinthians and Colossians again. Wow, there is so much truth in there. It was just awesome.’ Now when I say he is weird, I really mean he is the kind of Jesus Follower I’d like to be. He is not a nerd who never hangs out with people and hides in a dark room reading his Bible by candlelight or something. He hunts a lot, helps his neighbours so much, serves in the church. He is living a life of the fear of the Lord - in respect and awe and obedience and service to God. So, God gives him wisdom and knowledge.

Okay - now that we have a good understanding of the gift of knowledge and the gift of wisdom, let's look at the gift of discernment. Discernment is simply distinguishing truth from error. I'd like to read this whole section in 1 Corinthians 12. 7-11. It is interesting to see this all in context and see how Paul explains these three different gifts in particular. Here's the definition from the workbook we are using. To clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the behaviour or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power

Another list of definitions we have been using explains this gift like this: 'The gift of discernment is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behaviour purported to be of God is in reality divine, human or satanic.' (<https://shepherdsofthelost.org>)

A pastor friend of mine talks about three different voices in our heads. Our own voice, the voice of God and the voice of the evil one. Part of becoming a mature Christian is to learn to distinguish between these different voices. Is this temptation Satan trying to trip me up, or is this just me because I've made some dumb decisions lately and haven't been walking with Jesus. Is this deep strong feeling in my soul to do such and such or say such and such, from me, or from Jesus?

A classic example of this is when Peter speaks to Jesus in MATTHEW 16:21-23. At first it sounds like Peter is being wise - Jesus is their awesome leader - why on earth would he die. No way - says Peter. But, Jesus, who obviously has the gift of discernment, pulls Peter aside and shows him he is not speaking from his own wisdom, or from the wisdom of God, but from the voice of the evil one!

A key verse in thinking about discernment is 1 John 4.1-3 John clearly connects someone speaking with the gift of prophecy with spirits here. And he clearly says this is happening in his time. I believe we can apply the same logic to anyone who claims to speak to us on God's behalf. And I see the gift of discernment as so crucial in this. We desperately need people with this gift, who hear someone speak for God and can tell straight away by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, if that person is speaking for God or for a false spirit. How do I test this - by looking at the person's doctrine and life.

It says in Hebrews 5.14: 'Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill [discernment] to recognize the

difference between right and wrong.' Wow - these are three amazing gifts.

I always get super overwhelmed by that reality. The creator of the universe has directed the Holy Spirit - who is fully God himself right - to empower each of us with a gift that will fill us with joy and wonder, and will mightily bless those around us. Mightily bless them because it is done through the power of almighty God. Amazing. Who am I, who are you, to be blessed and used by God like this.

I'll finish with this great quote. 'Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.' (Charles Spurgeon.) Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



17. The Gift of Apostleship

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-06-20

One of the most misunderstood gifts.

If you loved to start new ministries that bless people, and if you loved to encourage people and build them up - especially leaders, and if you loved to teach people how to follow Jesus more deeply, you might have the gift of Apostleship.

Some gifts we are going to have to work out how to use them. Like, if someone has the gift of helps - we'll get the helps people together one Sunday after church to discuss how they can serve Jesus through the church. Or get the faith people together and ask them to pray and seek the Lord on what the gift of faith looks like worked out here at church. As it is not just your gifting, but your calling and passions we will be discussing, it is a much bigger picture than 'I just have the gift of faith'. I'm super excited about this, as to me this is where you go from knowing your gifting and calling, and can discuss what this will actually look like in practice.

Please remember our key verse in this series is 1 Corinthians 12.7 - A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. Again, there are three key points from this verse.

1. A gift, or gifts, are given to each of us. Without knowing what gift you have, you really don't know how to serve God, and therefore how to serve him to experience the power of the Spirit in your life!
2. These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to build up the church. Yes, I receive joy and blessing in using the gifts I have received, but that is not the core goal - the core goal of the gifts is to help each other in this church



3. Given - these are gifts from the Holy Spirit to you and CBC. So, because they are gifts it is more to do with the giver than with the receiver. The receiver is empowered by the Holy Spirit to use this gift so it doesn't matter if you can quote the whole Bible, or none of it, it doesn't matter if you are a leader here or just joining CBC - what matters is your desire to connect deeply with Jesus and service him with all you are.

In a jigsaw puzzle, you can't have a one piece jigsaw. You can't have one piece of the puzzle sit over on the side not wanting to connect - it just doesn't work like that. For the puzzle to work, you need all the pieces. We are the puzzle pieces - we all need to use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us to make this whole community flourish.

Ok, let me start with an illustration to lead us into the spiritual gift we are looking at today. We are looking at the gift of apostleship today. This gift is similar in meaning to the idea of an entrepreneur. I have a good friend in India who totally has this gift. Jiju is the most amazing 'starter of new ministries' person I have ever seen. This gift often has a strong leadership component and often a person with the gift of apostleship oversees and inspires other leaders. Jiju not only leads the whole huge ministry, Josephine and I have worked with in India, but he is crucial in helping develop and lead many men and woman all over India in his various roles.

We never figured out quite when he sleeps as at one point he was overseeing the Bible university and therefore all the lecturers, staff and students, he was redeveloping the whole administration building and structure of Rehoboth and helping get an orphanage for boys restarted. I have honestly never met someone with more connections and networking deals and things going on ever. Thrissur is a small city in India - around 350,000 population -about the same size as Christchurch. I went with Jiju one day to run errands for the college. I have never been down so many crazy back alleys and up random stair cases and through partially falling down buildings in my life. We met with so many different people and groups I totally lost count. Such an inspiration and such a man being used mightily by the Lord.

Okay - here is several definitions of the gift of Apostleship. A general meaning includes that of being an important early Christian teacher or pioneering missionary. A better meaning has it being a

vigorous and pioneering advocate or supporter of a particular policy, idea, or cause. So in the most literal sense, it is an emissary, from Greek, Apostolos, literally 'one who is sent off', from the verb apostellein, send off.

Okay, let me start with an illustration to lead us into the spiritual gift we are looking at today. We are looking at the gift of apostle today. This gift is similar in meaning to the idea of an entrepreneur. I have a good friend in India who totally has this gift. Jiju is the most amazing 'starter of new ministries' person I have ever seen. This gift often has a strong leadership component and often a person with the gift of apostleship oversees and inspires other leaders. Jiju not only leads the whole huge ministry Josephine and I have worked with in India, but he is crucial in helping develop and lead many men and woman all over India in his various roles. We never figured out quite when he sleeps as at one point he was overseeing the Bible university and therefore all the lecturers, staff and students, he was redeveloping the whole administration building and structure of Rehoboth and helping get an orphanage for boys restarted. I have honestly never met someone with more connections and networking deals and things going on ever. Thrissur is a small city in India - around 350,000 population -about the same size as Christchurch. I went with Jiju one day to run errands for the college. I have never been down so many crazy back alleys and up random stair cases and through partially falling down buildings in my life. We met with so many different people and groups I totally lost count. Such an inspiration and such a man being used mightily by the Lord.

Okay - here is our definition of the gift of apostle: To be sent forth to new frontiers with the gospel, providing leadership over church bodies and maintaining authority over spiritual matters pertaining to the church. As already stated: The Greek Word: apostolos - 'apo'=from 'stello'=send; one sent forth

A key to understand when looking at this gift, and a few others are the difference between office and gifting. I talked about this when I looked at the gift of prophecy. There was an office of prophet, but as the church was established in the NT the office moved to be a gift. We do not have a person in the office of a prophet. Same with the office

and gift of apostleship. You can see this clearly when we look at the Bible.

In Acts 1:21-26, this is clearly talking about the office of an apostle, and this is very early in the development of the church - super early. The gift of Apostle - Definition and explanation: Again, the spiritual gift of apostleship is sometimes confused with the office of Apostle. The office of Apostle was held by a limited number of men chosen by Jesus, including the twelve disciples (Mark 3:13-19) and Paul (Romans 1:1). The requirements for the office of Apostle included being a faithful eyewitness of Jesus' ministry and His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 9:1), and being called by Jesus Himself (Galatians 1:1). (<https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>)

But, when Paul talks later about apostleship, he simply lists it along with the other gifts. Look at 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. He probably gives the first three gifts here priority, because as we see in the book of Corinthians the church is focusing more on the spectacular gifts. These three gifts - apostle, prophet and teacher clearly serve the whole church and are key in leading people closer to God. Look also at Ephesians 4:11-12. We often see this gift on the mission field. We all will know of amazing men and women who headed overseas to serve the Lord - and then did exactly what that definition states. I often see the gift of apostle as someone who starts something for the Lord. Some people talk about this gift similar to them being an entrepreneur - but not just someone who starts things, but someone who does this with the calling, empowerment and direction of God.

I've talked a bit about our friend over in India. Before she took over running the orphanage and everything else there, an amazing man of God called Volbriech Nagel began the orphanage.

I love this explanation of that time from the Rehoboth website. The word 'Rehoboth' is from the Hebrew language and it means, 'God has made room for us'. Rehoboth Girls' Orphanage is therefore a very special place where God has made room for those who are in need of a place. 110 years ago a gentleman from Germany came and settled in Kerala. His name was Volbriech Nagel. A man with a heart of compassion. The vision was burning in his heart and he proceeded to build a dormitory for the orphan and destitute children in an eco-friendly land which is in Nellikkunnu Thrissur the cultural capital of Kerala State. On 1905 'REHOBOTH' was born! Soon after, he built a school

as he knew how it would enrich the lives of the children if they could read and write.' That is so exciting. Nothing was there, apart from the call and gifting of God on Mr Nagel's life. Now there is the orphanage, three schools, a farm, a retirement home for widows, and a Bible college. Amazing!!!!!!

Wow - stop for a second and think about the gifting and calling God has on your life. There is NOTHING you cannot do when it is you and God working together. You are essentially limitless when it is you and He working together!

John 15:5 says: 'Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.'

What does this gift look like at CBC or your church? First, it is where someone within our church is called and gifted by God to start new ministries. It may be a ministry within our church or our community, or it may lead them overseas. I know some of you are thinking of heading overseas in the near future to serve Jesus, so it is important to figure out if you have this gift or not. A key here I think is to listen to the Lord on whether or not you have the gift of Apostleship. If you do, then you will be seeing amazing ministry opportunities and wanting to see God bring them to fruition. Remember the verse in Ephesians 4.12: 'Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.' This is not just about you being all amazing and starting new ministries - it is about you being called and gifted by the Spirit to start ministries that build up the folks in the church.

Second, as there is a clear teaching and encouraging aspect to this gift - we saw that in Ephesians 4.12... Many people with this gift are empowered by the Spirit to teach and encourage – surprise!

In Acts 14.4, 14, Barnabus is also called an Apostle. I've never clicked on this before, but one of Barnabus' main gifts is the gift of encouragement. You see how these gifts all tie in with each other. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



18. The Gift of Healings and Miracles

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-06-27

When did you last see the mighty power of God?

I know our relationship with Christ is based on faith, but sometimes we need to see the clear mighty power of God displayed. A mighty power that we cannot dismiss or explain away. A mighty power like this greatly strengthens our faith. The spiritual gifts we are looking at today are super interesting ones. I'd guess these two have been some of the most contentious and misunderstood of all the spiritual gifts.



There is something about being all talk and no proof. I'm sure all of us know someone who is all talk and no action. We read in James 2. 14-16 that the proof of a person's faith is when they live out their faith. That is when we see their faith. I can tell you all day long that I love Jesus and that I'm an awesome Christian, but until you see me live that out - why would you believe me? It is the same with the gifts of miracles and healing. These are very visible gifts, and someone could say they have either of these gifts, but I'd be somewhat suspicious until I saw them actually perform a miracle by God's power or pray over someone and see them healed by God. To be honest, it has to be the same with all the gifts we have been looking at. Until you see someone genuinely help someone in need why would you agree that they have the gift of helps? Or until you see someone provide meals for people and bless people by having them into their home, why would you agree they have the gift of hospitality.

The spirit empowers us through these spiritual gifts to build up and bless each other. Remember that our theme verse is 1 Corinthians 12.7 'A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.' All these gifts then are active gifts. They are serving and blessing and

they involve getting off my butt to care for someone, praying and encouraging them.

A definition of healing is to be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually I love how the definition of the gift of healing we are using is so inclusive. So often when people think of this gift all they think of is physical healing, which is very weird to me. Jesus had so many conversations with people where he never physically healed them, but where he brought amazing emotional and mental healing. Obviously, there are so many times when he brings spiritual healing so it is important to understand this gifting fully.

The gift of healing is for all sorts of healing - a friend of mine is struggling with mental illness - I pray for them all the time for healing. Victoria does a lot of pastoral care where she is now praying over people for physical healing, but so often spiritual healing and emotional healing from such a hard life. It is important to remember all these gifts depend on God. That is kind of obvious right, but with these two gifts especially, the whole gift must come from God.

Helps - I could do this in my own strength and you would not know. Healing - this is all God. Last time I checked I totally can't just heal someone emotionally no matter how wise I am. etc. For the gift of healing we read in 1 Cor. 12:9,28,30: But first we see that Paul mixes up the lists of spiritual gifts every time he mentions them. The gifts are given by the Spirit to bless that specific church - so obviously the list would be different for the church in Corinth and the church in Ephesus. Also, he mixes up the gifts lots of people understand, with some of these ones that are a little more tricky to understand. It would be very difficult to pick and choose which ones we want to see the Spirit using in CBC. In Luke 4:40, we see for Jesus, it is always through the laying on of hands. Jesus could have healed everyone here with a thought, but almost always he goes and touches the person - I always see this as a clear sign of his love and care for people. Amazing that he would even touch lepers before healing them! This is seen in Matthew 8:1-3: For the disciples and elders, healing is often done through anointing with oil. In Mark 6:13 and James 5:14-15. It is interesting here that it is the faith of the Elders that calls to God for healing, not the faith of the sick person. Anointing with oil, like the touch from Jesus, is showing

the love and closeness with the sick person. We are with you in this. We are calling out to God on your behalf.

As an Elder in this church I've gone and prayed for lots of people, and not always, but often, I will anoint them with oil. After studying the gift of healing more this week I've realized I should always anoint the sick person with oil. Why would I not be following the clear teaching of the Bible? I do not think there is anything magical in the oil, but there is something divine in my prayer as I call out to God for this sick person.

So how do we pray for healing? First, like all the gifts we have been looking at, all of us should be praying for healing for people who are ill - not just those with this gift. Second, even when I take some medicine I am acknowledging I believe it is God's will for me or a loved one to be healed. This quote from Grudem speaks wisdom into this discussion: "Ken Blue has a helpful observation here. He argues that if we want to understand God's attitude toward physical healing we should look at Jesus' life and ministry. Blue says, "If Jesus truly reveals the character of God to us, then we may cease speculating about and arguing over God's will in sickness and healing. Jesus healed people because he loved them. Very simply, he had compassion for them; he was on their side; he wanted to solve their problems.'" This is a strong argument, especially when coupled with the realization that Jesus came to inaugurate the presence of the kingdom of God among us and to show us what the kingdom of God would be like.' (Grudem, Systematic Theology.)

So - how do I pray? To me, we simply pray that if it is God's will in this situation, we call out to Him for healing. God says he loves us, and that he loves to hear us pray, and that he will change things based on our prayers. So I step out in boldness and ask God to heal the person. I almost always pray this in submission to the will of God. I'll say something like this. 'God - we will always submit to your will for us. You ask us to pray in faith and now I call out to you in the name of Jesus for healing for this person, etc etc.

Paul prayed for healing for himself three times, but instead of healing him, God showed Paul that there was work He wanted to do in Paul through this illness. So often we can see that - so hard - super hard to see in someone we love, but we always trust the God knows what he is doing. He has a reason for everything.

I love what Grudem says about this: 'Those with 'gifts of healings' (a literal translation of the plurals in 1 Cor. 12:9, 28) will be those people who find that their prayers for healing are answered more frequently and more thoroughly than others. When that becomes evident, a church would be wise to encourage them in this ministry and give them more opportunities to pray for others who are ill.' (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology)

We have 1st Corinthians 12:10, 28 for The gift of Miracles. A Definition for miracles: to be enabled by God to perform mighty deeds which witnesses acknowledge to be of supernatural origin and means

Okay - so if you had never really understood the gift of healing before, the gift of miracles is kind of the next step up. First of all the Greek word Paul uses here is quite vague - the meaning is simply power. So we could say any activity where God's mighty power is displayed fits into this gifting. Also, although many of the miracles in the NT were healing, this is a separate gift so we need to clearly understand what this gift looks like in practice. Here are some clear examples of a miracle in the New Testament. Peter and the Apostles freed from Prison In Acts 5:19–20 or 12:6–11, we see this miracle occur twice to enable the apostles to continue preaching the truth about Jesus.

We also see that we have spiritual power over demons in Acts 16:18; cf. Luke 10:17. As I mentioned before - there is no clear meaning in the gift of miracles, other than someone specially empowered by God to display God's mighty power.

This quote explains this gift well: 'Those with the spiritual gift of miracles often have a heightened sensitivity to the presence and power of God through His Holy Spirit. They have a special measure of faith and desire for God to reveal Himself and draw many to faith in His Son Jesus Christ. They take care not to draw attention to themselves or have a following of people, but are constantly pointing others to Jesus. Those with this gift understand that God is Sovereign and He can work when and how He desires, but they make sure they are available and listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This gift is often accompanied by prayer and strong petition by these individuals for God to reveal His glory to people. They do not claim power themselves, but always give credit and

glory to God for His mighty works.’
(<https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts>)

To see a clear display of God’s mighty power that a person could not argue with is amazing. I would guess many of us at church have never seen a New Testament level healing or a New Testament level working of God’s mighty power like I have been talking about.

As an Eldership, we believe the Bible speaks clearly for today, and we are excited to see the Holy Spirit empower people with these and the other gifts we have been talking about.

The key to these gifts is boldness in the Spirit. As you continue to pray and seek God around which spiritual gifts he has given you, please be in prayer about these two as well. I so can’t wait for God to move in power here at CBC in line with what the word of God says. Wow! Amen!



Listen to the Sermon:



closer to Jesus and see people saved from a life of darkness and struggle. There are lots of little aspects of theology that I think we can get all hung up on when I just don't see them as essential. I honestly think Satan sits back and laughs sometimes when we get so caught up on small side issues that do not affect salvation and forget the main truths about finding salvation through Christ and living in a relationship with him.

I love how I've spoken with a few of you who do disagree with the church on some of the small issues of our faith, that does not affect salvation. You disagree, but then look past those small issues to focus on the main goal! Living for Jesus, and working hard to bless others as you do that and help them grow in their relationship with God. So beautiful. I'm sure we have some different views on some of these gifts of the Holy Spirit. As an Eldership, we know where we stand on these and why, and we so do not want to see anyone hurt or upset over what we would consider are the minor points of our faith.

Okay - so back looking at the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues. Here is the definition we are working from: to speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language or the body be edified. The Interpretation of Tongues is to translate the message of someone who has spoken in tongues. A pretty amazing gift. A key that we will see as we dig into this, is that the gift of tongues and interpretation is given primarily to lead people to Jesus, who don't know Him. In 1 Corinthians 12.10, we see that it is pretty clear that this is a gift, just like the other ones we have been looking at, that the Spirit gives to bless the church. Wild.

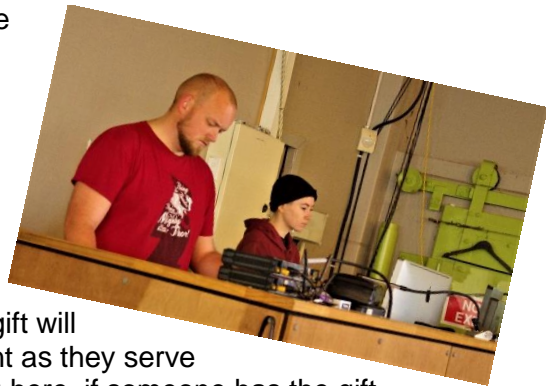
The first thing we need to do is unpack 1 Corinthians 14. Paul dedicates a significant part of his letter to the church in Corinth to this gift and interpretation. Acts 2.4, 6. If you read the rest of this chapter, it is clear that the Holy Spirit gives these early Christians a gift of speaking in their own language, but non-Christians are able to hear them speaking in their own language. Obviously, they talk to one another and realise that each person is hearing the apostles in their own language. Amazing. When we go over to 1 Corinthians 14 we see the same Greek word being used, but here the gift brings a different meaning.

Let's read 1 Corinthians 14.1-4. My first point is that tongues can be both a known language unknown to the speaker and an unknown language. In Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 14.2 we see what Paul says here: 'no one understands him, what they say is a 'mystery', they are speaking 'to God'. Again, this is the same Greek word as in Acts, but the use of this gift here is quite different. So the first thing we understand from the Bible is that the gift of tongues enables the speaker to speak in a language they don't know, but that other people will understand, or to speak in a language no one knows.

There has been one clear time here at church where this gift has been given to someone. Pretty amazing. Victoria is going to come up and tell us about one of these times. It was when a certain group of people understood what was being said in a language those people did not speak! That happened at CBC Wow.

Like all spiritual gifts, there is a blessing to the one using the gift, but that is not this gift's primary purpose. 1 Cor 14.4 (builds himself up); This is a pretty easy point to understand, I think. All gifts are given to build up the church. We've talked about that a lot. At the same time, the person using the gift will feel joy and blessing and fulfilment as they serve God using that gift. Paul is saying here, if someone has the gift of tongues and uses it in their own personal times of worship there will obviously be blessing and fulfilment, but that is not the reason they were given the gift. It is like they are kind of only enjoying a side benefit of using the gift. Does that make sense?

Perhaps it is kind of like working in your garden. You do it to grow beautiful flowers or great vegetables. That is the primary end goal. But in working in the garden you enjoy the fresh air and maybe the work of digging and pruning and so on. That is not the main purpose of gardening, but it is a great side effect. Does that kind of help?



I have a number of friends who are very strong Christians who love to pray or sing in tongues, in a language they don't know - as Paul says here. Not all of them, but many of them say their most lovely and deep times of connection and worship with God are when they are doing this. As I have been saying though, there is a difference between someone quietly, and just between them and the Lord, praying or singing in tongues, and someone speaking out publicly in tongues.

Okay - so these gifts involve someone speaking in a language they don't know, or maybe in an unknown language. Also, although the speaker receives a blessing, this is not the primary reason why the gift was given to them. My next point is unless someone interprets it, this gift can make Christianity seem crazy to a non-Christian.

Let's read 1st Cor 14.5-6, 12-13; so, if someone speaks in a service out loud in tongues but there is not someone to interpret this, then as a church, we are all like 'umm, ok' soooooo that was pointless. I don't meant to be negative here, but that is what Paul says - v16-19. There would be no point in someone speaking out in public in tongues if there was no one to interpret. But if someone prophecies and brings a clear message from God, we are all like 'Whoa, God is speaking and guiding and caring for us etc etc etc'. You can see why Paul is so keen on Prophecy.

Unless someone interprets, and this may be the person with the gift of tongues, the gift is only going to bless the one with the gift of tongues and will not bless the church. Verses 23, 27-28 now makes sense to us I think. We must do this in order right. I want to say this carefully, but after reading these verses to have all of us speaking in tongues at the same time would not be biblical. See how clear Paul is on this. See how crazy it would sound to a non-Christian who comes in and hears everyone speaking or singing out in tongues at the same time. Wild!

Look! Tongues are important, but prophecy is best. Look at 1st Cor 14.18-19 (key), 2-3, 4, 5 (key), 6 etc...

The main point in chapter 14 is yes, tongues are a gift and a way that God speaks to people, but more important is prophecy. Wow - so that is a lot of information and a lot of verses. I strongly encourage you to read over 1 Corinthians chapter 14 a few times this week and simply ask God to give you understanding and insight as you read it.

I like this short explanation of the use of tongues downloaded from <https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>: not every believer receives this gift. The gift of tongues is not a requirement or a necessary sign of salvation. See 1 Corinthians 12:30. Tongues can be human languages such as those heard in Acts 2, but often may be languages no one understands. See 1 Corinthians 14:2. Tongues are not “ecstatic speech” but are always orderly and are able to be controlled by the one speaking. See 1 Corinthians 14:27-28, 33, 39-40. No tongues should be spoken in the church gathering without interpretation. See 1 Corinthians 14:27-28. Tongues should not be forbidden. See 1 Corinthians 14:39.

So, what could the gift of tongues look like at Agora? As I have said about these gifts, we want to move very slowly and be guided by the Spirit on all the gifts. I was talking to Grant about this this week, and we were saying if we are understanding the Bible correctly here, then God will guide us. We don't need to worry about what this will all look like. Paul has given us very clear guidelines in 1 Corinthians 14. So here are two points for us to consider.

1. We would rather see people use the gift of prophecy, as it is such a clear sign of the power and presence of God. Paul says this again and again in 1 Cor 14. We are totally not saying 'don't use the gift of tongues' , but we feel Paul is pretty clear on this.
2. If someone has the gift of speaking in tongues then at this time we ask them not to use this gift in public until we have clearly identified people with the gift of interpretation and have clearly identified that they do have the gift of speaking in tongues.

I think this is a fair next step. Again - please hear that as Elders we are excited about this gift. We believe Paul is very clear here and we find it interesting that he dedicates so much time to this gift, when many of the gifts only get one word - literally - and no explanation. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



20. The Gift of Mercy

[Return](#)

A Sermon by Craig Barrow - 2021-07-11

Are you a good Samaritan?

Some of us love to care for others, while some of us - ha - just don't. The story of the good Samaritan [Luke 10] is a great example of the gift of Mercy. To care for someone suffering so deeply and completely, shows the love of Jesus through the beautiful gift of Mercy. Wow - this is the last in this series on spiritual gifts.



A friend of mine in India, who I have spoken about before, has a strong gift of Mercy. His name is Samuel and he was a student at the Bible college over in Kerela where I have gone to help a few times. Samuel was called by God to work with Lepers over in India. I've said before here that when he told me this I asked him if he was worried about catching Leprosy. He simply looked at me and said, if it is God's will he is not worried. He believed God would keep him safe, but if not, it is all with God. Wild. I've been emailing him and he is now married and working in a centre for people with leprosy caring for them and sharing the love of Jesus. So beautiful. This is a horrible disease and some of the people and situations Samuel goes into are pretty nasty. But he does it with this strong compassion and love for the person. Such a clear gift of mercy.

Here is the definition we have been working from: to be sensitive toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, so as to feel genuine sympathy with their misery, speaking words of compassion but more so caring for them with deeds of love to help alleviate their distress. I so love this definition. It is not just caring for someone in need with words, but also caring for them in practical ways. This is so the way of Jesus.

Look here at how James explains it/ James 2.14-17 - Here are these verses in the message translation - I love this. "Dear friends, do

you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense? I'm sure we all agree with this explanation by James. Words are so helpful and so needed by someone who is suffering. But often, certainly not always, they need 'deeds of love' as well. You see Jesus do this again and again. So often he cares for the person in a spiritual or emotional way first and then cares for them practically through physical healing. Beautiful

Okay - before we look at examples of Jesus showing Mercy, here is this gift explained in context. In Romans 12.8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. It is so helpful here where Paul talks through these gifts, how he gives a qualifier with each one. With the gift of mercy, or kindness, the qualifier is - do it gladly. I love this. I'm sure we all know someone who can help but does so with a grumpy frustrated attitude - that is not the gift of Mercy.

There is a lovely group of people in our church who are showing amazing gifts of mercy to someone in great need at present. They don't just call and text words of encouragement they pop around to see this person and sit with them and spend time with them to lift them up.. So beautiful.

Although this illustration is more the gift of helps. I needed to get all the large whiteboards and pin boards put up upstairs this week. The upstairs office is finally all sorted – yah. Someone in church who doesn't want to be named was so happy to pop in and give me a hand. We had them all put up in about an hour and now the place looks awesome. Imagine if he'd come in all ticked off, and been grumbling and moaning the whole time. 'Seriously Craig - these white boards are stupid. Do you really need them all'. This is a huge pain for me to be away from the house helping here. In fact you are a jerk for asking - grumble grumble...'. Ha - that is not a gift from the Holy Spirit! Jesus

shows mercy in both words and actions. Look at Matthew 9.35-36. I love these verses as they show this double aspect of the gift of Mercy. The word Matthew uses here means 'have compassion, feel sorry for, have pity on, have mercy'

The description of the people Jesus has mercy on feels like a lot of us at times. "...they were confused and helpless". How are you going in life at present? Is there an aspect of your life where, if you are honest, you are feeling "confused or helpless". I love the reality that Jesus knows this. He is the merciful one. He truly does care for you - not just in words - but in deeds. Call on him and he does give us insight, and strength and wisdom in situations. etc...

I love the chorus in this song. Your mercy saved me, Mercy made me whole. Your mercy found me, Called me as Your own. Made me whole'. 'Called me as your own'

When we are feeling 'confused and helpless' there is no better place to go than straight to God, asking for His Mercy to be on us and draw us into safety with him. Read Eph 2.4-6. Mercy and love here go hand in hand right. Due to God's mercy he has given us life - this always means fulness of life. Like Paul says in Eph 3 - 'fulness of life and power'. Like we sang in that song just now - 'made me whole'

Matthew 20:29-34 is another great example of Jesus showing mercy to someone in need. I love how the crowd is trying to shut them up, but they just call out all the louder. Jesus hears them and heals them. God is merciful towards us - always. Sometimes his timing can feel completely unmerciful, but we must trust that he has us.

I think for me sometimes it is not people telling me to not call out to God, but my own weakness and lack of trust in God. Do you know what I mean. I know deep in my soul I need to call out to God for help, or I need to put something on the church prayer group, but I wimp out either because I'm feeling too proud, or because I'm feeling too unworthy. Which is completely crazy right. God loves me, God cares for me. I must be more intentional in calling out to him for Mercy.

Here is another definition of the gift of Mercy. "The gift of mercy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals who suffer distressing physical, mental or emotional problems, and to translate that compassion into cheerfully done deeds which reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering." I love how closely this links in

with the key verse in Romans 12.8 - done cheerfully.
(<https://shepherdsofthelost.org>)

If you have this gift you can easily get burnt out caring for people. Or you can get burdened as a person with the gift of mercy can be too empathetic and take on the person's burden.

Our next step will be to offer these consultation catchups with people from the leadership team. We are just finalizing a date for that, but it will be offered on two Sunday afternoons at the beginning of next term:

In Psalm 86.15-16: But you, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. Look down and have mercy on me. Give your strength to your servant. I so love this cry of David. He is in a tough place when he writes this psalm. His response to hardship and suffering is to call out to God. That awesome thing is he is literally quoting Ex 34.6 here. This is when God revealed himself to Moses and God described himself using in the words David uses in verse 15.

The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

If you need some uplifting, if you are in a tough place, if you are suffering, we love you and want to help - in word and in deed. But the ultimate help will always be found in God - run to him and find a quiet place to be with him. Amen!

Listen to the Sermon:



SPIRITUAL GIFTS DEFINITIONS by Dave Tabrum

- ADMINISTRATION:** 1 Cor. 12:28 - to steer the body toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and supervising others (Greek Word: kubernesias - to steer, guide, helmsmen).
- APOSTLE:** Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28 - to be sent forth to new frontiers with the gospel, providing leadership over church bodies and maintaining authority over spiritual matters pertaining to the church (Greek Word: apostolos - 'apo'=from 'stello'=send; one sent forth).
- DISCERNMENT:** 1 Cor. 12:10 - to clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the behavior or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power.
- EVANGELISM:** Eph. 4:11 - to be a messenger of the good news of the Gospel (Greek Word: euaggelistes - preacher of gospel; eu=well, angelos=message - messenger of good).
- EXHORTATION:** Rom. 12:8 - to come along side of someone with words of encouragement, comfort, consolation, and counsel to help them be all God wants them to be (Greek Word: paraklesias - calling to one's side).
- FAITH:** 1 Cor. 12:8-10 - to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.
- GIVING:** Rom. 12:8 - to share what material resources you have with liberality and cheerfulness without thought of return.
- HEALING:** 1 Cor. 12:9,28,30 - to be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.
- HELPS:** 1 Cor. 12:28 - to render support or assistance to others in the body so as to free them up for ministry.
- HOSPITALITY:** 1 Pet. 4:9,10 - to warmly welcome people, even strangers, into one's home or church as a means of serving those in need of food or lodging (Greek Word: philoxenos - love of strangers; philos=love; 'xenos'=stranger).
- INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES:** 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27, 28 - to translate the message of someone who has spoken in tongues.

- KNOWLEDGE:** 1 Cor. 12:8 - to seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible through the gathering of much information and the analyzing of that data.
- LEADERSHIP:** Rom. 12:8 - to stand before the people in such a way as to attend to the direction of the body with such care and diligence so as to motivate others to get involved in the accomplishment of these goals.
- MERCY:** Rom. 12:8 - to be sensitive toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, so as to feel genuine sympathy with their misery, speaking words of compassion but more so caring for them with deeds of love to help alleviate their distress.
- MIRACLES:** 1 Cor. 12:10,28 - to be enabled by God to perform mighty deeds which witnesses acknowledge to be of supernatural origin and means.
- MISSIONARY:** Eph. 3:6-8 - to be able to minister in another culture.
- PASTOR:** Eph. 4:11 - to be responsible for spiritually caring for, protecting, guiding, and feeding a group of believers entrusted to one's care.
- PROPHECY:** Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:11 - to speak forth the message of God to His people (Greek Word: prophetes - the forth-telling of the will of God; 'pro'=forth; 'phemi'=to speak).
- SERVICE:** Rom. 12:7 - to identify undone tasks in God's work, however menial, and use available resources to get the job done (Greek Word: diakonia - deacon, attendant 'diako'=to run errands).
- SINGLENES:** 1 Cor. 7:7,8 - to voluntarily remain single without regret and with the ability to maintain controlled sexual impulses so as to serve the Lord without distraction resulting in a deep sense of fulfillment.
- TEACHING:** Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11 - to instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way so as to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth.
- TONGUES:** 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27-28 - to speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language or the body be edified.
- VOLUNTARY POVERTY:** 1 Cor. 13:3 - to purposely live an impoverished lifestyle to serve and aid others with your material resources.

WISDOM: 1 Cor. 12:8 - to apply knowledge to life in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision-making and daily life situations.

Book and Internet Reference downloads

<https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>

<https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>

<https://iblp.org>

NLT

St John Chrysotom

C.S Lewis

Robert Laidlaw

<https://fairlightwilliams7.wordpress.com/2013/05/31/robert-laidlaw-a-biographical-essay/>)

John Mark Comer – Loveology

Sid S. Buzzell, 'Proverbs,' in The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<https://shepherdsofthelost.org>

Charles Spurgeon

Grudem, Systematic Theology.

Biblical References used in these Sermons

1 st Corinthians 16::15-16	Service
Acts 27:11	Administration
Psalm 110:10	Discernment and Wisdom
Psalm 139:13-18	Being a Gift
Psalm 86:15-16	Mercy
Psalm 27	Shepherding
Psalm 23	Shepherding
1 st Corinthians 12:9,28,30	Healings and Miracles
Psalm 119:10, 15, 37	Singleness
1 st Corinthians 11:1-2	Leadership and Teaching
1 st Corinthians 13:1-3	Wisdom and Knowledge
1 st John 4:1-3	Discernment and Wisdom
Hebrews 13:1-3	Hospitality
Luke 8:1-3	Giving
Matthew 8:1-3	Healings and Miracles
1 st Corinthians 14:1-4	Tongues
Matthew 8:1-4	Faith
2 nd Corinthians 8:1-5	Giving

The Gifts of the Spirit

Psalm 103:1-5	Being a Gift
Philippians 2:3-4	Being a Gift
Romans 12:3-5	Being a Gift
Titus 1:4-5	Administration
1 st Thessalonians 1:5-8	Leadership and Teaching
Matthew 8:5-13	Faith
Romans 12:6-8	Prophecy
Acts 12:6-11	Healings and Miracles
1 st Corinthians 7:7-8	Singleness
1 st Corinthians 12:7-11	Discernment and Wisdom
Romans 1:1	Apostleship
Ephesians 1:3	Giving
Proverbs 1:7	Discernment and Wisdom
Acts 1:21-22	Apostleship
Acts 1:21-26	Apostleship
Acts 2:4,6	Tongues
James 2:14-16	Healings and Miracles
James 2:14-17	Mercy
Acts 2:44-45	Poverty
Mark 3:13-19	Apostleship
John 3:16	Giving
2 nd Timothy 3:16	Shepherding
Philippians 3:17	Leadership and Teaching
Romans 3:23	Missions
1 st John 4:1	Wisdom and Knowledge
Ephesians 4:12	Apostleship
Hebrews 4:12	Prophecy
1 st Corinthians 4:16-17	Leadership and Teaching
Ephesians 4:16	Leadership and Teaching
Mark 4:19	Poverty
Acts 4:34-35	Poverty
1 st Thessalonians 5:11	being a Gift
Hebrews 5:14	Discernment and Wisdom
James 5:14-15	Healings and Miracles
1 st Thessalonians 5:19-22	Prophecy
Acts 5:19-20	Healings and Miracles
Mark 6:13	Healings and Miracles
Romans 6:23	Being a Gift
Romans 6:23	Missions
Matthew 6:25, 33	Poverty
1 st Corinthians 7:29-31	Singleness
1 st Corinthians 7:32-35	Singleness
1 st Corinthians 7:36-38	Singleness
Matthew 9:35-36	Mercy
Acts 9:36-42	Giving
Luke 10:17	Healings and Miracles

The Gifts of the Spirit

Hebrews 10:24	Being a Gift
John 10:27	Prophecy
Luke 10:38-42	Hospitality
1 st Corinthians 12:7	Discernment and Wisdom
1 st Corinthians 12:7	Prophecy
1 st Corinthians 12:8	Wisdom and Knowledge
Romans 12:8	Giving
Romans 12:8	Mercy
1 st Corinthians 12:9, 28	Healings and Miracles
Romans 12:13	Hospitality
Luke 12:15	Poverty
1 st Corinthians 12:27-31	Apostleship
1 st Corinthians 12:28	Administration
1 st Corinthians 12:30	Tongues
Luke 12:33	Poverty
1 st Corinthians 13:3	Poverty
Hebrews 13:7	Leadership and Teaching
1 st Corinthians 14:3	Prophecy
1 st Corinthians 14:4	Tongues
Acts 14:4	Apostleship
John 14:6	Missions
1 st Corinthians 14:18-19	Tongues
Luke 14:28-30	Administration
1 st Corinthians 14:29	Discernment and Wisdom
1 st Corinthians 14:29	Wisdom and Knowledge
John 15:5	Apostleship
Acts 16:18	Healings and Miracles
Matthew 16:21-23	Discernment and Wisdom
Matthew 17:20	Faith
Acts 17:24-25	being a Gift
Acts 17:25	Giving
Deuteronomy 18:18-19	Prophecy
Matthew 19:24	Poverty
Matthew 20:21	Faith
Matthew 20:25-28	Service
Acts 20:28	Shepherding
1 st Peter 4:9-10	Hospitality
Ephesians 4:11-12	Apostleship
Ephesians 4:11-15	Leadership and Teaching
1 st Corinthians 5:11-20	Missions

The Gifts of the Spirit

Agora Church

(Formerly City Bible Church)

City Bible Church, Hamilton, New Zealand

City Bible Church in Hamilton, New Zealand welcomes you. It has activities for the whole family. It also has sermons that are Bible centered and available to listen to at cbc.net.nz. If you live in the Hamilton please come and join us at

13B Kent Street, Frankton Hamilton

Worship at 10AM

Gathering every Sunday to worship God, connect with each other and be encouraged to go and engage in our world.

Come and gather with us, we would love to meet you!

