

# Gifted for Service

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning. Today's scripture is from 1 Corinthians 12, verses 4-11, and 12, verses 26-31.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them, and in every one, it is the same God at work.

Now to each one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one, there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom. To another, a message of knowledge by means of that same Spirit.

To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by that one Spirit. To another, miraculous powers. To another, prophecy.

To another, distinguishing between Spirits. To another, speaking in different kinds of tongues. And to still another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit.

[ 1 : 1 2 ]     And he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. Now from 1 Corinthians 12, verses 26-31. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.

If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the Church, first of all, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues?

Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet, I will show you the most excellent way. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

So when I found out that I was going to be delivering my sermon to you the final week, I was trying to decide on what topics, what I could say to you.

[ 2 : 2 8 ]     And I made a group of fellow clergywomen, and one of them said, I always end my thing with, it is finished. And I said, ooh, that's, I don't like that, because our work will continue.

And so during this time, there was a song on the radio, Gifts from God, that I heard. And I said, that's what I'm supposed to talk about.

The lyrics from this song, particularly the following line, seemed to align perfectly with what I felt called to share with you as the theme for my last service.

So if you listened to Tom earlier, it says, Back when I was a kid, I thought gifts from God only came from church. But the more that I live, the more I learn it's not always the way it works.

Sometimes you don't see it until you're looking back. When you didn't get what you thought you had to have, because he had a bigger plan than the one you had. Yours didn't work out, and aren't you glad?

[ 3 : 32 ] Take a look around, it ain't hard to find. Everybody's got things that money can't buy. If the ones you love are sitting right beside you, then I say you've got a lot.

The best things in life are straight from his hands, like raising kids on a piece of land. A little peace of mind when the day is done. Where do you think that comes from?

That's gifts from God. Each of you is truly a gift from God to this church.

And I hope for each other. Because I know that you've been for me. These words remind us that God's gifts are all around us.

Not just the ones that we receive in church, but in our daily lives, our families, and our peace of mind. So today, I want to look at the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit.

[ 4 : 37 ] We're focusing on 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 4 through 11, and 26 through 31. Where Paul talks to us about the church's different spiritual gifts, and how each of us plays a vital role.

Now, I know in school, they taught us that when you are working on scripture, that you don't just look at one translation. So I want to share with you what the message says.

It says, God's various gifts are handed out everywhere, but they all originate in God's spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere, but they all originate in God's spirit.

God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere, but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is.

Everyone gets in on it. Everyone benefits, and all kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people. The variety is wonderful.

[ 5 : 48 ] Wise counsel, clear understanding, simple trust, healing the sick, miraculous acts, proclamation, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out by one, and by the one Spirit of God. Decides who gets what, and when.

And 25 through 26. The way that God designed our bodies is the model for understanding our lives together as a church.

Every part dependent on every other part. The parts we mention and the parts we don't. The parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in that hurt, and in the healing.

If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance. You are Christ's body. That's who you are. You must never forget this.

[ 6 : 54 ] Only as you accept your part in that body, does your part mean anything. You're familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his body.

Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, organizers, and those who pray in tongues.

But it's obvious by now, isn't it, that Christ's church is a complete body and not a gigantic, undimensional part. It's not all apostle.

It's not all prophet. Not all miracle worker. Not all healer. Not all prayer in tongues or interpreter of tongues. And yet some of you keep comparing, competing for so-called important parts.

But now I want to lay out a far better way for you. Paul starts this by telling us that despite our different gifts, our services, and our workings, they all come from the same spirit, Lord, and God.

- [ 8 : 01 ]     God. This means we're all part of the same team working together despite our different roles. These spiritual gifts aren't bestowed on us for personal gain or to enhance our image.
- They are given to us by the Holy Spirit for a higher purpose, for the common good. These are the tools to help us build up the church and serve one another.
- They're the tools that we're supposed to reflect the love and grace of our Lord. Paul lists the different gifts and reminds us that they all come from the same spirit who decides who gets what.
- This encourages us to appreciate our gifts and those of others without feeling jealous or superior. Paul beautifully compares the church to a body that if one part suffers, every part suffers with it.
- If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. This shows our interconnectedness and the crucial role that each one of us plays in the supporting and uplifting the others.
- [ 9 : 21 ]     Paul talks about different roles in the church like apostles, prophets, teachers, and those with gifts of healing, helping, guidance, and tongues.
- Not everyone has the same gift and that's okay. What's important is that we desire the gifts that God has given us and that we use them in love.
- God has designed each and every one of you to do something unique. something that only you can do. You might not believe this but God has a special mission for you and it doesn't matter what point you are in your life but when you find it you'll say this, this is what I was born to do.
- God prepares each of us for this purpose by giving us specific spiritual gifts to discover your unique purpose you need to identify those spiritual gifts, those special abilities that God gives us to do his work and when you become a Christian God gives you those spiritual gifts.
- One or often more but you still need to learn what yours are and how to use them. spiritual gifts are not natural talents or skills that you can learn.
- [ 10 : 51 ]     They're gifts from God. They're not to be used for our own benefit but for the common good. They're meant to serve God and others and no one has all the gifts and that's why we need each other.
- That's why we're interconnected. We all have different gifts to glorify God to help others and to build up the church. That's crucial.
- Let me say it again. You are given specific spiritual gifts for three reasons. To glorify God, to serve others, and to build up Christ's church.
- Our spiritual gifts are not the fruits of the spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that we find in Galatians.
- Those are characteristics that every one of us as Christians should have. Our spiritual gifts reveal what God wants us to do to serve God.
- [ 12 : 00 ]     They're not church roles or positions. I'm one of your pastors which means I'm a shepherd or a caregiver. And some of you have those wonderful gifts of shepherding and caring for others.
- But it doesn't mean that you have to be a pastor or that you're called to be a pastor. Don't expect everyone to have your gifts or do things the way that you do.
- Some people have the wonderful gift of music. Some people have the gift of administration and organization. but sometimes they expect others to be as organized as they are.

And when that doesn't happen we can get frustrated. And that's where we need to be able to extend God's grace to each other. My strongest spiritual gifts come from sharing God's love with others.

Service, mercy, hospitality, pastoring, giving, and a calming presence. As a pastor I deal with many discouraged people in challenging situations and God has given me the ability to go into almost any situation and be that positive force offering encouragement and hope.

[ 13 : 20 ] And it's not something that I'm going to get a degree in. No one taught me I can't learn them. They're spiritual gifts from God.

So if you don't know what your spiritual gifts are I invite you to take a study and learn. Work through experience and talk to others who can affirm the gifts that you have.

The best way to discover your spiritual gifts is through trial and error. Experiment and try different ways of serving God and others in the church and our community out in the world.

over time you'll see what you are gifted to do. The best way to identify your spiritual gifts is by getting involved and not just reading about them.

We have different categories of spiritual gifts. Communicating God's word are gifts such as preaching and evangelism missions and apostleship.

[ 14 : 26 ] the apostles weren't just the original twelve disciples. We have apostles today too those interpreters starting new ministries and trying new things and going forth for God.

There are spiritual gifts of educating God's people gifts like teaching encouragement wisdom discernment and knowledge. Those with gifts of encouragement often make great counselors and in today's world we need people with the wisdom and discernment to keep our church grounded.

The gift of demonstrating God's love. Things like service, mercy, hospitality, pastoring, and giving. every church needs people with the gift of serving or helping those behind the scenes people who get the things done and help the church fulfill its mission.

Celebrating God's presence, things like music and art and intercession and healing and miracles and praying. These gifts help us worship and experience God personally.

and there are those gifts that help support all of the others. Things like leadership, administration, and faith. For the church to fulfill its mission we need people with the gift of faith who are willing to take risks for God and go out where the fruit is, out on that limb.

[ 16 : 04 ] But the church also needs people who are like oak trees who are sturdy and persistent. the vision that the apostle Paul had for the church was one that was gifted.

A body that functioned well together having diversity but yoked together in unity. The church is one body unified under one Lord, one spirit with different members and various gifts working together for the common good.

unity and diversity aren't new concepts. Think about your favorite sports team. Everyone wants a team of stars but too many talented players can actually hurt the team's performance.

Research has shown that too many star players in sports like basketball and soccer lead to fewer assists and rebounds and the team performs worse overall.

We often talk about ministry in terms of our teams. We have the worship team, the finance team, the trustees, the leadership team, the SPRC. The word team shows how the church is meant to function.

[ 17 : 20 ] All committees and groups work together and communicate everyone doing their part and when this happens it's a beautiful thing because ministry can happen and we can collectively become a blessing.

The church works best when we function as a team. Together everyone achieves more. The Bible lists our spiritual gifts in three main chapters in Romans chapter 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4.

It tells us that every spiritual gift is absolutely important and Paul compares the different gifts of the church to various parts of your body.

What if your lungs one day said, I'm kind of tired of breathing, let's let somebody else do that. Or if your kidney said, I'm done cleaning up, find somebody else to take over.

Those results would be dangerous. So I invite you to seek to understand what gift the Holy Spirit has given you.

[ 18 : 34 ] It's going to require prayer, some inner reflection, and talking to those around you. It's that community who will reaffirm your gifts.

Once you've identified what your spiritual gifts are, use it to serve others. Remember, the purpose of these gifts is to build up the church and serve our community, and recognize that every gift is important and necessary for the body of Christ to function correctly.

Avoid comparing your gifts to others. Instead, celebrate the diversity of gifts that we find in our church. Be mindful of the interdependence that we share as members of the body of Christ.

Support those who are suffering and rejoice with those who are honored. Foster a spirit of unity and mutual care. Our gifts from God are diverse, and they are given to each of us by the Holy Spirit for that common good.

God. So let's embrace and use these gifts to serve one another, building up the body of Christ in love and unity. Because remember, every part of the body is essential, and together you can fulfill God's mission.

[ 20 : 05 ] As 1 Timothy 4, verse 14 reminds us, do not neglect the spiritual gift that is found within you. If each one of you started to use your gifts as God intended, this church and the community will be transformed, and the kingdom of God will become a reality here on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen. Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gifts that you have given us through your Holy Spirit.

Help us to discover and use these gifts for the common good, to build up your church, and to glorify your name. Unite us in our diversity, and teach us to support and honor one another as we serve you in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. As our time together comes to a close, I extend my heartfelt thanks for the love and support that you've shown me during my time here. Your warmth and encouragement have been pillars of strength as I have served this beloved community.

I am deeply grateful for the acceptance and trust that you have placed in my leadership. It is with a humble heart that I ask for forgiveness for any mistakes that I may have made along the way.

[ 21 : 36 ] As I prepare to depart, I take with me invaluable lessons and treasured memories from our time here together. aptitude and creativity.

I gratefully accept your thanks and forgiveness, and I extend the same to you.

Trusting that our shared experiences and this transition are pleasing to God. As I step away from my role here, I release you from looking to me as one of your leaders, encouraging you instead to embrace the continued ministry of this church and Pastor Scott.

Please know that my prayers for your future and spiritual growth will continue. Now let us join together in prayer. Thank you. Eternal God, whose love is unchanging and knows no bounds, we are grateful for the precious moments we have shared and the mutual growth we have experienced.

As we part ways, we entrust each other to your loving care, confident in the knowledge that you guide all our steps. May your love unite us, your wisdom lead us, and your grace abounds in us now and always.

[ 23 : 23 ] Bless Pastor Jennifer as she moves to areas of ministry, enriches her life, and works with your spirit. Let her new congregation be a source of joy and fulfillment.

For us who remain, grant us courage and enthusiasm as we continue to serve your kingdom here. We commend all these prayers to you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. So thank you once again for the journey that we've shared. May God's peace and love be with you all. And until we meet again, peace.

Thank you.