

Good morning/afternoon, everyone.

Today I want to wrap up our study of the subject of spiritual gifts. This is the fifth in a series of sermons on spiritual gifts. In the first we covered an overview of what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts, in the second we went through and saw how the Bible defines the individual spiritual gifts mentioned, in the third we had an exercise to determine what our spiritual gifts are from a list of seven gifts found in Romans 12, and in the fourth we covered the context of Paul's writing about spiritual gifts, and how they relate to the Church being a body of believers growing together.

I actually had enough material for about three more sermons on the subject, but I want to wrap this up so that after the Feast we can get back into our studies of the Gospels. When I started this series on spiritual gifts I didn't know how long it would be and how long it would take, and as I got into it I learned more and more that I wanted to share with you. And I'm not ruling out future sermons on spiritual gifts; we're just at a natural breaking point in this series with the fall Holy Days and the Feast coming up.

Today, to wrap up the series, I want to talk about **three basic themes** that relate to putting our spiritual gifts to use. They are:

- How do the seven gifts/personality types contribute to the Church?
- Key points to remember about spiritual gifts, and
- Being stewards over what God gives us.

So first, How do the seven gifts/personality types contribute to the Church? How do we put them into practice? This was a question one of our members wanted me to address. I have two handouts for you that relate to this that I was actually thinking of giving two additional sermons on. But I've condensed the key points into these two handouts.

The first of these, to show you how we can put these gifts into practice, is titled "Biblical figures who exemplified the seven gifts of Romans 12." This is a one-page handout that lists the gifts and then lists several biblical figures where this was apparently their primary gift or personality type, with scriptural passages about their lives and actions showing that gift in action. These are examples of how they used what God had given them. I'm not going to talk about this today for lack of time; I'm just giving it to you as a reference. I would suggest that you take the gift you scored highest in and read and meditate on the examples of these people and how they used their gift in their lives as examples for how you might use your gift.

The second is titled "Jesus exemplified all seven spiritual gifts." Interestingly, Jesus exemplified all seven of these gifts in His life. He was the perfectly balanced individual and could relate to everyone, likely because he had all seven of these characteristics. Again, I would suggest that you take the gift you scored highest in and read and meditate on the examples given from Jesus Christ's life.

Now let's look at some specifics as these would relate to our congregations here. Our congregations are fairly small and don't have a lot of responsibilities to go around in comparison with much larger congregations that might have a lot more and different kinds of programs and

projects. For example, the book *Discover Your God-Given Gifts* that I've mentioned before has about five pages of different jobs that a large church of several thousand members might have. So how might these apply to our congregations here?

Let's look at the seven gifts or personality types in order as given in Romans 12:

1. Prophesying/Perceiving

The strengths of these people are generally:

Identifies good and evil
Black and white-no gray
Frank, outspoken

Ways they can use this gift are:

Counseling
Visiting
Intercessory prayer
Teaching adults
or older youths

2. Serving

The strengths of these people are generally:

Sees needs and meets them
Works with hands—manual
Detail oriented
Hospitable
Does more than asked
High energy
Doer

Ways they can use this gift are:

Physical service
Setup for services
Assisting others in need
Hosting events for others
Using physical talents

3. Teaching

The strengths of these people are generally:

Self-disciplined
Logical
Applies scripture to life

Ways they can use this gift are:

Teaching in a spiritual setting
Public speaking
Mentoring
Writing
Research

4. Exhorting

The strengths of these people are generally:

Loves to encourage
 Applies truth rather than research
 Willing to help
 Wants to see change
 Sees trials as growth opportunity

Ways they can use this gift are:

Public speaking
 Supporting others
 Encouraging others
 in trials
 Teaching all ages

5. Giving

The strengths of these people are generally:

Gives of time, money, energy
 Gives without people knowing
 Handles money wisely
 Quick to volunteer
 Believes God is source of all

Ways they can use this gift are:

Visiting others
 Helping others
 General hospitality
 Serving in activities
 Teaching all ages

6. Leading/Administrating

The strengths of these people are generally:

Highly motivated to organize
 Clear communicator
 Prefers to be under authority
 Will assume responsibility if no leadership exists
 Visionary
 Enjoys delegation and supervising people

Ways they can use this gift are:

Organizing programs, events and activities
 Overseeing programs, events and activities
 Teaching adults

7. Showing mercy/compassion

The strengths of these people are generally:

Large capacity for love
 Looks for good in people

Attracted to those who are hurting
 Takes action to help and remove hurt
 Does thoughtful things
 Avoids conflict, confrontations
 Crusader for good causes
 Doer

Ways they can use this gift are:

Visiting others
 Calling, writing
 Listening to others
 Helping children
 Teaching children

Another question I want to bring out now is, having identified our particular strength or gift, is **this the only one that we are to exercise?**

No, it's not. We are to exercise *all seven gifts* in our lives.

What we *do* isn't always what we *are*. We each have innate personality characteristics that God gave us. That is what we *are*. And that is also how we will likely primarily help within the Body because that is where we will most feel a *need* to serve and we'll probably naturally be drawn to that. But having said that, God's Word tells us that we are to *all* exercise all seven of these gifts that we've been discussing in the previous sermons.

Why does He tell us to do this? For several reasons. One, **the needs are always there** and maybe they aren't being met for whatever reason. Maybe no one has noticed or identified the need, and God wants us all to be on the lookout for ways to serve the Body in every way.

Maybe God tells us all to **serve in these ways for our own good**—so that we'll become a better, more well-rounded person. Maybe He tells us to serve in all these ways **so we'll be better able to identify our gifts** and thus be better able to see where we can serve most effectively and in the best way for the overall good of the Body. Maybe because it's simply the right thing to do. I personally think it's probably for **all of these reasons**.

So let's notice God's instructions about our need to serve in all seven of these ways. This doesn't mean that we will be serving in all of these ways all the time, but that we will be doing all of these at various times.

1. Prophesying/Perceiving

1 Corinthians 14:1—Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. See also 2 Timothy 4:2; Proverbs 1:2

2. Serving

Galatians 5:13— . . . Through love serve one another.

See also Matthew 25:40; Colossians 3:23-24; Psalm 100:2; John 12:26

3. Teaching

Matthew 28:19-20—“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

See also Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15

4. Exhorting

Hebrews 10:24-25—And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

See also Hebrews 3:13; 1 Timothy 4:13

5. Giving

Luke 6:38—“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

See also Matthew 10:8; Romans 12:13

6. Leading/Administering

1 Corinthians 14:40—Let all things be done decently and in order.

See also Mark 10:42-43; Matthew 25:21; 1 Timothy 3:4-5

7. Showing mercy/compassion

1 Peter 3:8— Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

See also Matthew 5:7; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:12-14; Zechariah 7:9

So we see from these passages that even though we have one or two key strengths that God has given us, we are to put *all of them* into practice in our lives. There are clear scriptural commands to exercise all of these.

Now let’s move to the second major portion of this sermon, and that is **key points to remember** about spiritual gifts. They are:

1. We are not placed in the Body of Christ randomly or by chance.

1 Corinthians 12:18-27 (NIV)

18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

19 If they were all one part, where would the body be?

20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

...

24 But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it,

25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

The body is fitly framed together by God and each of us has been chosen and placed in the Body for a specific purpose. We talked a lot about that last time when we went through the analogies of the Church being like a human body with each part of the body working together so the whole body grows together.

2. The purpose of our gift(s) is to strengthen and build up the body.

1 Corinthians 14:12 (NIV)

12 Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

Ephesians 4:16

16 from whom [Jesus Christ] the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Ultimately, our goal as individual members should be that of perfectly mirroring Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:13

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

So this is the goal we are to work for. Realistically, however, we all have a long way to go toward that goal. God requires each of us to work together, compensate for each others' shortcomings and add our unique gifts, talents and character qualities to the mix until we collectively and individually reach the "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

None of us are "whole or complete" at birth or when we are placed within the Church. As we surrender ourselves to each other and serve one another, gain new perspectives, allow "iron to sharpen iron," and recognize that others have strengths that can help us develop our necessary growth areas, we are gradually perfected toward the fullness of Christ. The Church is the physical and spiritual workshop where this transformation, through the power of God's Holy Spirit, takes place.

3. Though we are all in the same body, we all have different functions and gifts.

Romans 12:5-8 (NIV)

5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Each person has his own gift, or combination of gifts, different from the gifts of others.

But why do we have different gifts? Why aren't we all alike? We have different gifts because those different spiritual gifts allow us to:

- See needs in the Body (the Church) that others overlook.
- Best meet those needs in the Body (the Church) in ways that others cannot.
- Help the entire Body be strengthened in love.
- Help the entire Body grow to become more spiritually mature like Jesus Christ (as the individual parts grow and mature, so does the whole body grow and mature).
- Reflect the fruit of God's Spirit in our lives: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

4. We are expected to stir up the gifts that are in us—both the gift of God's Holy Spirit as well as individual spiritual gifts.

2 Timothy 1:6

6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Romans 12:6-8 (NIV)

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

We should ask God for understanding of our gift or gifts and guidance to use them effectively in building the Body of Christ. We should recognize and appreciate the privilege of being a part of that Body. We should ask God for understanding of your gift and guidance in using it effectively in building the Body.

5. Recognize, appreciate and encourage the use of others' spiritual gifts.

We are to encourage one another to good works. An important reason to come together on a regular basis at Sabbath services is to encourage and exhort one another.

Hebrews 10:24-25

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

We are all told to use our gifts in serving others. If we are to grow together as a body, we should be encouraging others to use those gifts in serving others.

6. The overriding motivation for use of all gifts and talents whether spiritual or physical should always be love in an attitude of humility.

We are to use our gifts to serve, honor and glorify God and the Church, not ourselves. We are to use our spiritual gifts to *serve*, not to aggrandize the self. Spiritual gifts are *God's gifts of grace* that we do not deserve any more than we deserve eternal life. We must appreciate others' gifts and not be envious of them.

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8

31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

This approach personifies God's way of give versus man's way of get. Ultimately all spiritual gifts are no longer going to be needed, but what will remain is the love and humility that have become a permanent part of our character.

7. An important role of the ministry is to prepare the body for works of service and to build and bring unity to the Body.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Seeking to help each member understand and utilize their strengths, passions, interests and gifts appears to be an important part of this responsibility. After all, what is our future?

Revelation 20:4, 6

4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.... They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years....

6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection....they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

The future of all members of the body, individually and collectively, is to reign with Jesus Christ over the entire earth in the Millennium and beyond that in the period of the Great White Throne Judgment. So we should all be preparing prepare for our future role, not burying or hiding our God-given talents, abilities or gifts.

As we all work together to learn where God has placed us in His body, we must pray for guidance as we come to understand and appreciate one another. By recognizing and utilizing our spiritual gifts, we all will be involved in the *work of God*, which is not only preaching the gospel but building His Church and preparing His people as Jesus Christ's Bride.

The last area I want to cover in this subject of spiritual gifts is that of **stewardship**. **What kind of steward are you?** We find that word used a number of times in the Bible, but it's not one we use a lot today. However, the concept certainly applies today. What is a steward? To put it simply, a steward is someone who manages or takes care of something for someone else. The steward isn't the owner. But he is responsible to the owner for properly taking care of and using what the owner has entrusted to him.

If you work for someone, you are a steward. If you're working on a computer that belongs to your company or your boss, you are a steward over that computer. You've been given that computer to help you be more productive and profitable, and your boss isn't going to like it if your break that computer or just let it sit on your desk without using it. Or maybe it's some other kind of tools or a vehicle or any number of things. You're a steward over those things. They don't belong to you; they belong to someone else. And you've been given use of those things to produce a profit for the owner, which is your company or your boss.

What are the implications of that when it comes to spiritual gifts? Well, who do our gifts really belong to? Who do *we* really belong to? We belong to God. And the gifts He has given us really belong to Him. He gave them to us to generate a profit for Him as stewards over what He's given us. Let's notice a few scriptures that relate to this:

1 Peter 4:10

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1 Corinthians 4:1

- 1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.**
- 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.**

What does this mean for the spiritual gifts God has given us? Paul says we are to use the gifts we have received as good stewards of the grace of God. So what does that mean for how or whether we use our gifts?

Let's discuss this question by examining **Matthew 25:14-30** and the parable of the talents.

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

In that culture, a “talent” was a unit of weight, so the value of a talent would vary depending on whether it was a talent of copper, of bronze, of silver, or of gold. But regardless of the metal, Jesus is talking about the equivalent of thousands of dollars that the man gives his servants. And of course, the man traveling to a far country is Jesus Christ Himself. On his departure, he divides His goods among his servants “to each according to his own ability.”

“Talent” in that day meant money. But it’s from this parable that we get our modern use of the term “talents” to mean abilities or skills or gifts. In context, Jesus is talking about money. But in the intent of the parable, “talents” applies to everything God gives us—His truth, His knowledge, our material possessions, our abilities, our talents, our skills, our gifts. All are things that God has given us, and as this parable makes clear, we are expected to put them to use and increase them.

And just as in this parable the man distributes his wealth to his servants and expects them to generate a return on his investment, Christ apparently distributes spiritual gifts in a similar way, considering our innate or genetic abilities and disposition. Both the Father and the Son are aware of our individual strengths, weaknesses, attributes and proclivities and have chosen us and placed us in the body as They have seen fit.

So continuing with the parable, the man, picturing Jesus Christ, has gone away, leaving his wealth with his servants. And so begins the lesson of the parable.

16 “Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.

17 “And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.

18 “But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money.

19 “After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

So when the master of the servants returns, he demands an accounting. How had the three servants used their gifts or talents?

20 “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’

21 “His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

22 “He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’

23 “His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

24 “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25 ‘And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’

26 “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

27 ‘So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

28 ‘Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

29 ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

30 ‘And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

So we see that two of the servants were rewarded for doubling their talents and one was condemned for “burying” his—doing nothing with it. Discovering our spiritual gifts is one thing—*using them* and *multiplying them* is a crucial aspect of our responsibilities as Christians. The point of this parable is that God expects us to use the talents and gifts He has given us—and to neglect them will lead to two things—having what he have taken away from us, and punishment for being useless servants.

Although God is the source of spiritual gifts, each of us has a part in the development of the gifts God has given us. We may be ambitious regarding our gifts and do all within our power and means to serve the body, or we may be neglectful and ignore or “bury” our gift or gifts. As we read earlier, Paul tells the Corinthians to “earnestly desire the best gifts,” but he then goes on to show them “a more excellent way”—that being the using of one’s gifts in love and outgoing concern for others, reflecting the love of God toward others as well as exercising and building godly character.

In conclusion, let’s wrap this up with some of the words of Jesus Christ found over in **Luke 12:42**—

42 And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?”

43 “Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

44 “Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

Let’s use the gifts God has given us properly, with wisdom, love and humility in service to God and one another, pleasing God as good stewards so that ultimately he may share everything he has with us in His Kingdom.

I look forward to seeing you all on Thursday as we celebrate the Feast of Trumpets.