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OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Pledge

**As members of this church, we pledge:
To use our ^a spiritual gifts ^b according to the grace
Christ has given us, ^c loving one another with
brotherly affection, ^d aiding one another in sickness
and distress, and, ^e insofar as it depends on us,
living peaceably with all;**

^a 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11; ^b Rom. 12:6-8; ^c Rom. 12:10; John 13:35; 1 John 3:11;
^d Rom. 12:13, 15; James 6:14-16; ^e Rom. 12:18; 1 Thess. 5:13; 1 Peter 3:10

Scripture

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the
common good.

1 Corinthians 12:7

Lesson

Why Can't Frank Find His Spiritual Gift?

Frank desperately wanted to discover what his “spiritual gift” was. He started out by taking a spiritual gifts assessment test online. Two hours, 125 questions later, and \$16 later, he discovered that his gifts were 15% administration, 14% pastoral, and 13% teaching, with a hodge-podge of other things. He printed out the results—a stack of eight papers.

The next Sunday he walked into church with the papers tucked into his Bible. Breezing past an elderly woman sitting by herself, he noticed some crumpled trash on the floor. Wondering whether he should pick it up, he consulted his papers, but couldn't find “sanitation officer” anywhere on his list of spiritual gifts. As the service started, an announcement was given about a family that needed help moving, but Frank was pretty sure he didn't see “helping people move” on the list either.

For the rest of the service, however, his mind was alert to something he could “administrate,” but nothing came to mind. After the final “Amen,” Frank got up and walked toward the foyer. Along the way, he was perplexed by the fact that no one approached him to administrate something.

Once again, he passed the elderly woman sitting by herself.

What Are Spiritual Gifts?

Some background is necessary here. When sin entered the world, it ruined everything. In particular, relationships were damaged. Humans were separated from God and from each other. The bitter root of sin bore the fruits of fratricide, racism, sexism, divorce, hatred, class oppression, just to name a few. Clearly, what people need is God's powerful presence to reverse these effects of sin, bringing wholeness and healing not only between God and individuals but between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, and people of all races and classes.

This “powerful presence” is God's Spirit. And now Jesus, as the ultimate Spirit-anointed one (the Christ) has the authority to put God's Spirit into people who believe in him.

Now, when God's Spirit—with his healing, recreative power—takes residence among people, what do you think the result will be? A radical reversal of the shattering effects of sin! The broken building of humanity will

be built up again to be a palace-temple for God's Spirit (see Ephesians 2:14-22).

This is why the Bible uses language of "building up" to talk about to the evidence of God's Spirit among us. Paul writes: "Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in *building up* the church." When God Spirit comes into the life of a person, he works through that person's unique skills, interests, and opportunities to strengthen other individuals.

That, in fact, is what your spiritual gift is: *The unique blend of your skills, interests, and opportunities which the Holy Spirit uses to strengthen others and show that God himself is present in the church* (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:12).

Identifying Your Spiritual Gift

Many people, like Frank, start out by asking, "What is *my* spiritual gift?"

I'm afraid that this question muddles the issue for people and sets them on the wrong track. It puts the focus on a person's process of self-discovery instead of an outward look on the needs of others. No wonder Frank overlooked a spiritual need right in front of him—a fellow believer who could use a word of kindness and encouragement. It is a little like spending a lot of time shopping on Amazon.com for the perfect broom when the important thing is that the floor needs to be swept.

The following points are gathered or implied from truths we find in 1 Corinthians 12-14, and will help you understand how to exercise your spiritual gift:

1. Instead of asking, "What is my gift?" ask, "What can I do now that will most build up this local church?" Your spiritual gift is not so much something you possess: it is a way you serve.
2. In addition to looking for ways to serve during the formal gatherings of the church (e.g., music, teaching classes), consider ways to serve *outside* the formal structures as well.
3. Instead of looking exclusively *within* yourself, look also *outside* yourself—that is, the way God has sovereignly arranged your circumstances, interests, and abilities. What you contribute will differ, depending on your stage of life and experience.
4. In addition to seeking to exercise your spiritual gift, be attentive to the way others are contributing to your spiritual well-being.

Finally, on a practical note, recognize that church leaders might not notice needs that are obvious to you. The very fact that you noticed a need or have an idea is in itself important. Be open with leadership about things you see that can be done or done better to further God's purpose for the church.

Putting the Pledge to Work

1. Why is it important to understand the purpose and nature of spiritual gifts?
2. Identify some ways in which the people present in your group have used their skills or life stage to strengthen the church.
3. Suppose one year from now, every member was fully engaged in the exercise of his or her spiritual gift. Using some imagination, envision how different the church might look from what it looks now.
4. What can you do to encourage others to identify and exercise their spiritual gifts?