

More About Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Most of us enjoy seeing beautiful gardens but not all of us like to garden. Many of you have travelled to other countries and you see some of the wonderful plants that flourish in warmer, more tropical countries. Even within Ontario, there are various zones and gardeners can find out what plants thrive in particular zones, and struggle to survive in others. Not every plant thrives everywhere.

We are on our second last sermon on Spiritual Gifts and the Body of Christ. My goal has been to encourage you to learn what your strengths and areas of giftedness are, where it is that you flourish as a member of Christ's Body.

Unless we know our giftedness and our place in the Body of Christ, we can feel like a beautiful plant, planted in the wrong zone or the wrong climate, and we do not thrive ... maybe not even survive! And we contribute nothing to the landscape. Knowing our gifts and making

sure that they are functioning in the proper capacity within the Body of Christ is essential.

Some of you have already taken the spiritual gifts inventory that I provided a couple of weeks ago. As another aid to helping you determine if you are clear on your giftedness and your function in the body of Christ, I am going to make 7 different statements. I want you to respond (to yourself), True or False –

#1. I feel that I am capable of accomplishing more than I am presently achieving.

#2. I sense that God wants to use me in a meaningful way but I'm not sure how.

#3. My frustration and confusion about not knowing just what to do makes me less confident and competent.

#4. I desire to be more fruitful and fulfilled, making a difference with my life.

#5. I feel there must be something wrong with me because I still have not been able to figure out what I should be doing.

#6. I wish I knew God's will for my life.

#7. I am often asked to do things I am not interested in doing.

God has given each of us a set of gifts ... no two people have exactly the same set of gifts in the same measure. Everyone's purpose and function as a member of the Body of Christ is unique. When you know what your gifts are, you gravitate to those ministries in the church like a car moves smoothly into the correct gear for the task. When you can't seem to get in the right gear, when the plant you are, is not blooming and flourishing, it likely is because you are not matching your giftedness to the right ministry. Things do not go well when the ear tries to be the nose or the hand the foot. The Body of Christ – many different parts, many different functions.

Sometimes we are locked in our own thinking and can't imagine that we have a particular gift or conversely that we in fact do not have a gift that we are sure we have. Sometimes we see giftedness in others that they do not see themselves! We need to open ourselves to new ways of thinking and perceiving. Open to possibility.

Try this:

On a piece of clean white paper, place 3 dots in a straight line across the top, about $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart from each other. Number them 1,2,3. An equal space below, put 3 more dots and number them 4,5,6. Finally, do a third line below the second at equal space and put the final 3 dots, 7,8,9. Do you get it. It should look like a square, comprised of 9 dots, each dot the same distance apart from the one above, below, and beside it.

This is your challenge. Connect the dots with 4 straight lines without lifting your pen or pencil from the paper. This challenge requires that you open yourself up to new possibilities. That you try to see something familiar, in new ways.

You can let me know later this week how you have done.

How open are you to new approaches, new ways of thinking, change?

In the first part of chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, Paul is trying to explain to the people of Corinth that yes, we need to understand and appreciate the diversity of gifts and talents of all of God's people. But

at the same time, we need to recognize that this incredible diversity is always united in the Body of Christ by the very Spirit of God.

Varieties of Gifts, but the same Spirit. Varieties of Gifts, but the same Lord. It is helpful to remember that Paul is writing this letter to the people of Corinth as the early church is growing and becoming organized. The explanation of gifts was helpful in showing the people how their unique gifts could apply to the various ministries within the church. Paul was saying to them, “Here is how you can become engaged in your faith. Here is how you can make a difference for the Lord. These are some of the various ways the church can make a difference in the world and here is how you can be a vital part of that. Know your gifts, and put them to good work for God.”

On a personal note, the fact that your family, or your neighbourhood, or your congregation are filled with a variety of people who possess a variety of gifts, makes it possible for many different people to be involved in meeting many different needs. I met with a couple this week who spoke about their incredible neighbourhood, everyone

looking out for each other, using their various gifts for the betterment of their neighbours – their community. Think of just our congregation ... areas of finance, property maintenance, pastoral care, teaching, preaching, administration, music, outreach to children, or seniors, or singles or widowed or divorced, or people suffering around the world ... so many different areas of opportunity and responsibility. I bet that when I read that list, something inside of you moved towards or away ... you felt drawn to some areas of ministry and not by others. I remember working with the Session many years ago and we talked about each elder having an elder district and getting around to visit members of their district. At least 4 out of the 18 people said that showing up at someone's door to have a visit was way out of their comfort zone. They felt completely unequipped for such a thing. It terrified them. But these people were so gifted and so committed in other areas of ministry – finance, technology, maintenance of the property, and music. Know your gifts, and use them where they are needed. Let's focus on you. What do you care about most? What do

you have a passion for? Where would you like to see your life make a difference?

Paul says that it is the Spirit of God living within us that activates us in applying our gifts. Are you open to letting God ignite that fire within you? What are your gifts? How can you use them in the church for God's work, even in this time of COVID?

God bless you as you grow in your awareness of how God has gifted you, and how you can use those gifts to bring blessing.

Amen