Text: I Corinthians 12:8-11
Title: "The Spiritual Gifts"

INTRODUCTION

Let's open our Bibles together to I Corinthians 12. We've been talking about "The Spirit Way." The Holy Spirit is our entrance into the life that we've always wanted and the power that we've always needed.

ILLUSTRATION – In Gordon Brownville's book on the Holy Spirit he tells about the great Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, who first discovered the South Pole. On one of his expeditions, Amundsen took a homing pigeon with him. Homing pigeons can find their way home from tremendous distances. When Amundsen had finally reached the top of the world, he opened the bird's cage and set it free.

> Imagine the delight of Amundsen's wife, back in Norway, when she looked up from the doorway of her home and saw the pigeon circling in the sky above. No doubt she exclaimed, "He's alive! My husband is still alive!"
>
> Now can you imagine what it was like for the disciples of Jesus? After His death and resurrection the Bible says that Jesus ascended into heaven. He was gone, but the disciples clung to his promise that He would send them the Holy Spirit. And then when the initial gift of the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, it was a confirmation that Jesus was alive. And the disciples had with them the continual reminder that Jesus was alive and victorious at the right hand of the Father.

And when a person is saved the Holy Spirit comes to live in their life, never to leave. And along with that, the Holy Spirit brings with Him spiritual gifts by which we are to carry out the work of our Savior in and through the church.

> The ministry of spiritual gifts is the risen Christ encountering His people by the Holy Spirit. When you utilize your spiritual gift, and I am blessed or edified by that spiritual gift, I have had an encounter with God! The operation of the spiritual gifts in the church is a supernatural thing … the risen Christ, encountering His people in ministry.

Last week we said that spiritual gifts are given by <u>grace</u>, for <u>service</u>, with <u>power</u> to every <u>believer</u>. Now this morning we're going to wade a little deeper into this river.

And church, we must take this seriously. We keep track of the numbers of people in our church who are involved in at least one ministry or service in the course of year. And comparing our involvement with surveys that are done in churches all across America, we are well above the average. Even at that, only about 25% of our adult members are involved in any ministry in or through our church. And not all of those are necessarily using their spiritual gift in that ministry; they may just be serving out of a Christ-like desire to serve. So there is about 75% of our church not involved personally in a ministry. That tells me that many of us are either ignorant about spiritual gifts, or complacent about being obedient to the Lord by using their spiritual gift.

Why take this seriously?

1. UNWRAPPING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT HELPS YOU DISCOVER YOUR UNIQUE PURPOSE IN LIFE (v.7).

The word for spiritual gift is *charisma* or *charismata*. And you can hear in that word the word *charis*, which means grace, and at the root of that word is the word *char* which means joy. And I'm telling you, the joy that comes into your life at discovering and using your spiritual gift is amazing. Why? Because you are discovering God's unique purpose for saving you and placing you in His Body.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV) - Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Here spiritual gifts are called "the manifestation of the Spirit." And they are given to "each one." And a huge part of discipleship for us all as believers is to discover and to use our spiritual gift or gifts.

Ways to discover your spiritual gift(s):

- **Keep your <u>walk</u> with God <u>strong</u>.** Spiritual gifts flow and function out of the life of a Spirit-filled believer.

- **Ask God for <u>wisdom</u>.** We need God's wisdom in this process. And we're promised that when we genuinely seek wisdom, God delights in giving it to us.

- **Explore the <u>possibilities</u>.** In the process of service you will find things that you really are effective at, and some other things that you aren't.

  Note: We all have spiritual gifts and we should be serving with that gift in as many ways as we feel led by God to do. Our primary ministry in the church should be in the area of our gifting. But also we need to serve in other things, even if they are not in our gifting. Example: I may not possess the spiritual gift of service or helps, but the Bible commands me to be involved in serving others.

  Galatians 5:13b (NIV) - Serve one another in love.

  I may not have the spiritual gift of evangelism or evangelist. But the Bible says that we are to be witnesses for Christ in the traffic pattern of our lives.

  I may not have the spiritual gift of hospitality, but I am to open my heart and my home and my resources to other people as a basic Christian virtue.

  Rom 12:13 - Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

I know for a fact that due to the great number of children and preschoolers we had last Sunday, we need more helpers in that area. You may not have the spiritual gift to teach children, but that's OK. Jesus said, "Don't hinder the children from coming to me." So just because you want to see Jesus become real to children or preschoolers, call Scott or Adele and say, "Hey, I can help out. Show me what to do."

Sometimes we just need to do what is necessary to help others. No one is too important or so gifted that they don't have time to do basic service out of love for Jesus and others and the ministry of the Gospel.

One of the spiritual gifts is giving. That means they have an extraordinary ability to give sacrificially. But the Bible says that we are all to be proportional givers. We all are to give financially to God's Work in proportion to the income God gives us.

- **Monitor your <u>passion</u>.** What do you have a heart for? Some of you have a heart for single moms, or for senior adults, or for people in India, or for CEOs, or for people who live in poverty. Pay close attention to that, because it may be a clue as to where your gifting lies, or the ministry where you'll plug in your spiritual gift.

- **Expect <u>confirmation</u>.** Others around you will recognize that God has given you a particular ability. Example: When we're putting a team of people together for a particular task, we look for at least one person with the gift of administration. You need doers, you need thinkers, you need feelers, but the team won't get anywhere without someone with the organizational skills to get them going.

  Note: Tell others when they have blessed you. That's how God confirms that He is working by His Spirit through a person's spiritual gift.

When you discover what your gifts are, then you shouldn't just sit around and wait for someone to ask you to do something. Become proactive. Start using your gift. Cultivate your spiritual gift. Sharpen the tools God gave you.

<u>Note</u>: Parents, do you realize that you need to do this with your kids after they are saved. There's no one who has the insight into your child's life like you do as a parent, or grandparent. So start talking with your kids about this.

ILLUSTRATION - I was having lunch with one of our men recently. He was telling me that he had received an offer to take a job in another city. He said, "It was tempting, but God is really doing something great in my teenage son's life through the youth group here at Travis, and I think God has given him gifts that are being sharpened here."

Take your spiritual gift seriously. It's the pathway to incredible fulfillment as you discover God's unique purpose for your life. But there's another reason we should take this seriously:

2. UNDERSTANDING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT HELPS YOU APPRECIATE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BODY (vv.8-10).

The source of conflict in so many churches is that we want everyone to be like we are. We want people to be interested in the same things that we're interested in; or to participate in the ministries we participate in. We want them to respond the same way we respond. God has given each of us a unique passion. We're not all alike. When we understand the gifts and that God has given us unique gifts, we'll quit demanding that everyone has to be like us … or that everyone thinks the way I think.

Now in v.8 we come to a listing of some of the spiritual gifts that God has deposited in the church. Look carefully at the wording:

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NIV) - <u>To one</u> there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, <u>to another</u> the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, [9] <u>to another</u> faith by the <u>same Spirit</u>, to <u>another</u> gifts of healing by that one Spirit, [10] to <u>another</u> miraculous powers, to <u>another</u> prophecy, to <u>another</u> distinguishing between spirits, to <u>another</u> speaking in different kinds of tongues, and <u>to still another</u> the interpretation of tongues.

ILLUSTRATION – Now the Horned Frogs overpowered be the Baylor Bears yesterday (sorry John). And a big part of that victory was the play of the red-shirt freshman quarterback, Andy Dalton. He was named the player of the game. He did a phenomenal job for his first collegiate start at quarterback. But the fact is that he was just one guy on the team. Suppose Coach Patterson went up to those offensive linemen and said, "You guys are way overweight. You need to be like Andy Dalton, and lose some weight." Suppose Coach Patterson went up to the linebackers and said, "Quit worrying about blitzing. You need to start working on your passing. C'mon, be like Andy Dalton." Well, if you know anything about team sports you know that would be a disaster.

And for the same reason, we need to see the wisdom of God in putting the church together the way He did. We don't all have the same spiritual gifts. We don't all have a passion for the same ministries. The gifts of given by the Holy Spirit. And (newsflash!) you aren't the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:12 (NIV) - The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

Now just look at the first two gifts here in the list. (Note: Next week, we'll talk about what is are called "miraculous gifts" mentioned here in these verses.)

1 Corinthians 12:8 (NIV) - To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit…

Now these two gifts are what I might call contemplative gifts. By that people with these gifts tend to be thinkers and observers.

"THE MESSAGE OF WISDOM"

DEFINITION (at the bottom of your note sheet): "The message of wisdom" is the ability to make skillful and practical application of Scriptural truth to real-life situations.

The gift of wisdom is the ability to have insight into people and situations that is not obvious to the average person, combined with an understanding of what to do and how to do it. This comes, not from age or experience, but from special insight given by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, a wise non-believer would be able to have the same insights.

Now all believers are supposed to have and to pursue wisdom. But some are gifted with the "message of wisdom." When they share their insights about situations, others receive it as the direction of the Lord.

They have the ability to synthesize Scriptural truth and convey to others so that they can make wise choices and avoid the way of foolishness.

A Christian counselor will have this. Pastors need this gift in doing pastoral counseling, or in making application of Scripture in messages.

A person with the gift of wisdom sees the right thing to do in Scripture and knows how to help someone actually do it. They know how to put Scriptural principles into practice in everyday situations. They may be able to take the counsel of God's Word and help you straighten out your finances. They may be able to take the counsel of God's Word and help you make decisions about your career.

Now notice that this is called a "message of wisdom," or a "word of wisdom." The word there is *logos*. So it tells us that it is something not only possessed, but also that is spoken and communicated to someone else. It's not just wisdom for me, but wisdom for others. So when they speak to you, the light comes on. You see the right way to go in a specific situation in accordance with God's revealed will in His Word.

"THE MESSAGE OF KNOWLEDGE"

DEFINITION: "The message of knowledge" is the ability to <u>research</u>, <u>remember</u> and make effective <u>use</u> of Scriptural <u>information</u>, and to <u>pass</u> this understanding on to others.

Note: Some interpret this gift to be people who supernaturally have the ability to know things they wouldn't normally be able to know. Like walking up to you and saying, "You're going to have a heart attack tomorrow."

I'm not saying that God couldn't give that knowledge to someone; I just think that this gift is different from that.

Now once again, this is not just the product of a fertile mind. I know lost people who have a good bit of knowledge about the Word of God. No, this is a supernatural enabling to make full use of the knowledge of Scripture.

It is the ability to study God's Word and discover the full meaning of the text and the context, and to provide understanding to others. It is the ability to grasp the meaning of God's revelation.

If you're a teacher, you will likely also possess this gift. Most preachers and teachers have this gift. And if they don't have it, they must rely heavily on those who do.

The person with this gift is enabled not only to discover truths from the facts of Scripture, but also to explain and interpret those truths in order to help others understand them.

They may have been trained in a theological seminary, or they may be someone with no advanced education. But they are dedicated students of Scripture and they can bring Scriptural information together and share with others.

So you can see these are more contemplative gifts. But what if all of us were this way? Well, nothing much would get done. Thank God there are people with the gift of helps who say, "I'm glad you've got that gift, but, hey, I want to help someone fix their car. Show me where the garage is." Or someone with the gift of hospitality might say, "Great. You stay in your room studying and contemplating, but if the food isn't put out for the church fellowship, we'll be here all night."

Understanding your spiritual gift helps you appreciate the beauty that comes with the diversity that God has put in the church.

3. USING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT STRENGTHENS THE CHURCH (v.11).

1 Corinthians 12:11 (NIV) - All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

The word "works" is the same word that is used back in v.6 to describe the "effects" that are wrought by God in the church through spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit is working in this church to strengthen us and to shape us.

The Holy Spirit works through spiritual gifts to shape the church to look like the Body of Christ. He distributes gifts sovereignly. I am not to question why God gave me certain gifts, and why He didn't give me other gifts.

It is through the faithful exercise of spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit works in the church, presenting Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION – Three experiences last week showed me in vivid terms how God works in a church … how God puts people in place at a particular moment. And the ministry of Christ flows through them to someone. A man came forward during one of our services last Sunday and shared with me that he wanted to join the church, but also that he needed God's help in overcoming an addiction to cigarettes. I looked up, and there standing right next to me was a man whom I knew had battled the same addiction and with God's help had overcome it. He was standing right by my side when that man came forward.

Later a man came up to me and shared with me that he had been recently released from prison and that when his parole was completed he wanted to get involved in a ministry to prisoners. I

looked up and just three steps away was a man in our church who has been to prison and has been actively involved in prison ministry. God brought them together.

Last Monday night during outreach one of youth workers took an apple pie to a home of two children who came to SS for the first time, having been involved with our Autumn Chase ministry. What that SS teacher didn't know is those children's mother had been missing for some time. They live with their grandmother. But the next day they received the tragic news that the mother had been found dead. Was it a "coincidence" that that SS teacher showed up with the pie, not knowing the circumstances that family was going through? Not on your life. The grandmother commented how comforting it was for them to have that physical expression of kindness.

This is how the Holy Spirit works in the church when people have released their gifts to the Lord.

Are you yielded completely to the control of the Holy Spirit so that when He wants to use, you cash He can spend on the spot? Surrender to Him today.