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HOLY SPIRIT – BLOW INTO MY LIFE MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS
by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

A man from Illinois decided to travel to Wisconsin to go duck hunting. He shot and dropped a bird, but it fell into a farmer's field on the other side of the fence. As the flatlander climbed over the fence, a dairy farmer drove up on his tractor and asked what was going on. The hunter said, "I shot a duck and I'm retrieving it." The old farmer replied, "This is my property and you're not coming over here!"

Well, this made the hunter angry, so he said, "If you don't let me come over the fence, I'll call my Chicago lawyer and I'll sue you." The farmer smiled and said, "Apparently you don't know how we do things up here. We settle disagreements with the Wisconsin three-kick rule. I'll kick you three times, and then you kick me three times, and so on, back and forth, until someone gives up."

The Illini liked this challenge because he thought he could easily take the old farmer. The Wisconsin Badger climbed down from the tractor and planted the steel toe of his heavy work boot into the man's shin. The man fell to his knees. His second kick went directly to his stomach, knocking the wind out of him. The farmer then landed his third kick to the side of the hunter's head. The disoriented man slowly got up and said, "Okay, you old codger, now it's my turn!" To which the farmer responded, "Nah, I give up. You can have the duck."

Many of us battle over insignificant or unimportant things as well. Sometimes we fight because of a lack of information, and other times we kick people simply because we want to.

But our New Testament Scripture teaches us regarding the topic of spiritual gifts. This topic goes back to the church at Corinth but still resonates in today's churches. Preaching on this topic can cause tension. This tension can result from an overemphasis on certain gifts versus other gifts, or it can come because being humans we like to pick fights with those who are different than we are.

But before we jump into our text in 1 Corinthians 12, let's set the context. The Corinthian church was beset with many problems and difficulties. The church was filled with division, arguments, lawsuits, and immorality. On top of that, there was confusion about marriage, food sacrificed to idols, worship, the Lord's Supper, the Resurrection, giving, and spiritual gifts. In particular, some people thought they

were more important than others because they had some pretty spectacular gifts. When Paul wrote this letter to the church he specifically addressed these issues.

Paul wanted to make sure that the church had a proper understanding about spiritual gifts. The church at Corinth desperately needed instruction on this topic, and so do we. This is a topic that is too important for believers to be uninformed about, and it's certainly too critical to fight about. John MacArthur writes, "No local congregation will be what it should be until it understands spiritual gifts."

Therefore, let's begin by defining what a spiritual gift is. "Spiritual gifts are divine abilities distributed by the Holy Spirit to every believer according to God's design and grace for the common good of the body of Christ."

It's important to recognize that the Holy Spirit at conversion gives a spiritual gift; whereas a natural talent is something we're born with. While we must yield our talents and abilities to the Lord's work, we must pay particular attention to unleashing our spiritual gifts for the good of the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is often neglected in many churches today. Paul reminds us that before we were saved, we were led astray by our emotions and false doctrines. Now that we are believers, the Holy Spirit empowers and energizes us for ministry.

Just as no one can confess the Lordship of Christ apart from the Holy Spirit's leading, so too, it is impossible to improve your service without being led by the Holy Spirit. **Galatians 5:25**: "*Since we live by the Holy Spirit, let us keep in step with the Holy Spirit.*" The Holy Spirit blows like the wind through surrendered lives.

John 3:8 says: "*The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.*" Let's continue to allow the Holy Spirit to move us into worship and the work of ministry.

Paul next challenges us to incorporate diversity in our understanding of spiritual gifts in verses 4-6: "*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people.*" I want you to notice that the Trinity is involved with the giving of gifts: the Spirit, the Lord Jesus, and God. These verses help us see how the entire Godhead is involved in the giving of spiritual gifts.

The key word in this passage is the word “different.” We all have different kinds of gifts, there are different ways to serve and there are different workings. There’s not just one gift that fits all believers. The word “gifts” comes from the Greek, “charismata,” which is the root for the word “grace.” Grace gifts are those divine abilities distributed by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of “service.” This word speaks of opportunities for expressing our spiritual gifts in practical ways. The word “working” refers to the results or accomplishments that come when we use our spiritual gifts in meaningful service. Whether or not we are able to see the results, God does. We get the word “energy” from this Greek word. When we serve according to our giftedness, God gives us energy and we in turn energize the church through our service.

Philippians 2:13 reminds us: *“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”* Because God is at work within us, we can accomplish His purposes. The Corinthians had elevated the more spectacular gifts and gave more attention to the spiritual superstars. Paul challenges them and us, to incorporate diversity in our understanding. We minister differently because we’ve been gifted differently. The same God is at work in us, but He customizes His work through us for His ultimate glory and the strength of the church.

Let me illustrate. At our upcoming Smorgasbord, suppose someone drops a plate full of dessert in our new lift. This is how people with different gifts would respond.

- Gift of prophecy would say - That’s what happens when you’re not careful.
- Gift of service says - Oh, let me help you clean it up.
- Gift of teaching would respond - The reason that it fell was because it was too heavy on one side.”
- Gift of exhortation would matter of fact state - Next time, maybe you should let someone else carry it for you.
- Gift of giving - Here, you can have my dessert.
- Gift of mercy with empathy would say - Don’t feel too bad. It could have

happened to anyone.

· Gift of administration - Paul, would you get the mop? Shannon, please help pick this up. Mary, could you get him another dessert?

We've all been gifted differently, and so we act differently and we serve differently. Friends, this church has every gift that is needed in order to function as a biblical community and a haven for those seeking salvation. **1 Corinthians 1:7:**

"Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed." This verse is written to the entire church at Corinth. Even with all its problems, this community of faith did not lack any spiritual gift. Likewise, Salem United Methodist Church has just the right amount of spiritual gifts! This is important to keep this in mind as we become intentional about doing service inside and outside the church; as we continue to welcome others to Christ and as we all continue to be hospitable stewards to what God has entrusted to us. It makes me wonder what needs God is going to meet by placing each one of us in this church at this particular time!

Spiritual gifts are given so that they can be given in service to others so that the church will be fortified. Remember that gifts are received, not achieved. The gifts of grace are given to you so that as each part does its work, the church can be built up.

If Paul were to write a letter to us today, he would say something like this: "Brothers and sisters, say one of you owned a set of tools. Would you spend all your time counting them, naming them, organizing them, polishing them, and putting them on display? No, you would use them. So it is with the gifts of the Spirit: they are tools not to admire, but to use. They are not medals to be won or trophies to be displayed or treasures to be guarded. Use them! As you serve God, the Holy Spirit will reveal the gifts God has given you."

1 Peter 4:10: *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."* Paul's concern for young Timothy was that he not only be able to identify his gift, but that he would implement it: *"Do not neglect your gift, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God"* (**1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6**). Do you need to allow the Holy Spirit to fan your gift into full flame? Are you burning bright for God, or are you just flickering or smoldering?

A well-known conductor was holding a rehearsal one night with a vast array of

musicians and a hundred-voice choir. While the mighty chorus sang out, the horns blared and the cymbals clashed. Sitting far back in the orchestra, the piccolo player thought to herself, “With all these loud instruments, it doesn’t matter what I do. They don’t need me.” And so she stopped playing. Suddenly the conductor stopped the music and looked right at the piccolo player and said, “It doesn’t sound right without you. If you don’t play, the concert’s off. We need you.”

You’re needed in this church! God has gifted you and you and you with an awesome gift, and now He wants to use you. Don’t allow yourself to think you don’t matter. Nobody is a nobody in the body of Christ. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

One of the lessons we can learn from the church at Corinth is this: having spiritual gifts does not necessarily make you spiritual. It’s possible for a church to have all the gifts that are needed, and for every believer to know what their gift is, and still miss the mark.

In the last verse of **1 Corinthians 12**, we’re reminded that there is something far greater than even our divine abilities: *But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.*

1 Corinthians 13 is without doubt the best explanation of love ever written. This love chapter is sandwiched between a discussion of spiritual gifts in chapter 12 and chapter 14. Paul recognizes the dangers of having spiritual assets when they are divorced from love.

Notice the gifts that are listed in verses 1-3: *If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

After elevating the supremacy of love over every spiritual gift, Paul then describes how love should be the marinade that provides the distinctive flavor in our serving: *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Jesus did not suggest that we go and preach the gospel. He commanded it. We have been commanded by Christ to go and spread the good news to the whole world.

Some people would have you believe that you become a great golfer, skier or tennis player by just reading about these sports or thinking about them.

But just like sports, we truly become great Christians not only by studying and meditating on the Word of God but also by combining this study with action.

Jesus states in the Gospel of John that you should *love one another as I have loved you*.

This makes being an Action Christian so much easier.

Love gives us the desire to introduce others to our best friend, Jesus.

If you can, imagine yourself standing with our Lord as the unbelievers are being judged. And, there in the crowd is a family member, neighbor or maybe someone you work with. As they stand in the judgment line - they catch your eye.

Can you hear their voice, why didn't you tell me about Jesus? (Pause) Why didn't you care that I will spend eternity in hell? (Pause)

We need to exercise our Christian action because by telling others about Christ, we grow. We learn from our actions how to exercise our Faith.

I believe the opposite of love is not hate, no (Pause), it is fear.

And it is fear that keeps us from stepping out and using our gifts for the glorification of the Kingdom. And it could be this fear of how we will be perceived by others that keep us from trusting God and walking boldly for Christ.

We need to be willing to step out and do God's work even in the presence of fear and not let that fear separate us from God's plan for our lives.

The Statement "Fear Not" or "Be not afraid" is in the scriptures 365 times; One for every day of your Life.

Remember you are the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World. What you do, no matter how small it may seem, does make a difference. As we continue forward in

service and mission to God and humanity remember:

Be informed about your spiritual gifts.

Be influenced by the Holy Spirit.

Incorporate diversity in your understanding of your gifts.

Identify your spiritual gift(s).

Implement your gift in service.

Intensify your love for all Creation and the environment.

Allow the Holy Spirit to blow into your life and lead you into some exciting serving opportunities!