

## Sermon Notes

**Series: Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts**

**Date: July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**Title: “Defining Spiritual Gifts”**

**Text: 1 Corinthians 12**

**Based on 1 Corinthians 12, we can define spiritual gifts as special abilities given by God through the Holy Spirit to empower believers for ministry to the body of Christ.**

**Looking at this definitions in three sections, we see that:**

### **1) SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE SPECIAL ABILITIES GIVEN BY GOD.**

- a) Paul highlights this part of our definition in verse 4 when he uses the word “*charisma*” which translates into the English – gift.
  - i) It has the idea of something that God has bestowed on us by His grace.
- b) By defining spiritual gifts are “special abilities,” it helps to distinguish them from other things.
  - i) Spiritual gifts are not the same thing as talents, or natural abilities.
    - (1) Talents / natural abilities are things God gives every person at birth by His common grace.
    - (2) Spiritual gifts are abilities that God only gives believers by His special grace, typically at their new birth.
    - (3) At times, these special abilities are new and different from the abilities and talents a person had before becoming a Christian.
      - (a) Example: Moses in Exodus 4
    - (4) Typically though, God gives us spiritual gifts that enhance talents and natural abilities we already have.
      - (a) Example... if you were a naturally gifted teacher and you become a believer who receives the spiritual gift of teaching, you may now have greater insights into how to clarify, and illustrate, and apply the material in a more fruitful way...
  - ii) Spiritual gifts are not the same as spiritual responsibilities.
    - (1) Spiritual responsibilities are those things that every Christian is commanded to do (e.g. serving one another, giving, showing mercy, evangelizing, etc.) regardless of our gifting.
    - (2) Whereas all believers share the same spiritual responsibilities, not all Christian share the same spiritual gifts.
    - (3) And yet, there often is a correlation between the two because some spiritual gifts are special abilities that concern an area of spiritual responsibility.
      - (a) E.g. Some Christians have the spiritual gift of service, giving, showing mercy, etc.
      - (b) They are able to do these things in a greater and in a more fruitful way than others.
    - (4) This understanding should impact the way we spend our time ministering in the church.
      - (a) We should all spend time fulfilling our Christian responsibilities, but we should spend the majority of that time using our spiritual gifts...
- c) We must remember that spiritual gifts are special abilities “that have been given to us from God.”
  - i) Paul highlights this in verses 18 and 28.
  - ii) So when we receive spiritual gifts, we receive them by God’s sovereign grace.
  - iii) This aspect of spiritual gifts has at least three applications:

- (1) We should be content with the gifts God has given us.
- (2) We should not boast about our gifts or look down on the gifts of others. (cf. vv12-20)
- (3) We need to be careful as a church about neglecting any one gift. (cf. 21-22)

## 2) **Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by God THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT TO EMPOWER BELIEVERS.**

- a) Though spiritual gifts are appointed by God, they are placed in us specifically by the Holy Spirit.
  - i) Consider how many times the Spirit is referenced in verses 7-11.
  - ii) Based the sovereign design of God the Father and the atoning sacrifice of God the Son, God the Holy Spirit is the One who operates these gifts in us.
  - iii) Paul further demonstrates that our gifts are marked with the presence of the Holy Spirit when he uses the word “*pneumatikon*” or “spiritual” to describe our gifts in verse 1.
  - iv) In light of what Paul conveys in verses 1-3 and the reference of “by the Spirit” next to each of the different gifts in verses 8-11, we must reject the teaching that says the presence of one gift vs. another has any bearing on our maturity or degree of spirituality.
- b) Since the Holy Spirit is operating these gifts within us, we are full of divine power.
  - i) This is why Paul describes the spiritual gifts as “*energma*” or “activities” / “energies” which empower us.
  - ii) So when we use our spiritual gifts, we’re displaying divine energy and power.
  - iii) But the question is... For what?
    - (1) (See point 3.)

## 3) **Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by God through the Holy Spirit to empower believers FOR MINISTRY TO THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

- a) One of the main reasons we have been given and empowered with spiritual gifts is to minister to the body of Christ.
  - i) We see this several times in our passage. (cf. v7, 24-25, 28-30)
  - ii) This purpose of ministry is so crucial that it is one of the four words Paul uses to describe the gifts.
    - (1) In verse 5, he describes the gifts as “service” or “*diakonia*,” the same word we use for deacons and deaconesses –who are people gifted in service.
    - (2) For Paul, ministry wasn’t some add-on to what spiritual gifts are – it was central to its very definition.
  - iii) As we continue in this process of understanding and identifying our gifts, we must keep in mind the end goal: using those gifts to unify and build up the body of Christ!