

# **“SPIRITUAL GIFTS: A CALL TO MINISTRY.”**

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**August 24, 2014, 10:30AM**

**Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:1, 11-16**

## **Introduction.**

Since Pentecost Sunday we have been talking about God's gift of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We started with ten truths about spiritual gifts and then six things they are not and shouldn't be confused with. Then we considered nine of the speaking gifts, nine of the serving gifts and four of the sign gifts.

Then we talked about how to focus the gifts according to how God has shaped us in life, through our heart or desires, abilities, personalities and experiences. Now what?

**1 Corinthians 4:2** *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

## **Ephesians 4:1, 11-16.**

What is this trust? That we are saints gifted and equipped for works of ministry. Paul writes as if he is writing to all of us. He says walk according to your calling. Don't sit, get up and walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received from God.

God has called all of us to good works, works of ministry or service in His Church. He could have done it Himself, He could have sent angels to do it, but He didn't. It is His will that we do the work of building up and edifying the body. God wants you and me to do the work of ministry in the church and in His kingdom in the world.

Notice all the good that comes, being built up and edified enables us to attain unity in the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ and true maturity which is found only when we become more like Christ. There is no true maturity in life found outside of Christ. We are created in the image of God and we are redeemed to reflect the image and likeness of Christ.

This happens when each part does its part and works together with the other parts. If all do their part then no one person's burden is too great. Most importantly, when we all serve, love reigns. Without mutual love the body of the church cannot be healthy. Where love doesn't reign, Christ doesn't reign. Where love reigns, Christ reigns.

### **What is Ministry?**

The word in our text (vs. 12) is the Greek word "diakonos" meaning "to serve or to minister; to render service for someone else at one's own expense."

***Ministry is using whatever God has given me to serve Him and the needs of others.***

Ministry is not just what pastors do. Ministry is a call to good works. The life of a Christian is a life of service.

The life of a Christian is a lived out response to the grace we have received. Gratitude expressed in

worship, giving, serving, helping, sharing, reaching out.

## **Why should I be interested in Ministry? (From Shape material.)**

### **1. I've been called into ministry!**

**Galatians 1:15** God, in his grace, *chose* me even before I was born, and *called* me to serve him.

**Isaiah 49:2** Before I was born the Lord *called* me.

**Jer. 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart.

**Eph. 4:1** I urge you to live a life worthy of the *calling* you have received.

**I Peter 2:9-10** But you are a *chosen* race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who *called you out* of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Maybe you have heard the phrase, “priesthood of all believers.” In the New Testament priestly language is only used in reference to the body of believers as a whole (Phil. 2:17; I Peter 2:9). We are all priests, we are all ministers.

You and I are ministers of Jesus Christ called into ministry, called to serve and to build up the body.

## **2. I've been created for ministry!**

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are God's workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Created with a divine and eternal purpose, a purpose that begins on earth and continues in heaven. You are here today because God had a plan for you before you were born.

## **3. I've been saved for ministry!**

**II Timothy 1:9** [God] who *saved* us and *called us to a holy calling*, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus.

Why did God save us? Sin? Yes, but He didn't stop with that. God is raising up a mighty army of ministers. If He didn't want ministers He wouldn't have saved us.

#### **4. I've been gifted for ministry!**

**I Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

That's what we have spent the summer talking about. You already have gifts, press on in putting them into practice.

#### **5. I've been given authority for ministry!**

**Matthew 28:18-19** [Jesus said] All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples.

**2 Corinthians 5:20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors.

Many of you have experienced being in a position somewhere where they gave you a responsibility to

do something but no authority. That can be very frustrating. We have been called and saved and equipped and given responsibility to minister and serve, and we have been given Jesus' authority.

We represent Christ with His blessing and commission. We are sent in His name.

## **6. I'm commanded to minister!**

**Matthew 20:26-28** Whoever would be great among you *must* be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you *must* be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.

**1 Corinthians 4:2** Now *it is required* that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

**Luke 12:48** to whom much is given, from him much will be required.

A non-ministering, non-serving Christian is a contradiction; it's disobedience.

**Colossians 4:17** (KJV) [To Archippus] Take heed to the ministry you've received from the Lord and *fulfill it*.

Get going, do it. But He never gives us a command He isn't willing to enable us to keep.

## **7. I'm being prepared for ministry!**

**Ephesians 4:11-12** God gave...pastors and teachers to *prepare* God's people for works of ministry, so that the Body of Christ may be built up.

That has been what this summer has been about, Pastor Al Vander Griend and I with the help of other resources, teaching and training and equipping. Its available on line, take advantage of it, use it, talk about it at home, don't neglect the opportunity.

## **8. The body of Christ needs my ministry!**

**I Corinthians 12:27** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

**I Corinthians 12:7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.



This is clear from our text:

**Ephesians 4:16** the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

We are a body with many members, all of whom are necessary, by the will and grace of God. No man is an island unto himself. When I neglect my gift, you are cheated.

## **9. I'm accountable for my ministry!**

**Romans 14:12** So then, each of us will give an *account* of himself to God.

Remember the Parable of the Talents and what happened when the master returned. We talked about this a couple of Sunday nights ago about the coming great judgment when there would be a great accounting of our works, both good and bad.

## **10. I will be rewarded for my ministry!**

**Colossians 3:23-24** Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not men,

since you know that you will receive *an inheritance* from the Lord as a *reward*.

**Matthew 25:23** “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness!”

You and I are ministers called, created, saved, gifted, equipped, prepared, authorized, and needed for ministry, a ministry for which we will be held accountable and rewarded.

### **Application and conclusion.**

A couple of years ago our council made a change in our structure. They changed the name of our committees to ministry teams. There was more in mind than just a simple name change. They want us to change our understanding of these groups.

Committees have meetings. Committees feel like something you have to do. Committees are something you are on for a little while and then look forward to

getting off. Committees are a boring way to do the work of the Lord.

Now we aren't naïve, we know all those same attitudes and feelings can exist in any group no matter what you call it. It's our hope and prayer that over time our ministry teams will grow into places of ministry, places where those with specific spiritual gifts will find a place to serve and help. It's entirely conceivable that a person could serve on a ministry team for many years because that's where they are gifted, where they feel they can best serve the body, where they find joy and pleasure in being used by God.

I would love to see our current ministry teams devote some time to thinking and praying about how they can minister and serve better or more fruitfully. I would love to see more ministry teams for those with other gifts that are not being used in our body, an evangelism ministry team, a prayer ministry team, care home ministry teams.

*What's your ministry and how can you find it?*

I have encouraged you to take the inventory, there are still some on the information table. But even after you take it, and you assess your shape, then what. Let me suggest a simple way forward. If you have the Holy Spirit you already have gifts, so you don't have to seek them. You just need encouragement to use them.

Next time you know someone who is distressed or discouraged or defeated by circumstances in life ask if you can meet them for coffee and just listen to their story. You don't have to have answers, just spend some time listening. Don't be quick to speak, ask questions, let them have your undivided attention. Don't start telling your own story or similar experience, make this their time. After listening offer an encouraging word and a promise to pray for them. Experiment with the gift of encouragement and mercy.

Next time you are in a group or with someone and someone share about some physical pain or chronic suffering, ask if you can put your hand on them and pray for them and ask for God's healing power to deliver them from what they are suffering. Pray in the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Just pray and ask God if He would be pleased to glorify

Himself by healing this person. Experiment with the gift of intercession and healing.

Next time you hear about someone in a financial hole that they can't see any way out of, do something crazy like open your wallet or purse and ask if what you have would make a small difference and be an encouragement that God knows and cares and can send help. Or you can just put \$100 in their box or in the mail. And if what you give is a real sacrifice trust God to supply your needs. Experiment with the gift of giving.

Next time someone comes up with a question from the Bible, something they are confused about, and frankly you aren't sure of the answer either, tell them you will do some study. Then go to your Bible, check cross references, get out a concordance or a Bible Dictionary or go on line to [PreceptAustin.org](http://PreceptAustin.org) or [Monergism.org](http://Monergism.org) or [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org) or [BibleStudyTools.com](http://BibleStudyTools.com) or [ccel.org](http://ccel.org) or [BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com) or [Theopedia.com](http://Theopedia.com). Or ask a pastor or elder or older Christian. Then sit down with them and share what you learned. Experiment with the gift of teaching or giving a word of knowledge.

Is someone you know struggling with some sin, falling into temptation, can you in a spirit of gentleness speak the truth in love, ask if you can pray with them and if you can help them by asking them each week how they are doing. Just having someone who cares enough to love and speak the truth may be what the Holy Spirit uses to deliver their soul from the enemies grip. Experiment with the gift of exhortation or prophecy.

Do you know someone who is just overwhelmed by life or by clutter in their home or clutter in their mind or with some demanding deadlines or unfinished projects and you are able to see a way to organize or clean up or clear the way or walk them toward a solution? Experiment with the gift of administration.

Is there someone with a burden and you can help them bear it in our church or in our community? Is there a need in your church that you could actually do or help with and you see how it would lighten a burden or a load for someone else or even for the whole church?

If you are not currently on the rotation to serve in the nursery would you be willing to do that twice a year to

lighten the load for those who serve often? Call Jill McKee or the office. If you aren't one who is on the rotation to make meals for those in need in our congregation would you be willing to make a meal say three times a year to lighten the load for those who do it regularly? Call Marilyn McCoy or call the office. If you aren't on the cookie rotation, would you be willing to do that twice a year. Call the office. See the bulletin about a cupcake ministry.

Serving with our gifts was never meant to be rocket science or complicated to figure out. Ask God to lead and guide you and open some doors to opportunities and then start encouraging, praying, giving, teaching, exhorting, leading, and before you know it God will have you right where He wants you doing what He has given you His Spirit to do.

Look for a need and meet it. Find a hurt and pray to heal it. Listen for a cry for help and answer. Identify a weakness or a gap and overcome it. Notice what's missing and provide it. Wherever there are large groups of people there are many needs, needs for deeds of love or mercy or everyday basic helpfulness.

If we don't have time to help and serve then we have way too high a view of the importance of our own lives. May we not be one of those who pass by on the other side.

Let me leave you with a final reason for pursuing ministry in the body and in the world.

**Genesis 2:10** (NASB) Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

It says that the river that flowed out of the garden watered the garden. You would think it would say the river that flowed into the garden watered the garden. The life comes from what flows out of us. When you serve in some ministering way, that river that flows out of you will water your own soul and will revive and refresh you. When the water only flows in and not back out it becomes like the Dead Sea, stagnant and lifeless. I call us to life-giving ministry and service.