

DO YOU HAVE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?



Scripture:

Psalm 36:5-10

⁵Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. ⁶Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O LORD.

⁷How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

⁸They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

⁹For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

¹⁰O continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your salvation to the upright of heart!

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



Some of the fun things that come up on Facebook are tests where you answer some questions and then they will sum up your answers and conclude things like: where you should be living (state or city that fits you best), what personality type you are, what kind of pet you should have, what kind of career you

should be in, what movie star you are most like, and it can get even more ridiculous if you keep looking! I found out yesterday at our officer training retreat that you can take a test that will tell you which cartoon character you are most like.

AN INTROVERT

Last week I took one of these tests titled: The Twenty-five Question Test that Will Determine Which Type of Introvert You Are.

Yes, I am an introvert. The majority of pastors are introverts. We have to push ourselves to be social. So if you think I'm not being friendly enough, it might just be that I am low energy that day. Don't take it personally. I can go deep inside my head and not come out for a long time sometimes. That is a characteristic of an introvert. You have to drag yourself out of your head to be social or to even leave your home. But once you do, you enjoy people and socializing. It just takes more energy to get into it, and you are glad to get back into just your head again afterwards.

Now back to the test. The results of this type of introvert test were put into four categories: The Protector, The Mastermind, The Architect, or The Healer. I wonder if you might guess what my test result showed. It said that I'm the Healer. Healers are true idealists, always looking for the hint of good in even the worst of people and events, searching for ways to make things better. While they may be perceived as calm, reserved, or even shy, Healers have an inner flame that can be harnessed for magic. The Healer introvert type is a shaman to his or her tribe. You carry within you the ability to understand problems and connect to the root cause on a deep level. You're naturally spiritual and find it easy to access the spirit world. You have incredible potential to do good. The world needs you!

I think each of the categories' results probably describes the person very positively so they will want to take more tests and stay on their webpage.

SPECIAL GIFTS

But it is true; we all have special gifts and talents given to us by God. We can't all be healers, or wise shepherds, or have the gift for languages. So God makes us a community where we appreciate each others gifts and work together with them to make a meaningful

impact on the world as a group and not just alone.

1. I love that hymn: *Blessed Be the Tie that Binds our Hearts in Christian Love*. Don't you? "The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above." This hymn emphasizes how together our minds become more like the mind of God. Then the hymn lyrics carry on with: "We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear; and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear."
2. We are all made for community and made to share sorrows and joys and our spiritual gifts with one another to strengthen each other's faith, and to support each other through our mutual journey through life on earth.
3. So if each of us is given gifts that are manifestations of the Spirit, how do we identify them in us? And then what do we do with them?

Gifts that are manifestations of the spirit, according to this passage, are gifts that have to do with wisdom, healing, faith, knowledge, prophecy, discernment and speaking and understanding other languages.

If you could choose which ones of these spiritual gifts you had, which one would you choose?

**Wisdom
Healing
Faith
Knowledge
Prophecy
Discernment
Speaking and understanding languages**

All of these gifts are very meaningful in their own way aren't they? Do you have friends who seem to have one or more of these gifts of the Spirit?

I don't think it is possible to have any of them without faith. The gifts of the Spirit are all to be manifestations of the Holy Spirit. And without an awareness and sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit these gifts are meaningless.

But if the foundation to these gifts is based on the Holy Spirit, then they are powerful gifts to have! It takes an awareness of the Holy Spirit to activate them. Daily prayer increases the awareness.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are so important to the future of the church. The Methodist church even has a Spiritual Gifts assessment on their main national church website. Here it is: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment>

They say that The Spiritual Gifts Assessment helps individuals identify their God-given gifts for living faithfully as Christian disciples day by day and to find meaningful ways to use their gifts in connection with others through the community of faith. The process helps people understand the nature of spiritual gifts and ways to enhance the effectiveness of their gifts by linking together with others. Blest be the tie that binds.

The site has a caveat or warning. Please be aware that this online assessment is designed to introduce you to the gifts of the Spirit. To more deeply understand your spiritual giftedness, we recommend that you explore your gifts in a group setting such as your local church.

PROPHECY

I like taking tests and doing assessments. So I took this test, too. It said my first three gifts were Shepherding, Leadership and Prophecy. Prophecy? Here is how they define the gift of prophecy.

The gift of prophecy is the ability to speak God's word to others, or more appropriately to be open for God to speak God's word through us.

Prophets do not predict the future, but offer insight and perspective on current conditions and how things might turn out if changes aren't made. Prophets are incisive, clear, and often controversial, communicators. Prophets see things that others often don't, and they have the courage to "tell it like it ought to be."

I have never been called a prophet before but I guess according to this definition of spiritual gift prophecy it fits. I hope you all will go to this site and see what your spiritual gifts are according to the test. It takes just five minutes to take it. So it is really just a discussion starter.

SHEPHERDING

One of the true stories the site tells about churches and spiritual gifts is a story about a wealthy man named Carl who had the gift of shepherding. Every week Carl would invite new people to church. There was a problem though. The congregation started to worry about the "type" of people Carl was bringing. Some of the congregation believed Carl's friends didn't fit in with the church's standards. It all came to a head when Carl led a group of guys in who had matching orange one piece jumpsuits and leg irons on their ankles. A sheriff with a rifle followed the bunch into the church and they all sat in the front pews.

How would you feel if that happened here? You know if I had a chance to get prisoners here for worship, what would I do? Didn't that sound like a good idea?

Sadly in Carl's Methodist church people became angry at Carl about bringing the prisoners in and he never came back after the bad reaction to his shepherding of the sheep who he thought most needed Jesus. Then he realized the ones criticizing him were the ones who most needed Jesus.

Later the pastor felt regret for not supporting Carl more and for not teaching the congregation that he was fishing for men like Jesus did.

ENVISIONING OUR CHURCH'S FUTURE

Yesterday we had a retreat and officer training at Westminster Woods for the new and veteran officers of the church that you elected at the congregational meeting last November. We had a great time together and envisioned where the church can grow into the future.

When a congregation is willing to take time to identify and use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church it becomes more vital and grows.

FIVE REASONS CHURCHES FAIL

But church leadership research has identified Five Reasons Churches Fail:

1. Conflict (often caused by gossip, and breaches in confidentiality).
2. Hypocritical and judgmental attitudes towards outsiders.
3. Lack of welcoming hospitality and creating easy ways to feel connected and to get involved with the church.
4. Not dealing with conflicts in the church causing dissension among the people.
5. Not preaching and teaching the Bible.

But I would add that another reason why churches fail is because the church members are not encouraged to identify their spiritual gifts and then use them for the benefit of the church and one another.

The apostle Paul taught us to be grateful for the gifts that God has given to the church, even with its frailties. This church is rich in blessings not just because of the accomplishments of the people but because of the grace of God that has enriched and sustained this church family.

You have been sanctified and called to build up the church as each of us has a role in building up the kingdom of God. Despite our flaws we were blessed with the task by God to enrich the church with the spiritual gifts we have been given.

Paul in Romans reminds us, "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; and extend hospitality to strangers."

Despite our fallibilities, God's grace is with us.

May we ponder these things in our hearts and do all we can, using our spiritual gifts to transform this Church of the Roses into the church God hopes we will be.

(Pastor Cindy called forward all the new church officers.)

These church officers who come forward now are willing to help lead us at this time in the history of our church. I know God is grateful for their faithful devotion and generous spiritual gift-giving.

Benediction:

Be the Peace, Be the Kindness, Be the Healing and Be God's Love by sharing your spiritual gifts with the world.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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