

ACTIVATE YOUR 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!



ACTIVATE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

One of the fun things that I miss, since I'm not on Facebook anymore, are the various personality tests. Some would conclude that a certain state or city fits your specific personality type. Others would determine the kind of pet you should have; others would suggest the career you should be in, or what movie star you are most like. It can get even more ridiculous if you keep scanning all the various testing available.

There is even a test that decides what cartoon character you are most like. The test result for me? Popeye! I thought it would be Lucy from Peanuts.

TYPE OF INTROVERT TEST

Last week I took one of these tests titled: The 25 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 in four categories: The Protector, The Mastermind, The Architect, or The Healer. I wonder if you might guess what my test result showed? It said, 'You're 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 and reserved, Healers have an inner flame that can be harnessed. The Healer introvert type is

a shaman to 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 they probably always write the results very positively to motivate the reader to take more tests on their webpage.

SPECIAL GIFTS AND TALENTS

But what is true is that 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 other's gifts and work together to combine them to make a meaningful impact on the world.

What exactly is a spiritual gift? In this passage it reads: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." And it says God "activates them all in everyone." So, each one of us has spiritual gifts given to us to help people for the common good.

WHAT IS YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT?

So, what is yours? The spiritual gift options listed in today's passage have to do with acquiring wisdom, the sharing of knowledge, having faith, promoting healing, being a prophet, discernment of spirits, speaking various languages, and understanding languages. Basically, anything that promotes the kingdom of God could be called a spiritual gift. And if the kingdom of God is a kingdom of peace, love, and forgiveness in harmony with one another, then any gift that enables such a community

to form and promote God's work in the world, is a spiritual gift.

But notice, these gifts are not talents that are developed for self-aggrandizement. They do not include American Idol type of talents which are more for entertaining and self-promotion. Spiritual gifts are abilities that build up God's ministries of healing and wholeness.

1. Often on a day like today when new officers are being installed, we sing songs like *Blessed Be the Tie that Binds our Hearts in Christian Love*. One of the verses says: "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 meant to share our spiritual gifts with one another to strengthen each other's faith, and to support each other during our mutual journey through life on earth.

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.

SPIRITUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

Parker Palmer has a new book: *Leading from Within: Reflections on Spirituality and Leadership*. In it he talks about other kinds of spiritual gifts. He talks about a spiritual gift that is "the knowledge that death is natural, and that death is not the final word." He says, "The spiritual gift is to know that allowing something to die is also allowing new life to emerge. That's the core spiritual insight that can move us beyond our denial of death."

Another spiritual gift that the apostle Paul exhibited was his ability to suffer and endure. In 2nd Corinthians 6 he talks about the things he and his mission companions suffered. Paul

said, they experienced "afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger," and yet they endured and proclaimed that now is the day of salvation.

**Paul says, we are treated:
as imposters and yet are true;
as unknown and yet
are well-known;
as dying, and see — we are alive;
as punished, and yet not killed;
as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;
as poor, yet making many rich;
as having nothing,
and yet possessing everything.**

GOD'S GRACE

What is the everything Paul possessed? What allowed them to rejoice in the midst of life's suffering? It was the spiritual gift of God's grace and faithful trust that nothing could separate them from God's love.

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!

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. We had a great time together and envisioned together 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.

Church leadership research has identified five reasons that 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
5. Not preaching and teaching from the Bible.

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

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 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.

LET LOVE BE GENUINE

Paul in Romans reminds us to: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; 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.

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 willingness to use their gifts and talents to further God’s work here at our Church of the Roses!

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 forevermore. Amen



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