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SERIES: DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE?

PART 10A: I AM GIFTED

When I was a boy I fully enjoyed working with my father. He was such a man’s man to me. In the summers he would pay me $5.00 a day to work 10-plus hours a day with him. I loved when we would go to lunch, and I got to hang out with my father. He taught me an excellent work ethic. He taught me how to work hard. He taught me to endure difficult tasks, especially when I didn’t want to do it. I also believe my father took me to work with him so I’d get to know him better.

God is our Father, and He has equipped every one of us with Spirit-empowered gifts who have surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ to be involved in ministry with Him to achieve His Kingdom purposes in our lives, culture, community, and church. It is just like going to work with your dad. It’s just like Jesus said in Luke 2:49, when His mother asked Him where He had gone, **“I must be about My Father’s business.”** The majority of Jesus’ adult life was spent as a carpenter, bringing glory to His Father and serving people by working with his adoptive father, Joseph. He spent the last 3-plus years of His life preaching, teaching, healing, feeding, evangelizing, leading, and more, and then was crucified on the cross for our sins, buried, rose from the dead, and ascended back to heaven, from which He rules today—He is still doing ministry.

Jesus’ ministry is continued on the earth today through His people, His church, you and me. It is through the Holy Spirit, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:11, **“It is the One and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.”** Jesus continues His Father’s business, the business of His Kingdom, His agenda, His rule and reign through you and me—people who have surrendered to His Kingdom. This is why Jesus teaches us that part of our daily prayer life is to be committed to praying what we just read this past week in Matthew 6:9-10 in what is called “The Sermon on the Mount,” **“Our Father in heaven, may Your name be kept holy. 10May Your Kingdom come soon. May Your will be done on earth as it is heaven.”**

The life of Jesus permeates our culture and community through us. It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus empowers our gifts and talents, which enable us to make a meaningful impact in people’s lives. Spirit-empowered gifts are given only by God’s grace, and we can’t get a gift unless God gives it. Here is what is so important for each one of us to understand. Because God knows what people need and what the future holds, and where particular churches are deficient, He personally gives each one of us specific gifts needed for the health, purpose and ministry of each life-giving church. Practically, what this means is that you have been given specific gifts by Jesus, and because you’re here, we need your gifts and contribution to ensure that CVCHURCH is successful in fulfilling God’s purpose for our life together. One of our lead slogans is: **A GREAT COMMITMENT TO THE GREAT COMMANDMENT AND THE GREAT COMMISSION WILL CREATE A GREAT CHURCH.** This is achieved by each one of us humbling ourselves to Jesus, and we work in unity together and complete the assignments He has given to each one of us. Paul writes inEphesians 2:10, **“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”** As we will learn today and over the next week that to do the good things He has planned for us He has equipped every one of us here with Spirit-empowered gifts. Not every one of us are called to full-time vocational ministry, but every Christian is called to “the work of the ministry.” This ministry work includes your job, your family, church, and community, loving and serving people in your life on behalf of Jesus Christ. Please follow along as I read Ephesians 4:1-16. **“Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. 3Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. 7However, He has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. 8That is why the Scriptures say, ‘When He ascended to the heights, He led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to His people.’ 9Notice that it says ‘He ascended.’ This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. 10And the same One Who descended is the One Who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that He might fill the entire universe with Himself. 11Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. 14Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, Who is the head of His body, the church. 16He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”** In this series, **“Do You Know Who You Are?”**, we are looking at who Jesus says you are. So far He says: **You Are In Christ; You Are A Saint; You Are Blessed; You’re Appreciated; You Are Saved; You Are Reconciled; You Are Afflicted; You Are Heard.** The truth is, once you have surrendered your life to Jesus, your entire identity is sourced and lived out of the truth that you are in Christ. You have a new identity and new community where you learn more about your new identity as you use your gifts to serve and be served by others. Often Christians within a local church, such as ours, back away from involvement in a church, because they see the faults with the church. Often a person will project their own flaws, foibles and failures on to the group of people they are worshipping with and then criticize the group, and this hinders them from getting closer to the people and getting engaged in ministry with their family. What is ironic is that the fact that they can see a lack could indicate that there’s a need for them and their gifts. Rather than complaining, it’s better to humbly start serving where there’s a need, and invite others to help.

**I.** **What happens when you use the gifts God has given you in your local chuch?**

**A. Contributes to the unity and peace in your church**

When you choose to bring your spirit-empowered gifts, abilities and talents in a humble, gentle and patient way, you help develop and maintain an attitude and environment of unity and peace. The reason that unity and peace between the members of a local church is important is that it makes us a safe place for people to become a part of. When the competitiveness, arrogance, selfishness, and insecurity are replaced with love, mercy and forgiveness, people feel freer to become a part, and then they’re willing to let themselves be known. We saw this last Saturday at our Easter Egg Hunt. We received feedback that those who attended noticed that we made changes from last year and that all the volunteers were loving, cheerful and extremely helpful. Hey, church, this made a real impact on our community. Ephesians 4:1-3 in our passage says, “**Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. 3Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.”**

**B. Builds up the local church which is Jesus Christ’s body**

In verse 7 Paul writes, **“He (God) has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.”** Paul then writes in vv. 11-12that **He has given gifts of men and women to the local church, and their responsibility is to equip God’s people—that is you—to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ.** The word “to equip” has several nuances to it that are very important. Harold Hoehner writes, **“The word equip is a word that first was seen in the literature used in the medical practice of setting a limb or bone or the restoration of a shoulder.”** It was used in Matthew 4:21 to mend a broken net. Part of building up the local church is to have people and ministries that can help mend and restore people to health spiritually, mentally, emotional, and relationally. We have seen this happen in a profound way through CELEBRATE RECOVERY and in our small groups. Almost every week I hear testimonies of people whose lives have been restored, mended and set free because of the small groups and different ministries and people in our church. CVCHURCH, this is what we’re all about—seeing Jesus’ love and power flow through each one of us to see people come to Jesus through salvation, and then to see their lives mended and made whole. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (NIV)**

**C.** **Encourages members to learn core convictions of who Jesus is**

We need to know who Jesus is and why He came and why it is so important that each person surrenders their lives to Jesus Christ. Vs. 13 says, **“This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.”**

**D. Helps people grow in the maturity of who Jesus is**

When we are all engaged in using the gifts that Jesus has given to us, it will help people that God gives to us to mature in who Jesus is.

**E.** **Learn to give and receive “the truth in love”**

Vs. 15 says, **“We will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church.”** It is a real art to learn to be able to give and receive the truth from each other as we learn to share it in love. We do not share the Scriptures as a hammer to break people, but we learn to share the truth in a way that will allow people to humble themselves and receive the truth that God has for them.

**F.** **Appreciate different Christians: as we work together, we fit together**

Vs. 16 says, **“He (Jesus) makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”**

**G. See the growth of our church family in all areas of S.E.R.F.V.I.P.**

**II. Grow in how you learn to think about Spirit-empowered gifts**

**A. We’re given different portions of a gift or talent**

This means that some people are gifted in leadership to lead dozens, others to lead thousands or more. Some are gifted to lead worship in small groups and others in larger groups.

**B. Our gifts need cultivation and maturity**

According to many of you, I have grown in my ability to lead, cast vision, give biblical guidance, teach publicly and grow in other areas so I can influence our CVCHURCH family to the best of my ability. But it has taken, and continues to take, constant learning, reading, attending conferences, listening to podcasts, and all the means we have at our disposal. Many of you, it has been so gratifying to watch you over the years and a period of time to see you grow and mature. I have seen this in all our small group leaders. I have seen it in our staff. Josh Williams has been with us for three years, and it is a real joy to see how he has grown in his leadership skills, communication skills and his talents in how to reach the youth in our church and our community. If you are not aware, we are seeing real growth under his leadership in the last year. Where we used to reach 20-30 youths combined on Wednesday and Sunday, last week we reached 86 kids in the combined Sunday and Wednesday.

**C. Be willing to serve outside your area of giftedness, at least for a season**

Often people who are afflicted with perfectionism have a hard time starting to serve, because they want to make sure they’re exactly in the right place. That puts way too much pressure on yourself, and sometimes it is an excuse not to serve. You can never go wrong by being willing to serve where you see a need simply because someone needs your help. More than knowing your gifts, focusing on developing a servant’s heart is most important. Find a place to serve in our church that interests you, and see how it goes. It it’s not a fit, don’t get discouraged. Rather, try something else until you find your place. If there is a ministry you would like to be part of a team to start, please let us know.

**D.** **There’s a difference between giftedness and maturity**

It is important to cultivate not only our gifts by the grace of God but also our maturity. It is true, but often gifted people are not mature people, which ends up being deceptive to them and dangerous for others. We have gifted people come to our CV family, and it hasn’t worked out very well, either because of their own arrogance, or their past traumas and hurts, and they just don’t play with others very well. I am always looking for the heart of a servant, not the most talented and gifted person. A truly gifted and mature grace-filled person has a unique way of making everyone better and helping everyone involved feel good about who they are. Someone who is extremely gifted but immature and doesn’t know how to get along with others creates an environment where, if that person sticks around, the other people leave, because it is too painful to be around them. I have also seen people who are wildly gifted, and, over several years, their attitude changes because they have matured and they’re easier for people to engage. That is one of the most rewarding experiences I get to see in equipping people to serve. Equipping for me has as much to do with influencing how people treat themselves and treat others as well as teaching them skills of ministry. Knowing how to relate to people so they feel better about themselves and willing to serve is a real skill and gift.

**E. The best way to discover your fit is simply by trial and error**

Find a place to serve in our church that interests you, and see how it goes. If it’s not a fit, don’t get discouraged. Rather, try something else until you find your place. Next week we are going to look at the gifts in the four passages in the N.T., and I will list each one of them out and define the gifts and then ask questions that will help you discover whether you think you might have that gift or not. The goal is to see everyone who calls CVCHURCH their home church to discover their place of ministry.

Let’s pray.