

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

September 19, 2021

We Are Better Together

“Getting in S.H.A.P.E.”

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Rev. Mike Fordham

In *Today's Christian Woman* a mother shared about their 6-year-old son, Alex, who was looking at a picture of himself when he was just 1 week old. Upon seeing his umbilical cord still attached in the picture, he asked, “What is that on my belly button?” His 8-year-old sister, Maria, quickly replied, “That's your extension cord!” We all have something in common here today beyond our bellybutton and that is a birthday. We put a lot of emphasis, and rightly so, on our birthdays to the extent that we have celebrations every year for our family members and friends. Not only is it important to celebrate the day we entered this world it is also just as important for us to understand why we were born into this world, or in other words, what is our purpose in life? Here in *1 Corinthians 12:1-11* the Apostle Paul helps us discover our purpose in life by first pointing us to the Holy Spirit as the one who has made all of us gifted children of God who have been given the privilege of serving God!

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this. ² You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. ³ So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶ God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

⁷ A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸ To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. ⁹ The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰ He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹ It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

THE GIVER (VV.1,4,11)

The Apostle Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians to the church in Corinth. The city of Corinth was a wealthy, influential, Roman capital of its region. The city also had 2 strategic ports which meant there were people from all over passing through, and a city where you could experience all that the world had to offer, both good and bad. Paul

wrote to this letter, 1 Corinthians, in part to correct some of the problems in the church such as: disunity in the church, church members suing one another in public courts, the rich eating all the food at their communal meals and leaving only the scraps for the poor, sexual misbehavior in the congregation, and their worship gatherings were chaotic. The church consisted of both Jews and Gentiles and Paul here especially reminds the Gentiles that before they followed Jesus they were pagans who worshiped many gods. In the Roman culture of that time the people had all kinds of gods they worshiped for a wide variety of needs and occasions, such as: Jupiter, the king of the gods, Mars, the god of war, Neptune, the god of the sea, Bacchus, the god of wine & fertility, Pluto, the god of the underworld, Apollo, the god of sun, music, and prophecy, Cupid, the god of love, Saturn, the god of time, wealth, and agriculture, Vulcan, the god of fire, Mercury, the god of financial gain, poetry, & eloquence, and even a two-faced god of doorways and gates, Janus. They had a smorgasbord of gods for just about every need and every occasion. Some gods were more powerful than others or more good or evil. Most of these gods, if not all of them, were at the disposal of the people and could be manipulated. They were limited in their power, abilities, and specialties that they addressed. In his book entitled, *Generation Ex-Christian*, about younger Christians leaving Christianity, author Drew Dyck relates one interview with a young man who left Christianity to join the Wicca religion. Morninghawk Apollo, (the new name of the young man who renamed himself according to the common Wiccan practice) discussed his rejection of Christianity with candor saying, "Ultimately why I left is that the Christian God demands that you submit to his will. In Wicca, it's just the other way around. Your will is paramount. We believe in gods and goddesses, but the deities we choose to serve are based on our wills." That is a perfect modern-day description example of what paganism in the 1st Century was.

Paul says that the Corinthian Christians used to worship these Gods but now that they are followers of Jesus, they now have a relationship with the one and only true, triune God. All these other gods are wannabes, fake gods. There is only one, real true God and this God cannot be manipulated and is all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere, and is perfect in all His ways. Here in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul especially highlights the role of God as the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. In the Bible we learn that the Holy Spirit serves many different roles. The Holy Spirit fills us with God's presence, is a teacher, a revealer of God's thoughts and ways to us, guides and empowers us to tell the world about Jesus, God uses the Holy Spirit to bring us into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and also brings new life in Christ, gives us assurance that we are children of God, empowers us to overcome sin and to live a fruitful life, and the Holy Spirit helps Jesus' followers and prays for us in our weaknesses and the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to become more like Jesus. Paul wants the Corinthian Christians and us today to understand that the Holy Spirit of God is living within all of us, and the Holy Spirit is not some small god to be manipulated or used for our own selfish desires. Instead, the Holy Spirit is God Himself and He is the Lord or leader of our lives. We submit our wills, our entire lives to God's will.

THE GIFTS (vv.8-10)

Paul especially highlights one very important role of the Holy Spirit and that is that the Holy Spirit gives us, what Paul calls, spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are special God-given

abilities, that we are not necessarily born with or that we have learned how to use. Instead, the Holy Spirit decides what gifts and gives them to each one of us according to God's purpose and plan for our lives. Every single Christian has the Holy Spirit living within her or him and as a result is gifted. Isn't that a nice thing to think that when it comes to God He has made each one of us gifted children of God? We are all in God's gifted program. The Greek word for these spiritual gifts is *charismata* which literally translated is translated as "grace gifts". All the gifts we have in our lives are the result of God's grace, God's unmerited favor in our lives. We get no credit for those gifts. God gets all the credit and praise for the spiritual gifts in our lives. We did not earn them or deserve them but God, in His infinite wisdom, knowledge, and plan for some reason has given some of us the gift of teaching or preaching, administration, shepherding or caring for others, giving, faith, knowledge, wisdom, discernment, miracles, healing, leadership, and many other special, God-given, spiritual, Grace-gifts.

If we really want to better understand the purpose that God has for our life it is important to discover our unique S.H.A.P.E. **Spiritual Gifts – *What spiritual gifts has God given us?* Heart – *What are we passionate about?* Abilities – *What abilities do we have, or have we learned or developed?* Personality – *Are we introverted or extroverted, people person or task oriented, or what is our Enneagram #?* Experiences – *What life experiences have shaped who we are?*** When we see more clearly what our Spiritual gifts are, what our Heart or passions are, what our natural Abilities are, the different aspects of our unique Personality, and finally mix that all together with our life Experiences, the picture of God's design and plan for our lives gets clearer. The key to understanding God's plan for our lives, our purpose in life is to discover our unique, God-given S.H.A.P.E. As we grow in understanding what that is we should then have the best self-image in the world as we understand who we are as Christians and realized that we are all gifted.

Dr. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ tells this story of a famous oil field called Yates Pool. He writes, "During the depression this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates wasn't able to make enough on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch. With little money for clothes or food, his family (like many others) had to live on government subsidy. Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told him there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract. At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, 30 years after the discovery, a government test of one of the wells showed it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day. And Mr. Yates owned it all. The day he purchased the land he had received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he'd been living on government relief. A multimillionaire living in poverty. The problem? He didn't know the oil was there even though he owned it. Many Christians live in spiritual poverty. They are entitled to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and his energizing power, but they are not aware of their birthright. God has invested in you and me His resources of spiritual gifts. Too many of

us Christians are barely aware of them and thus are missing our God-given calling and purpose in our lives and are therefore missing out on living life to the fullest.

THE GOALS (v.7)

What then are the purpose of these spiritual gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit. Verse 7 here in *1 Corinthians 12* says that God has given them to us to simply help each other. In *1 Corinthians 14:12*, *"Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church."* The Holy Spirit has given us these spiritual gifts for not only helping each other but also for the building up and strengthening the church. Yesterday, with our Bunk Bed build here at the Killearn, 150+ of us made all the parts for over 30 Bunk Beds which is over 60 beds. Each one of us worked at a different station such as: making slats, staining the wood, putting the brand on the wood, sawing, sanding, screwing, and more. Each one of us did just our part and all together when it is done and will be delivered it will be a blessing to others outside of our church in the world. That is the church working at its finest. Each one of us doing our part together brings about great fruit and blessing to those we are serving. In the movies today of superheroes in the DC and Marvel comics the difference between the superheroes and the villains is what they used their powerful, special gifts for. The heroes use their powers to serve selflessly for the good of others, the villains use their powers to serve their own, selfish wants and desires. God has given us these special, grace-gifts to help others and then build up the church to be Jesus in the world. This is doing what *1 Peter 4:10-11* says, *"¹⁰ God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. ¹¹ Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen."*

These grace-gifts are not to be put on a shelf and admired but are to be used to glorify God and build up each other! The first step then is to discover what spiritual gifts God has given us, then to begin to use them and develop them by serving others with them and as we do God will use us to do beautiful things for His kingdom. These God-given, grace gifts are for glorifying God and to build up each other and the church.

Reverend Thomas Tewell writes: My friend Andy Eddington, once the president of Shriner College in Texas, would go to prisons and preach to men on death row in Huntsville, Texas. I used to go with Andy every now and then, and on one of those trips we stopped at a greasy spoon on our way home to Dallas. Andy loved sugar in his coffee, so he took not one, not two, but three teaspoonfuls of sugar. As the waitress watched, Andy said, "Ma'am, we're going to need more sugar for this table." This Texas waitress looked at Andy and said, "Listen, bud, before I give you more sugar, you stir what you got." Now, there's a sermon there, and the sermon is: Stir what you got. Use your gifts. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to Timothy in *2 Timothy 1:6* telling him, *"This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you."* Stirring up the gifts simply means that we become masters of these gifts as we yield ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Don't let our unique

God-given S.H.A.P.E. to just sit on the shelf collecting dust but to be used for the glory of God in serving each other.

All Christians, ALL Christians, are gifted children of God. God is calling on will servants who will discover and use their God-given, grace-gifts for God. Are you will willing and available?

Icebreaker I – When is your birthday? How do you typically celebrate your birthday? Do you have a favorite memory of your birthday?

Icebreaker II – Do you know your S.H.A.P.E?

1. Why did Paul write to the Corinthian church about spiritual gifts?
2. What was the most fulfilling job or task you ever had?
3. When have you felt that you were part of a unit where all the parts worked together for a common goal?
4. Who has been given spiritual gifts?
5. Who are spiritual gifts from and for what purposes are they given?
6. Verses 4 - 6 indicate that some Corinthians felt certain spiritual gifts were better than others. Have you ever encountered that attitude among Christians? In yourself?
7. How is the diversity of the gifts related to the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
8. If you already know your strongest spiritual gift, what is it and how are you using it?
9. Why is it important for us to learn to recognize our spiritual gifts?
10. How is a spiritual gift different from a personality trait, a talent, or a characteristic?