

“What’s My Gift?”

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Galatians 5:22-23 & 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

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What’s My Gift? I am certain that the disciples asked themselves that question when Jesus gave them their marching orders before ascending to heaven. Imagine if you will, you are standing with your crew about to address a huge crowd. I want you to hear what might have been happening inside the mind of one disciple the day the eleven stood up to address the crowd.

I can’t believe this is really happening. Everything that Jesus said has come true. I am not sure exactly what happened when we all got back together after Jesus left us, but he said the Holy Spirit would come. And apparently all we had to do was call upon the Holy Spirit! Well, that didn’t work the way we thought it would, we all tried praying while we were scattered and in hiding. But we decided to pray, while were all together that day, just one more time. Then that crazy wind happened. I couldn’t stop praying, I had to speak louder and louder as the wind got wilder and wilder. I could just see through the whirling air a flame dropped down of each of the other disciples, but I wasn’t sure if one dropped down on me. I felt different but I just couldn’t tell for sure.

And now we are here. We are standing here addressing an international crowd of thousands. How are we going to communicate to all these people when we don’t even know where they are from or what language they speak? And I, Peter, had to assure the crowd that none of us were drunk and then try to say what we had to say to the crowd. Would they even listen?

It was the first time we had to tell His story. Really tell his story. Jesus’s story. When we were done, thousands repented and became believers. My mind is blown! Somehow, everyone in the crowd understood. How is that possible?

We saw during Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came down and helped each of Jesus’s disciples by placing certain gifts inside them so that they could go out into the world and make more disciples in the world. Does this phrase sound familiar?

Part of the mission statement of the United Methodist church states:

“... go make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world...”

That is exactly what Jesus needed his disciples to accomplish and why the Holy Spirit descended upon them with gifts that would help them.

One of the first manifestations was speaking in such a way that everyone listening could understand what was being said because they could hear it in their own language. On that day, Peter had to trust in the Holy Spirit’s gifts and lean on his faith to address that international crowd alongside his fellow disciples. A gift of the speaking in tongues, from the Holy Spirit, paved the way for more to hear the good news and become believers.

Other amazing feats, or even some consider miracles, that bubble up because of this touch of the Holy Spirit included: Peter and John healing, Philip casting out demons, Paul raising a man from the dead, just to name a few. These accomplishments were fueled by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But how does all of this apply to you and me? Those were extraordinary gifts for the disciples, right? That doesn't really apply to us, right? Stepping back through 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (I summarize):

The Holy Spirit distributes different types of gifts, but behind it all is God. The Holy Spirit distributes to each person just as God determines.

There are different types of gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us in order to help accomplish whatever task God puts in front of us. All these gifts come from the Holy Spirit by request of God and his Son, Jesus Christ to each and every one of us as we need it. These gifts can be given at any time throughout our lives. From Galatians 5:22-23 these gifts include:

Wisdom

Knowledge

Faith

Healing

Miracles

Prophecy

Distinguishing (Discerning) between Spirits

Speaking in Different Tongues

Interpretation of Different Tongues

Let's quickly step through what these gifts mean or what they could mean.

Wisdom. Wisdom is the gift to make choices and give leadership that is according to God's will.

Knowledge. Knowledge is the gift to comprehensively understand a spiritual issue or circumstance.

Faith. Faith is the gift to trust God and inspire others to trust God in any circumstances.

Healing. Healing is the gift to use God's healing power to cure a person who is ill, wounded, or suffering.

Miracles. Miracles is the gift to display signs and miracles that give credibility to God's Word and the Gospel message

Prophecy. Prophecy is the gift to declare a message from God.

Distinguishing (Discerning) between Spirits. This is a gift to recognize whether or not something is truly from God (or not) or is in accordance with righteousness (or not).

Speaking in Different Tongues. This is the gift to communicate in a foreign language you do not have experience with and/or to converse with those who speak that language.

Interpretation of Different Tongues. This is the gift to interpret the speech and/or writings of a different language and translate it back to others on your own.

Paul tells us that we will lack no spiritual gifts as we wait for Jesus Christ to return. Even though some gifts appear more often than others, some may come and go, the Holy Spirit will provide what we need when we need it.

So how do we figure out what gift the Holy Spirit has put inside of us?

I have found four things that have helped me discover what my gifts have been over the years. And yes, they have changed as I have gained experience, grown in my faith, and started listening to others in my inner circle. I have found that Prayer, Life Experiences, Spiritual Gifts Surveys, and Perspectives of others have help me to discover what my gifts are.

Prayer may seem obvious, but one day I decided to be intentional with my prayer. Of course, I pray for others that I thought they could use prayers of healing, prayers of concern, and prayers of love. But I started to also include prayers of self-discovery. Remember that a prayer is a conversation with God. When you pray to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, a special line of communication opens up and we can be one-on-one with God. Ask him to reveal what your purpose is and what gifts he may have sent is not only appropriate but gives God great joy in knowing that your faith is showing you that there is a purpose and you are intentionally trying to discover it.

Life experiences can help to strengthen our understanding of ourselves and how much God has our back in difficult or unusual situations. I believe that God will send us a quick, possibly short-term gift, when needed. Years ago, I found myself in a difficult family situation. My brother-in-law took his own life and while I was on the phone with his wife, the police called to let her know. I froze knowing that I needed to do something. First, I called my husband and told him to meet me at his parents' home. Then I prayed. Sitting in my car, outside of Nifty Fifty's in Delco, I asked God to just simply give me whatever I needed in the moment to help my family. Because of the distress and shock being experienced by my family, I had to call other family members to tell them what happened. I am not a phone call kind of person with folks I don't know well. But God helped me to stay calm and use Wisdom fed to me in that moment. I moved forward in blind faith. I look back at that crazy moment and realize that God gifted me everything I needed. I cannot be any more grateful. Praise God!

Spiritual Gifts Surveys are also a great tool to narrow down what your spiritual gifts may be so you can explore them, pray about them, and talk with others about them. For me, just going through several different surveys over the years helped me to better understand what the gifts mean and how I could possibly use them. I remember, years ago, one of my gifts fell into an evangelism category. Umm... God? Excuse me? Evangelism? In this category, the Holy Spirit Gifts of Faith was prominent. After talking to my pastor at the time, he helped me realize that I

was able to show my faith and inspire others in their faith because of my love of storytelling. At that time, my storytelling were the songs I was singing in the Praise Team. Singing music about God, His Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was a form of evangelism using my gift of Faith. Amazing!

Quite often we need to rely on others around us, especially our church family, family, friends, and mentors, to help us see what we cannot see ourselves. When we are truly using our gifts and living our lives for God, even if we are still trying to figure it out, we produce what is called the Fruit of the Spirit. We may not even realize that we are producing fruit, but others notice. We can start with the Fruit of the Spirit that other's see in us and work our way back to the gift that God has given us through the Holy Spirit. Here is what they are:

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-Control

Not sure what fruit you are producing or what fruit others see in you? Let's do this. Today you were given stickie notes and a marker. On 9 of the stickie notes one of the Fruit of the Spirit is listed. You also have blank ones and a marker to repeat a Fruit of the Spirit or write some other characteristic or gift you see in someone. I want you to walk around and stick one to someone that exhibits that fruit. For example, if you see that a person is always joyful, good energy, place the "Joy" stickie on that person. In return, you must let others place stickies on you. Let's see what we can discover!

When I did a similar activity years ago, I found myself covered in stickies that said "Joy." I had no idea that is how other church member perceived me. It made me reflect on why that was so and how I can continue producing that fruit. My Joy brought out joy in others. Amazing!

Discovering what our spiritual gifts are is an ongoing process. We may never discover a gift that lines up perfectly with what is listed in the scriptures. But what we can do is journey through some self-discovery and figure out... What's My Gift? Never stop the journey with God. Amen.

Benediction

What's My Gift? A totally legitimate question that leans into finding out through prayer, life experiences, spiritual gifts surveys, and the perspectives of others. Explore not only who you are but whose you are. What is gift is God giving you now? Go find out and serve your Lord. Amen.