

Doing Church pt 3 – Spiritual Gifts 1 Corinthians 12

Good Morning Mercy Church! 1 Corinthians 12.

How many of you had the great fortune of being in a high school where they did class superlatives? You know what I'm talking about? Most likely to succeed, best dressed..etc? We are right here in graduation season where all that stuff has just been published. I was actually given a superlative... "Best Eyes." I kid you not. I think it was because my friends felt bad that I was mediocre at everything so they just tossed that one in there. I polled our staff team &

- Paige Taylor – Most Likely to Go Broke through identity theft

- Charlie King – Cutest Couple & Most Spontaneous

- John Hellams – Best Speaker

- Scott Urbanek – Most Athletic

** Senior Yearbook Photos **

Today we are talking about Spiritual Gifts. And a lot of times when people hear "spiritual gifts" they have a mental shift to something like spiritual superlatives. Things you can do in the Christian life better than others. And if you are not a Christian, maybe you think this is the part where people start rolling on the floor being "filled with the spirit" and stuff. It's not that either and I'm going to show you that today.

Here's what is underneath all this: God has a specific plan and purpose for your life. And he's custom-made you with a gift to fulfill that purpose. And when you employ the gifts he's given you for the purpose he gave it...it unlocks a passion and enjoyment of the Christian life!

Today we are going to figure out what gifts are and here's the cool thing: you are going to leave here with a game plan to figure out your own spiritual gift. Not a formula but more of a roadmap. Gonna be good. Let's get to work.

1 Corinthians 12:1-30

[1] Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. [2] You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. [3] Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

Not surprisingly the Corinthians didn't really get what was supposed to happen in church. After all they were first generation Christians. Nobody grew up going to church because church just started. Paul says that they need to put the things they learned about religion from their pagan days up on the shelf. That stuff is no good for them now. See in their worship of pagan idols who were "mute" which is his subtle jab saying they were just lumps of carved wood... what would happen is a priest or somebody speak for the deity, tell you what you needed to do to gain his favor... then you would leave and go apply. There was no interaction, just come and watch the show. The church was to be a totally different thing entirely. It was a lively interactive gathering. Apostles preaching, miracles, prophecies, communion, baptisms, tongues. But in Corinth, there were a lot of people treating it like the pagan temple. They came for the weekly show.

Same is true today in our church. Plenty of people on any weekend here are not members of the church. Not here or

anywhere else. Some of the people who ARE members are not involved in ministry here and some who are involved in ministry aren't members. My old pastor used to say that's why the church looks like a college football game: 22 people in desperate need of rest surrounded by 22k people in desperate need of exercise.¹

This is not to slam on you ok. I think many have never been taught well about why your ministry is important. You give, you invite people to church, you go home and try to apply the sermons... You probably think you are doing well but still... Church is more of an activity for you.

Many of us treat church like a 9th grade boy treats girls. Gotta keep my options open and make sure I don't commit to anyone in case something better comes along. So I come, sit, watch, and leave. When I can. Friends, That's not church!! And my goal today is to help you see **Church is not an event you attend, it's a community you belong to.** We believe every member should be a minister. And active participant in the ministry of the church. And today you are going see why we believe that and how it plays out. So those of you doing ministry should use today as a heart check as to why you do it, those of you not doing ministry should use it as a heart check as to why you are on the sidelines. And those of you who aren't Christians, but are considering these claims, get to hear what you'd be getting into! Here we go: two questions Paul is going to answer:

What is a church? And what is my role in the church?

He actually answers the second one first:

1. What is my role in a church?

¹ Shout out to Danny Franks & J.D. Greear. Forget now who coined it but I heard it said monthly for 10 years. It stuck.

Ok he's going to go in depth on an analogy in a minute. But before the analogy let me show you the thing he.. analogs? [4] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. [7] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good..

Remember how we talked about Pagan worship services being a come and watch show? This description is VERY different. Look at verses 6 & 7... there are many activities and the same God is empowering all of them... in... everyone! Verse 7 knocks it home: everyone is given a manifestation of the spirit. So whatever these spiritual gifts are... everyone has one. And when the church gathers together everyone has some kind of experience with the God who is actively empowering these gifts with everyone.

And why does he give a manifestation to each? FOR THE COMMON GOOD. You MUST catch that. Really the rest of the passage is going to build off of that. **What is your role in the church?**
To use your spiritual gift for the common good of those in the church.

Listen to me, when God wants to work in someone's life... he employs a person to do it. People are God's plan A for carrying out his purposes here in the world. You get that? That's a big takeaway today. PEOPLE are God's plan A. He wants to use others to do something in your life. And... he wants to use YOU to do something in someone else's life. Get that? You may feel like you are a messed up person with nothing to offer anyone. Good. Now you are ready to be used by God. Because I PROMISE he has a plan to use you to move in someone else's life. Someone

else's relationship with God is going to hinge on YOU being willing to be used BY God in their life.
Examples from my life: Chuck, Chad, Rick, Logan, Bob, JD

I'll prove it...

[8] For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, [9] to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. [11] All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills

So what is a spiritual gift?

- **A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given to every Christian to build up others in Christ.**

1. It's something different than a natural talent. Yes, sometimes it can go along with a natural aptitude like maybe I would be good at public speaking. But, something more happens with a spiritual gift. Because the Spirit is empowering it, when someone is using their gift it is like Christ is working through them directly into others in the church in a unique empowering way. It's like with Scott Urbanek. Every Christian is supposed to encourage other Christians right? But when you get around Scott, he has a way of saying the same words your or I would say...but you feel uplifted by him. He's so

encouraging he can tell you your dog died and you'd walk away feeling great. God has gifted Scott with an ability to speak hope and life (that's what encouragement is) into others. Others experience that facet of God through Scott.

2. You know its being expressed when it is building up someone's faith. It's not like you get some warm glow or something when you use your gift. Up down LR A-B-B-A "GIFT MODE!" A spirit filled church isn't a bunch of people shouting & taking laps. Sometimes a church thinks they have to like conjure the presence of the Lord into its gathering like he's some cloud...He was present in a cloud in the OLD TESTAMENT. NOW, His Spirit lives in CHRISTIANS. So yes, the Spirit of the Lord is here because Christians are here! And a spirit filled church is one where most of the believers in the church are ministering to others in a way that encourages and builds up others. It's not one guy doing and everyone else watching. It's everyone doing.
3. Now sometimes I sense there is confusion over how this squares with obedience to God's commands. For example...if I don't have the gift of evangelism, do I need to share the gospel? And...I'm pretty sure I don't have the gift of tithing so do I tithe? Here's how you can think about it: We are each called to obey God's commands. But there are some commands that as we obey them God infuses them with his

power in a supernatural way that causes others to see more of him through our obedience.

It's supernatural because the way it works is empowered by God himself and its aim...so that others draw closer to God through Christ.

Now in verses 7-9 & 28-30 he lists off a few of the gifts so we can get an idea of how this plays out.

- Apostles, prophets teachers, wisdom, administration – these are the gifts God gives to people so they may lead the church. It doesn't make them any more or less spiritual to have that gift, that's just what God has given that person for the building up of other Christians.
- Faith – The supernatural ability to believe God is going to deliver and be faithful. These are the people who are rock-solid in times of crisis. That's who you want around you because their faith builds up your faith.
- Tongues – I know you saw that one. My commitment to you is...next week. Or maybe the week after. Tough to tell. But chapter 14 is all about that gift. This chapter is not about the differences between the gifts but instead their common purpose.
- You know there is no comprehensive list of Spiritual Gifts in scripture? There are at least 4 lists and they all list different things. The point is not to pick yours out of the list in scripture, the point is **God wants to work for his glory in other people's lives and he wants to use YOU to do it!**

And he's given you a gift or ability to do that!

Ok Next comes the answer to the first question: **What is the Church?**

Paul is about to go on a 15 verse metaphor to explain what the church is and his metaphor is that the church is the body of Christ. Let me read it to you

[12] For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. [13] For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

[14] For the body does not consist of one member but of many. [15] If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. [16] And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? [18] But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. [19] If all were a single member, where would the body be? [20] As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

[21] The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." [22] On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, [24] which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, [25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

[27] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. [28] And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second

prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. [29] Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? [30] Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

What is a church? His loud and clear message is: The Church is a body

A body has a whole lot of different parts that are all needed to function properly. It's pretty mind blowing right? According to Wikipedia...the body has 206 bones, over 600 skeletal muscles, about 60 chemical elements including lead, copper, aluminum & arsenic. Many of these things on their own are poisonous but when combined with the others they make up the glory that is sitting in front me here. Your brain can store 100 trillion facts and make 15,000 decisions a second. Your nose can smell up to 10k different odors and your tongue can taste one part of quinine in 2 million parts of water. Each element, each body part, has a role to play. And when these elements work together, it is amazing.

THAT is the thing Paul is comparing the church to. And you are one of those body parts. And your spiritual gift...that's the thing that tells you what part you play. I want to show you the implications Paul laces through those 15 verses about what this means for us:

We fight for unity – vv 12-13

In two verses Paul says the word “one” five times. And it makes a lot of intuitive sense. He says

[12] For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

The body has to work *together*. The parts cannot function independently. That would be to my harm. My stomach wants to eat deep-fried everything. My heart says hey man if you do that,

you dead. Instead the heart and stomach work together for one goal: keeping me alive.

The same thing has to be true for Mercy Church. The goal this time is keeping the church thriving and healthy. So we center ourselves around the gospel of Jesus Christ and his mission to make the saving message of Christ known in the whole world. That's what drives us. I know everyone comes to church with at least a little bit of a different idea of what church should look like. You think I should preach a certain way, the music should sound a certain way, and we should prioritize certain ministries. And I'm not saying you are wrong. I hope we have differences in fact we are about to talk about that.

BUT, how we handle our different ideas is everything. I had a brother come to me and graciously ask me what our plans were for building more “care” into how we serve our people. Reality is, he saw “a caring spirit” as something vital to the Body and was concerned we were lacking in it. I was so thankful for that conversation! We are making real progress now. Leader training begins with our value – people are the mission. We must care for people on every team and in every group. The goal wasn't unity for unity's sake. The goal was unity so that the name of Christ would be exalted better here in this Body of believers!

We celebrate our diversity

[14] For the body does not consist of one member but of many. I am so thankful Paul gets so simple with the analogy. It is one I can teach my kids really easily. Your body is not a bunch of feet! It's a bunch of *different* parts. Hear what that means: **unity does not mean uniformity!**

The only time there is uniformity in the human body...is when it decomposes after being dead for a long time. Everything turns to dust. Nobody wants that. And more times than not uniformity in the church body can be a sign of spiritual death.

Listen that means we celebrate our cultural diversity. I think we all know that right now this is a pretty white church. BUT, I am thankful to God for the diversity that is developing here. Courtney and I had dinner with several members of the Mercy Family who represent minority cultures the other night and we just talked & dreamed about what it will look like to see mercy become a more culturally diverse church which would be more representative of what heaven will look like some day. We don't know all the answers but we are headed in the right direction.

Another even more direct implication is that it means not everyone is going to have the same ministry passions as you. Some will be more passionate about overseas church planting, some about one-on-one discipleship, some about local outreach to those in need. And you'll be tempted to think...well I don't see this church engaging in ministry to a certain segment of society I'm passionate about so I'm going to leave. Wait a second...maybe you are the elbow we've been missing.

Sometimes I feel like you guys are waiting for me to present the ministry ideas...even though you have your own...and you hope what I present lines up with what you are passionate about.*

consider leading us into that space! To which you say "wait isn't the pastor supposed to be in charge of all ministry ideas?"

GOTCHA! I'm not the head of the church! Jesus is the head of the Church. I help *lead* the church but that's because that's how he's gifted me. My job is actually

Ephesians 4.11-12 – he gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, the pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.

My job is to help prepare you for the ministry God has gifted you for! You see a problem in our church? Don't use that as an excuse to run away. Maybe that's why God sent you here!

There are a lot of different ways to serve in our church right now. And more that you can lead us into. We've got people going to serve the homeless, we've got people discipling refugee kids on Wednesdays, we've got preparing this place for worship every weekend, we've got people caring for needs of our church members...all kinds of places. Leads me to the next thing...

You need the church, and the church needs you

[17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? [18] But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. [19] If all were a single member, where would the body be?

Unity, not uniformity. I love the weird examples Paul gives. Like...imagine if your whole body were an eye. You'd be like Mike Wazowski from *Monster's Inc.* Except without the mouth, ears, legs, & arms. Just...an eye. And he says where would be the hearing? Where would be ANYTHING? Not only would it look bizarre, it wouldn't function. Nor would it function if you were a whole bunch of eyes. That's verse 19. Just a bunch of eyes? Would look terrifying and wouldn't be able to live because no vital organs.

Paul's rather humorous but VERY direct point: you need others and others need you. No body part has everything it needs. Some of you are the mouth...just check with your friends they will affirm. You need the brain and the hand. The brain to know when you need to be quiet and the hand to shut you up. The shoulder needs the finger to scratch it. The Nose needs the finger to pick it. EVEN the hidden body parts are important!

[21] The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." [22] On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think

less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty

Paul is saying there are certain parts of the body aren't as...representable. So we cover them up. Which would be great for some of us to remember as we get into summer. I'm not sure why 70% of CLT wears spandex "work out clothes" to dinner. Whoever LuLu Lemon is needs to put out a field guide for how to pull it off. ANYWAYS.

The point is there are some body parts that are less visible, But that doesn't make them less valuable....

It's easy for some of you to think that because you are not up here preaching or singing that you are somehow less important to the body of Christ. Listen you gotta kill that. There are a few people whose ministry is to serve the rest of our ministry team members. HQ team? They come in, set up, and make sure others are all hydrated and well fed as they serve each week. Does that make them less valuable? No! They are creating that culture of care and community that makes us a family and not an event. Just like body parts need one another, so the church needs you and YOU need the church! There is no such thing as lone ranger Christianity. Christianity is a group project.

We are all in this together

[25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

The reason we give honor to one another and we care for one another is because we are all in this together. You know this right...if one part of your body gets hurt, the other parts have to compensate to make up for it. When I tore my ACL, MCL, PCL in my right leg, my arms and my left leg got more work & tired.

Compensating on crutches. Same in the body. When one suffers we all suffer together and if one is honored we all rejoice together. There must be no division in the body. The only reason for division is when one body part is actively harming the rest. A church should never be divided over personalities or preferences. Listen: the reason you leave a church is because you believe the message and or mission of the church has been corrupted or lost entirely...or because it's clear he's designed your gift to work best in a different body. **Basically, don't run from something, run towards something.**

You don't like the music? Big deal! Not everything is exactly according to my preference. If we fight for unity it will allow us to deal with and grow through every obstacle except deviance from the message or the mission.

Sad irony – I've seen churches split over surface things like worship styles & personality conflicts yet tolerate all kinds of doctrinal problems.

What does this all of this look like for us?

1. You should belong to a church body

Some people are really commitment averse when it comes to...well...anything. But I definitely see it in church life. Listen how are we supposed to rely on you and how are you supposed to rely on others if you just show up every once in a while? This is really blunt in this passage: YOU CANNOT SAY "I DON'T NEED THE CHURCH." Non-Christians this is a big challenge to you if you say, "I'm cool with God, just not the church." God doesn't work that way. Christian, you cannot casually belong to the body of Christ! You need to quit dating the church and join it! Again doesn't have to be here but it needs to be somewhere. You need to surrender that autonomy because listen...The hand isn't a body all by itself. It needs the rest of the parts and God is saying as flawed and messed up as those other body parts may be, and as

scary as it might be to join yourself to them, that's a whole lot better than being a hand out on your own.

Quick application: Some of you need to come to Starting Point. This Coming Weekend. You need to belong and this is a way for you to do that here at Mercy. Saturday Night & Sunday Morning. Sign up on the website: mercycharlotte.com/startingpoint

2. You need a job

Ok throughout this you've heard me say you need the church and the church needs you. God has wired you to use your gift so that we see Christ through you!

Your first question is probably, OK THEN...HOW DO I KNOW MY SPIRITUAL GIFT?

I'm going to avoid pointing you to exactly one resource. I will give you a couple of questions to answer based on our understanding of a spiritual gift:

- **What type of ministry are you passionate about?** If you say, "I don't know" well then jump into a ministry here and we'll work it out. Better to start somewhere than nowhere.
- **What do other believers say your strengths are?** Ask other believers who know you what they think you are wired for
- **What need is there in the church body?** – sometimes gifts come about initially through filling a need. For example you may find you have the gift of administration and that all starts by serving on a tear down team and you see how things can be done better and you step in and help improve things. Yes assessments are good and so are conversations...but the best way to figure it out is by serving others. It's like trial and error until you figure out what gifting God has given you. Just start serving and we'll figure it out.

You hear a pattern? Get in and start serving somewhere!

A quick aside: There are some of you who've been around here who need to stop hiding behind excuses and commit to ministry here. I see parents of young children who won't serve on a ministry team out of a fear that being here for 2.5 hours on a Sunday messes up your kids schedule. But as a parent of 4 let me tell you what really going to mess up your kids is them observing a Christianity where you aren't visibly sacrificing yourself for others. If you can't do Sunday fine. That's not the point. Get on a ministry team that serves the body throughout the week. The point is God wants to use you in the lives of others!!!

I see single people afraid of committing because it will mess up their ability to take spontaneous lake trips. To which I say: Of course it will! Commitment requires sacrifice but there is more joy in ministry when you are giving your time and energy to serve others than when you are just serving yourself.

This is when the gospel starts to come alive in a really big way in your life. See sin has a way of making me the center of my world and making me think I will be happy. That's a lie. I keep trying to fill that tank and it never works. But when I lean into the gospel that says Jesus gave his life to serve me, and calls me to follow him there, that's when I find true life. We mentioned this idea a few weeks ago as the freedom of self-forgetfulness.² The idea is: our culture tells us happiness comes when you focus on yourself. Yet that never delivers. The more we focus on ourselves the more obsessed and eventually enslaved we become to pursuing some abstract sense of happiness. Our lack of commitment to others doesn't give us true freedom & happiness. But God tells us that there is actually freedom in forgetting yourself. On losing yourself into Christ and focusing on serving others. In commitment that you initially think will

² Term & Idea comes from Tim Keller's book by that name.

deny you freedom, you actually find it. In serving others you actually find joy in your own life.

Yes, one clear way is to get on a ministry team. But, here is a more basic application. Consider incorporating into your vocabulary one simple question to those around you: **What can I do to serve you?**

To your church, to your friends, to your family, to your co-workers...Serve them! See what happens when you dive into the gospel that way. Trust that God will bless you in it.

3. Come to church expecting God to show up!

Ok listen this one I learned from my mentor when he taught me on this passage. The reality is, the primary place where these gifts were put into practice was when the church gathered together for worship. That's a big deal! It was really challenging to us this week as we were talking about it. Do we come to church expecting God to show up? Do we expect to meet and experience Christ as others use their gifts for that purpose? Do we expect God to use EACH OF US to show Christ to someone else? Ya'll...that changes how you think about church. I'm not just coming to hear something. I'm coming to give and receive something!

We've been talking as a leadership team about how we can continue to cultivate more participation in our worship and we'll be trying some things. Sunday should be a day marked by anticipation of what God is going to do...What if that were your car ride here? Well... a whole bunch of people gifted by the Holy Spirit are all gathering together today. I WONDER WHAT GOD IS GOING TO DO? AND THEN...I WONDER WHAT HE'S GOING TO DO THROUGH ME!? If we felt that way, we'd all be praying Sunday morning...God use me today to show Christ to someone! What if we came to our community groups like that! In fact one thing God has been teaching me is that every time I have a

conversation with another person...that is an opportunity to give them Christ! And to experience the love of Christ in some way. God wants to do something in someone's life and he's going to use YOU to do it! People often pray...God I need your wisdom. God has provided you that wisdom! IN THE CHURCH! God I need help with my marriage. He's given you people in the church! God I never had a parent to show me how to follow Christ....He's given you parents in the church!!

LISTEN TO ME: PEOPLE ARE GOD'S PLAN A! When God wants to move in someone's life...he uses one of his PEOPLE to do it! And you, you are that person!