

“Discover the GEM in You”

I Corinthians 12:4-11

Sermon Series: BELIEVE Week 17: Spiritual Gifts

The Rev. Dr. Douglas C. Hoglund

The Woodside Church

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It was a simple package, wrapped in plain brown paper, and tied with ordinary string. The postal service carried the undistinguished parcel in the usual way. Besides the address to a large corporation, the package bore no unusual markings. When it arrived at one of the branch offices, an armored car quickly transferred it to corporate headquarters. There an employee wrote on the package, “To Janet,” marked it “Personal,” and placed it in a double-sealed vault.

Why all the mystery? Why was this simple package shrouded in secrecy and guarded with top security? Inside the plain brown wrappings was a 438 carat uncut diamond, the fourteenth largest in the world. It was cut and polished by the Zale corporation into thirteen gems, the largest one, dubbed “The Light of Peace” diamond is over 130 carats. Legend has it that the head of Zales gave the diamond as a surprise present to his seven year old granddaughter Janet. When finally shown the mysterious and lavish gift, valued at nearly \$5,000,000, Janet replied, “Grandpa, I don’t want a diamond! Please, can I have an ice cream cone?”

If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, you have received an incredible, priceless gift – an abundant relationship with God and eternal life with God. All the diamonds on earth cannot purchase that gift for you. It is freely given to everyone on the planet through the death and resurrection of Jesus. All we need is to believe Him, receive Him and follow Him. Yet our gift-giving God does not stop there. As you follow Jesus you discover He places gifts in you. That is our BELIEVE topic this week: Spiritual Gifts. There are several passages about Spiritual Gifts in Scripture. Here is one:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. (Romans 12:4-6)

Scripture teaches every Christian, every disciple of Christ, receives one or more Spiritual Gifts from the Lord (Romans 12:6, I Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:7, I Peter 4:10). When do you receive spiritual gifts? When the Holy Spirit comes into your life. How many gifts do you receive? Scripture does not say. It could be one or several.

What is the purpose of Spiritual Gifts? That we know for sure. Spiritual Gifts are the tools to accomplish God’s mission in the world – to help all people love God, grow in grace and share with others. Many ask the question, “What is my purpose?” or “Why on earth am I here...on earth?” You will understand your **purpose** when you understand the kind of **person** you are. What God made you to *BE* determines what He intends you to *DO*. This is the secret of knowing God’s will for your life! Discovering your Spiritual Gifts helps you discover who you are and why you are here. Using your Spiritual Gifts

will bring you great joy. You will finally feel: this is what I was made for. It's surprising, and tragic, that many Christians do not use their Spiritual Gifts. God gives you this incredibly priceless beautiful gem and, like Janet, you'd rather have an ice cream cone. Why? There are a lot of myths about the gifts.

1. Myth: Only pastors have gifts for ministry. Truth: **Every Believer Has Gifts For Ministry.** Paul says:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (I Corinthians 12:7)

Even though you did not go to seminary, you are in the ministry. God's will is for every Christian to discover and use his or her spiritual gifts. You are a gifted minister, you have a ministry, you have a calling.

2. Myth: Some gifts are more important than others. Truth: **All Gifts Are Equally Important.** Paul describes the Church like a body – the Body of Christ.

...there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (I Corinthians 12:25-27)

Some feel the more visible gifts are more important. The elder and deacon, the pastor and worship leader are more valuable than the Growth Group leader, the Greeter, the kitchen worker or the clean-up team. The real powerful people are the sound booth techs since they can shut me off. Paul says this thinking is silly. My hand and foot are more visible than my liver and heart but I would not want to go through life without any of them.

3. Myth: I can use my gifts on my own. Truth: **Each Gift Depends on All the Others.**

In fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable (I Corinthians 12:18-22)

The Church is not an institution, a club or a bureaucracy. The Church is not an organization. It is an organism – a living, breathing, growing, changing being. An institution or a club can still function if only 10-40% of its membership is active. But your body will be in serious trouble if 60-90% of it did not work. Your body needs every part to do its part. And so does the Body of Christ. Every member depends on every other member. We cannot afford to have a few people burn out by trying to run everything and have the majority feel unneeded, unappreciated and inactive. We cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

4. Myth: Some gifts are miraculous, others are mundane. Truth: **All Gifts Are Miraculous.** In I Corinthians 12:7-11 Paul mentions some pretty miraculous gifts: message of wisdom, message of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in tongues or heavenly languages, interpreting tongues or heavenly languages. But in Romans 12:6-8 he speaks about gifts which seem more mundane: serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, governing, showing mercy. Some people desire the seemingly miraculous gifts. Others are afraid of them. Pentecostal churches emphasize the first group of gifts. Presbyterians, being the “Frozen Chosen” are more comfortable with the quieter ones. When I was in college, I was told by another believer that I was not a complete Christian until I received the gift of tongues. The truth is: all gifts are miraculous.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (I Corinthians 12:11)

All gifts are supernatural and miraculous since they all come from the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit wants each congregation to have all the gifts. If you have the gift of prophecy, tongues or healing don't hide it. Use it along with all the other gifts.

The Holy Trinity places a GEM in you. We want to help you discover and use it. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (I Corinthians 12:4-6)

Here are three steps which help you discover and use your GEM. The G stands for **GIFT**. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. (v. 4)

We have a simple, free, easy to use method to discover your Spiritual Gifts. It's called <http://giftstest.com> created by Beliefnet.com You can find it by scanning the QR code in your bulletin, by going to the Woodside app or by simply typing in this address online. It has 66 easy to answer questions, takes about 5 minutes and immediately scores and gives you the results. You will be told your top 5 gifts and how you scored on all the gifts. You can email the answers to yourself or a friend. I encourage you to do this in your Growth Groups this week. Above all, please email your answers to Linda Marr at linda@woodside-church.org so we can help you unwrap and use your Spiritual Gifts.

Next, the E stands for **ENERGY**.

There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work (v. 6).

The word “working” in Greek is *energemata* from which we get our word *energy*. Simply stated, God gives you the energy to use your gift. I see many who are burned out doing God's work. This includes pastors. It is tragic. Why do we get burned out? We run on our own steam instead of God's power. How do you access God's power and avoid burnout?

1. Talk to God in Prayer – find out what He wants you to do.
2. Time Out from your ministry – every once in a while take a Sabbath
3. Timothy – Always invite others to do the ministry with you. Never serve alone.

Every staff member, elder and deacon, every youth leader, teacher, Growth Group leader, kitchen worker, greeter, sound tech, choir member, worship leader and mission worker must find a Timothy. We don't need any Supermen or Wonder Women. We need Teams and Teams need Timothys.

Finally, M stands for **MINISTRY**.

There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. (v. 5)

The Greek word for “service” is *diakonion* which is often translated as deacon or minister. Your ministry is the place where you use your gift. Now your ministry might be here within these walls among God's people but your ministry could also be beyond these walls in prisons, homeless camps, nursing homes, businesses, schools, soccer fields, government offices. Your ministry might be starting new churches, leading a Growth Group with friends who don't go to church, launching an environmental clean-up project, fixing up an under resourced urban school.

How do you find your ministry? This is a crucial step because you may have the gift of teaching but your ministry is teaching adults not children. Here are some suggestions for finding your ministry:

1. Ask God: Pray and see what doors He opens, what hungers He gives you.
2. Ask Yourself: What gives me joy and energy? What makes me feel alive?
3. Ask Others: Take the Spiritual Gift Test and then talk to one of our pastors or staff members. We won't twist your arm to do a church job. We'll help you find what God is calling you to do.
4. Try Somethings, Stick With What Works: When I asked several leaders at Woodside how they got into the ministry they are now doing this seemed to be the most common response. They tried some different ministries, stopped doing the ones that weren't a fit and continued in the ones that were.

Now you need all three – G. E. M. They are interlocking circles. Imagine knowing your Gift and Ministry but not having the Energy to do it. Or maybe you are energetic and want to do a ministry but it's not your gift. Perhaps you have the gift and energy but no place to use it. When you have all three, then you are living in the sweet spot in the middle – exactly where God calls you to be. Recently Scott Burgess, a member of Woodside, shared this letter with me.

I've been thinking about the spiritual gifts chapter and wanted to share something with you. When I came back to Woodside in 2006, after 33 years away, I wasn't really looking to change my life. I came because you made an impression on me at my father's memorial service and I wanted to see what one of the Woodside worship services looked like. Michelle, Lizz and I came to a 9 am service, and while I was a little confused by the clapping during worship, I think all three of us enjoyed it. The way the members greeted me made me feel welcome. I didn't realize there was much more in store for me.

After joining Woodside, Michelle and I took the Alpha course. This opened up my eyes to growth groups and then to many other opportunities. I started trying different ministries to see which felt right to me. I've helped set up & clean up after Woodside events, been part of the hospitality team, gone on mission trips to the DR, gone into prison, served the homeless, played blackjack with Alzheimer's patients, built homes, helped the addicted and worked with kids. Some of these I've become passionate about, some I've enjoyed but don't feel strongly drawn to and some just didn't feel right for me (I feel the prison ministry is much safer than adventure club).

I took the spiritual gifts survey a number of years ago. Some of my results made sense to me, but two didn't: Music and Evangelism. Obviously the survey was flawed. Sure I can clap and lift my arms up during worship, but musically gifted? Naw! And evangelize? Are you kidding me? Then the Christian Life Prison and Recovery Ministry came into my life. Since then I've had the opportunity to bring about 14 different musical bands to bless Woodside with Worship. And through the ministry I've had hundreds of opportunities to share the good news of Jesus through a testimony or a message.

It was important to discover my spiritual gifts. But stepping out of my comfort zone and trying things – actually using those gifts – that was the real blessing to me. This is where I learned the truth of this verse:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11.

Scott discovered there is a GEM inside him *when* he used it. Recently we asked Scott to join our Message team and share God's Word with you during worship. It seems the future God planned for him includes more steps out of his comfort zone. There is a GEM inside you. It's time to let it shine.