

# Growing together - using your spiritual gift

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Sermon Audio file

### GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST THROUGH SPIRITUAL GIFTS THE UNIVERSAL CALLING OF GOD-GIVEN PASSIONS

Every human being is a unique creation endowed with specific passions and abilities from the Creator. These core desires captivate the imagination and define identity because they represent what is cared about most in life. Whether a classic hymn or a particular vocation, these intrinsic motivations are deeply rooted.

Scriptural and Historical Framework:

James 1:17 explicitly states that "every perfect gift is from above," establishing God as the ultimate source of all talent.

Christian author and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar famously observed, "You are the only person on earth who can use your ability that you've been given."

Human design consists of a completely unique, irreplaceable blend of interests, experiences, skills, and burdens.

The Spiritual Reality of the Believer:

While all humans possess natural talents by virtue of their physical birth, born-again believers receive an entirely new layer of gifting: spiritual gifts of service. These are divinely engineered to make it possible to serve Jesus Christ by actively serving His church. As 1 Peter 4:10 commands: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Talents are God's gift to the individual; what is done with them is the individual's gift back to God. Believers are the living witnesses of a passing world, and the window of opportunity to grow together effectively is brief.

THE DUALITY OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

The healthy functioning of the local body requires a profound interplay between corporate unity and individual diversity. Though these concepts may seem conceptually opposite, they form the exact mechanism through which the church thrives.

The Grounding of Diversity:

Ephesians 4:7 shifts the focus from structural unity to personal diversity: "But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 serves as the definitive parallel passage: "There are diversities of gifts, but the

same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all."

#### Defining a Spiritual Gift:

A spiritual gift is a divine capacity given to a Christian at the moment of conversion—not at natural birth—for the primary purposes of glorifying God and edifying others. While these gifts frequently operate in tandem with natural, inherent talents, they can also be completely distinct ministries given entirely by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament identifies approximately 19 specific spiritual gifts, ensuring every single believer possesses at least one, while some are entrusted with multiple.

#### The Necessity of Humility:

God couples spiritual gifts directly with divine grace. The greater an individual's level of spiritual gifting, the greater their corresponding need for grace to exercise those gifts in deep humility. Scripture warns that God actively lifts up the lowly while bringing down the proud. Exercising a spiritual gift detached from grace is destructive to the body; believers must humble themselves voluntarily before God, or face being humbled by Him.

#### GIFTS FOR THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

To understand modern spiritual gifts, a theological distinction must be made regarding structural gifts given at the dawn of the church era. Ephesians 4:11 records that Christ "gave some to be apostles and some prophets."

#### The Ministry of Apostles:

Defined as men specifically commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel and plant the earliest Christian churches (cf. Mark 3, Acts 9).

Qualified uniquely by having witnessed the resurrection of Jesus firsthand (cf. Acts 1, 1 Corinthians 9) and validated by the ability to perform miraculous signs and wonders (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:12).

Because these gifts served a strictly foundational purpose before the written Word of God was complete, the office of the Apostle ended with the apostolic era.

#### The Ministry of Prophets:

Acted as direct spoken mouthpieces for God, delivering immediate revelation and foretelling future events.

Along with the New Testament apostles and Old Testament prophets, their corporate ministry concluded once the New Testament canon was fully completed and finalized.

The modern church does not continually rebuild the foundation; it stands firmly upon the completed foundation of the Word of God established thousands of years ago.

#### GIFTS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE CHURCH

In tandem with foundational offices, Christ established ongoing gifts designed for the continual formation, spiritual construction, and local development of believers.

#### The Ministry of Evangelists:

Divinely equipped and empowered to win the lost and proclaim the Gospel to the unreached, exemplified historically by figures like Philip in the Book of Acts.

The Compound Ministry of Pastor-Teachers:

Pastors are uniquely called to shepherd, guide, protect, counsel, and feed the local flock.

Teachers are supernaturally gifted to accurately interpret, explain, and apply the structural truths of Holy Scripture.

The Functional Misunderstanding of Ephesians 4:12:

Ephesians 4:12 states that these leadership gifts are given "for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." A prevalent error interprets this to mean the professional pastor is hired to perform all ministerial duties.

In contrast, the structural syntax of the verse dictates that pastor-teachers are given to fully equip ordinary saints, thereby empowering the everyday members to execute the actual work of ministry. A local church cannot flourish through pastoral effort alone; it must grow from the inside out via the mobilized giftedness of its entire congregation.

THE FIVE-FOLD IMPACT OF EXERCISING GIFTS

When the members of a local church faithfully step into their spiritual gifts, it produces five distinct, transformative hallmarks across the corporate body.

Corporate Unity

According to Ephesians 4:13, these gifts are poured out "till we all come to the unity of the faith." Unity is not uniform alignment on personal preferences; it is achieved when a congregation unites with absolute intensity around the central framework of Scripture and core doctrine.

Deep Intimacy

Ephesians 4:13 connects gifting to the "knowledge of the Son of God." The Greek context implies far more than intellectual information; it denotes a deep, relational, experiential, and ongoing personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. As a believer uses their gift for His glory, Jesus transforms from a historical Savior into a personal, present friend.

Spiritual Maturity

The ultimate objective of church leadership is to bring the body to a "perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). "Perfect" does not imply sinless perfection, but rather robust spiritual maturity.

Practical Application: Spiritual maturity is structurally impossible apart from active Christian service.

Believers who consume church services without serving others become completely consumed by their own perceived needs. The standard complaint—"My needs aren't being met"—must be answered with the diagnostic question: "Whose needs are you actively meeting?" Christian needs are fundamentally satisfied by meeting the needs of others.

#### Theological Stability

Active engagement of spiritual gifts builds institutional and personal defense. Ephesians 4:14 warns "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

Word Study: The Greek word for "trickery" utilized by Paul is *kubeia* ( $\kappa\upsilon\beta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ), from which the English word "cube" is derived. It refers directly to the use of loaded dice.

Satan utilizes loaded dice, operating through spiritual deception, cults, and craftiness to systematically pull believers away from orthodoxy. Exercising spiritual gifts acts as a protective shield, embedding Biblical truth deeply into the daily lifestyle and preventing believers from becoming prey.

#### Radical Authenticity

Ephesians 4:15 demands that believers "speak the truth in love." True Christian authenticity requires an absolute, uncompromised balance of both virtues:

Truth without love degenerates into sheer brutality (e.g., weaponizing scripture to cut others down without regard for their soul).

Love without truth degenerates into absolute hypocrisy (e.g., validating cultural tolerance, "personal truths," or sinful lifestyles while withholding God's absolute standard).

Modern culture aggressively demands a false love devoid of objective truth. The church must reject this compromise, anchoring its relationships firmly in absolute truth wrapped in deep Christian love.

#### THE POTENTIAL OF INTERDEPENDENT GROWTH

The corporate design of the church strictly forbids isolationism. Growth is a joint venture catalyzed by local interconnectedness.

##### The Anatomy of the Body:

Ephesians 4:15-16 illustrates that the church grows into Christ, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

True Kingdom growth is not merely a statistical rise in weekly attendance numbers or baptism counts. It is the inward, structural fortification of individual spiritual walks.

A healthy believer cannot experience true fulfillment while keeping their faith entirely localized or hidden. Following Jesus was never structured as a solo journey.

#### The Power of Christian Community:

Believers understand the deep complexities of the Gospel far more clearly when engaging in authentic, vulnerable relationships through small groups, corporate Bible studies, and intentional prayer partnerships.

Historical Illustration: The Holocaust survivor and Christian author Corrie ten Boom noted with absolute accuracy: "When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles."

#### SUMMARY CORE TAKEAWAYS

God is the sovereign Author and Giver of both natural talents and spiritual gifts.

Spiritual growth is an inherently corporate journey that requires the practical mobilization of individual spiritual gifts.

True spiritual maturity develops within the intentional vulnerability of small groups and shared relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.

Optimal discipleship is achieved through the intentional combination of corporate Sunday worship and consistent small group fellowship.