

Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (NKJV)

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

It is a couple of weeks before Christmas and I am looking at the gifts I purchased for my wife and two daughters. I must admit I am questioning if each gift is right for each person. Will they like it? Will they use it? Will it benefit others? Will it help them in their life? I think I did well. Now we get to the fun part – the wrapping of each gift. I do not do well wrapping gifts, but I like to wrap them in such a way that you can't tell what the object is until it is unwrapped.

Each of us is different. God made us unique. We each are wrapped in a special way. We are the recipients of many gifts. Some gifts are for our growth, while other gifts are to be shared with others. Do you know what gifts you possess? If you do, how do you use them? To help, I have listed a few below; the scriptures have more.

Acts 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (The Holy Spirit).

Romans 1:11-12 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong – that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 12:9-11 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 See top of page.

Let us use this year to seek the gifts we have, then use them as God intended us to use them.

Lord, bless us this day with the opportunity to share the gifts you have given.

*Jim Kier
Pitman United Methodist Church*

Born to Serve

Galatians 6:10 (NIV)

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

One of my favorite TV shows is *Dirty Jobs* on the Discovery Channel. People worldwide send descriptions or videos of their jobs to the producers of the show and host, Mike Rowe. They explain that their jobs are important and essential but also may be difficult, dirty, nasty, disgusting, menial, or appalling. After reviewing the information, Mike and the producers decide which “dirty jobs” he will try on the show. We never know what jobs are turned down by the producers or which ones Mike may have seen and said, “Nope, I’m not doing that one.”

Do you remember being given a job by a parent, spouse, friend, or employer and saying, “I don’t want to do that,” or “I don’t feel like doing that”? Did your response cause any problem or conflict? When God has presented a job, situation, or opportunity to you, have you ever told Him you did not want to do it, could not do it, or didn’t have the time, ability, patience, or fortitude to do it?

These are not the responses that God wants or expects from us. We sometimes forget that God put us on this earth to have a heart like Jesus, a “servant’s heart.” Jesus took on many menial tasks without hesitation. He washed the feet of others, helped children, served meals, and comforted and helped lepers. No job was too menial or too “dirty” for Jesus while serving others.

Like Jesus, we are to serve others, and if we have a servant’s heart, no job should be beneath us. God is continually putting situations before us and asking us to help a sick or dying friend, visit the lonely, volunteer to clean up areas of our church or community, donate time to help others in need, be a good listener, or provide a shoulder to cry on. To get involved in these takes time away from *our* schedule. But as Christians, we have to give up our schedule and allow God to put us on *His* schedule, the one schedule that best serves Him and others.

My favorite quote regarding having a servant’s heart comes from John Wesley: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can.”

Don’t we all look forward to God saying to us one day, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”? So when God asks us to do a job, we should not hesitate. But if we do, we need to ask God for the grace to do it anyway.

Mike Rowe will eventually retire from his *Dirty Jobs* TV show, and if you and I have careers, we too will eventually retire from them. However, we will never retire from serving God, and through our obedience to Him, we will always try to do those jobs He asks us to do.

Lord, let me be your servant on your schedule, and let me be good to all people with love. Amen.

*Ted Frett
Trinity United Methodist Church*

Tuesday, March 15

Rough Draft

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Everyone who wrote a devotion for this booklet thought about it for a while, got a little nervous, and then started to write. It's likely that most people wrote a rough draft and then rewrote it. Maybe a few times. Perhaps they had someone else read it and give comments for improvement. Then they handed in the final copy. And they still didn't think what they wrote was worthy.

God loves rough drafts. We are His rough drafts. We have such need for improvement.

Sometimes we forget to cross the t's:

we ignore a kindness we could have shown.

Sometimes we use the wrong punctuation:

our tone of voice isn't what it should have been with someone.

Often we write the wrong word:

we wish we could take back something we said.

Sometimes we have a sentence in the wrong place:

we don't ask God for guidance before we start our day — we blunder on and later ask Him to bless our choices.

Sometimes we just can't quite find the right word:

we avoid someone who needs us because we don't know what to say or do, yet we know all they need is our presence.

We don't think our writing is good:

we think we don't have much to offer God.

The more writers write, the better their writing becomes. Isn't it the same with our faith?

The more we practice our faith, the stronger it becomes.

The more we read God's Word, the easier it is for us to discern His will.

The more we pray to Him, the easier it is to feel His touch.

Our life — God's rough draft — will never be perfect until we meet Him face to face, but it will definitely work its way from rough draft status to a final copy. All writers learn to trust their editors, just as we must learn to trust God, the chief editor of our lives.

Lord, thank you that you have promised to change our rough draft status to a worthy final version. You do a better job holding the pen than we could ever do.

Claudia Cuddy

Trinity United Methodist Church

Letting Go

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

Be still, and know that I am God.

I have heard this Bible verse for years. I have always thought it meant that I was supposed to just be quiet and remember that God is almighty and powerful and the One in control. I thought I just had to acknowledge God and believe that He was God.

What I've been missing all these years about this verse is the true meaning of "Be still." When God tells us to *be still*, He is, in fact, asking us to *let go*. I've learned this past year that what God is telling me to do in this verse is to let go of everything and hand it over to Him. So often I am trying to solve all my problems and make all the decisions for my own life. I don't need to do that. I need to let go and turn my life over to Him. I need to let go and know that He will take care of things.

So now, instead of praying and telling God what I think all the answers should be, I pray and give all my cares and concerns to Him and ask Him to show me the way.

I am still, and I listen to Him to hear what He wants for my life. I am still and listen to Him for direction and answers and daily guidance. I am still and ask Him to allow me to do His will.

Because I tend to like to control everything, it's hard to let go of everything and allow God to be in control. But I know the only way I can truly do His will is to let go, be still, and know that He is God.

Dear Lord, help us to be still, surrender our lives to you, and allow you to do your will through us. Amen.

Pat Heritage

Glassboro First United Methodist Church



Christians ... have developed two fundamental expressions of Unceasing Prayer. The first ... is usually called *aspiratory prayer* or *breath prayer*. The most famous of the breath prayers is the Jesus Prayer. It is also possible to discover your own individual breath prayer ... Begin praying your breath prayer as often as possible.

Richard Foster in *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, pp. 122-123)

What is True Beauty?

Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

In a world where we put such intense focus on physical beauty, material possessions (or wealth), and of course that all-important attention given to our earthly “egos,” I would like to reflect on these qualities in the realm of the spiritual rather than just a worldly superficial interpretation. You might say that I would like to look at these characteristics through a pair of the proverbial “rose-colored glasses,” or maybe through the depth, love, and perfect wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To this thought, I pose the query, “What is true beauty?” I dare to say that no matter what the appearance of one’s outward earthly vessel, the tenderness, compassion, and healing power that comes from the Spirit of God within and through us is what truly defines the measure of “our beauty.”

Seeing someone through the eyes of God is the measure of their own beauty. As we pray to be used as an instrument of tangible love in their lives, we can also pray to gain a glimpse of who they really are. Maybe we can help to mend a wound within them, either physical or emotional. Maybe we can help them to know the treasure they are to us and to God. Or maybe, most important of all, we can tell them of God’s plan for the salvation of their souls. Such precious ethereal beauty is within every one of us if we will only filter what we see through the channel of God’s unending love for all of us.

What truly could be more beautiful than the love of God!

*Michael Patrick Murphy
Zion Community Church*

Think on These Things

Whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are true,
Let nobility dwell in the house of righteous.
Teach us Lord how to think upon these things.

For the beauty of a rose, for the wisdom of the old.
Teach us Lord to think upon these things,
and treasure them more than gold!

For music’s sweetest lullabies, for love that fills our children’s eyes.
O Lord we pray your wisdom leads,
to think upon these things.

From a song text, written by Michael Patrick Murphy

The Lord Is My Strength

Philippians 4:13 (KJV)

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

2 Samuel 22:33,37 (KJV)

God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip.

Psalms 18:32 (KJV)

It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV)

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

The Lord revealed to me one day when I asked Him, “What does it really mean to go in the Lord’s strength?” What does that look like? He gave me this illustration, relating to my experiences as a caregiver.

As a Certified Nurse Assistant, I use a “gait belt,” a wide canvas belt placed around a client’s outer clothing to help them transfer from one position to another. It also helps them ambulate (walk) as I walk by their side. The client is still walking on their own, yet I am holding this gait belt to steady the client who is a fall risk.

If the client begins to lean forward or to the left or right, or is off balance, my grip on the back of the gait belt adjusts their posture and helps keep the client from falling. If the client starts to drift, I am able to steady them.

My grip on the belt is like the grip the Lord’s strength has on us. I help the client to walk with my strength. The client is enabled by my help, which is a snapshot of Philippians 4:13 – of going in the Lord’s strength and power with steps that do not slip. The client is walking in the Lord’s strength (with my help).

I will love thee, O LORD, my Strength and Redeemer. Thank you for revealing your presence to me in such a powerful way, as you guard my steps and make my way perfect. It is in my weakness that you are magnified and glorified and I am strengthened through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Diana McMillion

North Raleigh United Methodist Church

My Peace I Leave with You

John 20:19-20 (NKJV)

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Have you ever lost a child while shopping or at the beach? Many years ago, while checking out at a JCPenney's, I lost my four-year-old son. I was frantic! I searched through all the clothes racks to no avail. In about two minutes, I went through every scenario of a child's disappearance. I finally found him in the vestibule singing at the top of his lungs, while smearing the windows with his little hands. Imagine how I felt, so relieved, as my fear turned to joy and peace.

Remember when Mary lost 12-year-old Jesus for three days on their way home from Jerusalem? Luke 2:41-49 tells how they backtracked to the temple where they finally found Him "taking care of His Father's business." What peace and joy. At 12, a son won't take his mother's hand to cross the street, but at four, Jesus probably held Mary's hand whenever they traveled, as she kept Him in view at all times (well, almost all times). It isn't easy being an attentive mom and being there all the time to keep children safe.

Can you imagine how His mother felt as she watched Jesus struggle to Calvary? You know she wanted to take His hand and drag Him out of the procession and prevent the crucifixion. What anguish she faced watching Jesus' pain and suffering.

Now imagine three days later, being huddled behind locked doors in the upper room in fear with the disciples, with all hope dashed of seeing Him again.

But then Jesus came and stood among them! Can you feel Mary's joy? She couldn't believe her eyes. As He showed His hands and side, can you see Mary grabbing hold of those wounded hands and kissing them as she probably did when He hurt them as a child? Her Son, alive, and carrying out the Father's business. What peace and joy!

Just as a parent holds a child's hand to keep the child safe, Isaiah 41:10 and 13 tell us that God our Father will uphold us with His righteous right hand, and not to fear. How do you feel knowing your Father is holding your hand to keep you from being afraid? Now that's peace and joy!

Abba, Father, thank you that you will never let us go, and will hold our hands to keep us forever in your grasp, as our loving parent. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Pastor Sherry Zappala
Emmanuel/St. Paul's United Methodist Churches, Penns Grove*