

THE ORGANIC CHURCH #5: SPIRITUAL GIFTS I INTRODUCTION

I'd like to test a line of logic with you, ready?

- The ***church is the body of Christ***, that is; it is meant to be His physical representation on earth. (*Can we agree on that?*)
- When ***Christ came in the flesh***, His purpose was not for Himself, but to serve as a bridge between God and humanity. (*Can we agree on that?*)
- It is safe to conclude: The ***church, therefore, does not exist for itself*** but as a bridge between God and humanity. (*Can we agree on that?*)

That reasoning is reflected in our church's statement of purpose:

As a church; To **afford** every man, woman, and child in our sphere of influence the **opportunity** to hear, understand and respond to the Gospel

We are trying to exercise that purpose in our practical goals:

- ***To reach deeper into the community where God has placed us~***

That is the ***incentive behind the prayer walk***- it takes our prayers physically into the community.

The "Little Italy" dinner in June- it is a chance to let the community know we are here; and let them know why we are here.

That is the reason for our ***part in the Lake's kid's camp***; it is an opportunity for our community to touch, see, understand, and respond to the Gospel.

The ***lakeside services*** this summer; to reach another segment of the lake community.

If we are the body of Christ, it is instinct to move outward; together, not simply, to collect people in here.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

GOD'S COMMAND IS TO BUILD UP THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE (THE CHURCH): WHAT IS MEANT BY "BUILD UP?"

NAME SOME PRACTICAL WAYS TO "BUILD UP" THE CHURCH

1. THE SPIRITUAL GLUE

But that's a huge undertaking; ***reaching and then discipling people*** who are starting from scratch, spiritually. It's a whole lot harder than attracting folks who already know "church".

But the payback is this: At the end of it all; there will be people who were once were lost, and now are found. There will be people who once were dead, but now live. The difference is; we will have actually done what God has called us to do. It will have made an eternal difference.

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But there's **only one way to take on a God-sized calling**; our church family has to move as one. We must desire the same goal; have the same vision; and move by the same marching orders. That is God's design for the church: **living God; living people; living connection**.

But here's the catch: A church congregation, is a diverse group. We have all kinds of temperaments, ways of reasoning, and personal desires. Even if we come to a consensus on where God is leading (*which is doubtful*); **how do we proceed without flying in all directions?**

Humanly, it's not possible. Perhaps, one or a few people could coerce the rest of us to follow. But that isn't church; that's a dictatorship.

If we are trying to reach a spiritual objective: What we need is a Spiritual presence; one that lives in each of us personally, and yet, leads all of us in the same direction.

And this presence would have to do even more than that to meet the task. That presence would also have to **equip us to do our part**.

We will never be God's church until **we honestly realize a few things:**

- We cannot **be the body** of Christ unless we have Christ's nature in common. Each must become that.
- We cannot **accomplish for God** unless we are **equipped by God**. We must attain that.

That's why God sends us a type of spiritual glue. He has sent us an equipper. He has sent us Himself in the form of the Holy Spirit. (***Anchor text***)

1 Corinthians 12

1. Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:
2. ...no one can say that Jesus is Lord except **by the Holy Spirit**.
4. Now there are **diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit**.
5. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.
6. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.
7. But the manifestation of the Spirit is **given to each one for the profit of all**:

We are **fit together like organs in a body**. Our place in that body is defined by capacities called "spiritual gifts. A church without working gifts is like a physical body without working organs.

If a local church doesn't look like the church of Scripture, you don't have to look any further for the cause. **For the living body to hold together there must be active and engaged spiritual gifts.**

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

NAME TWO FUNCTIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

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DESCRIBE WHAT A CHURCH WOULD LOOK LIKE WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT?

2. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

But what exactly are “spiritual gifts” anyway? Let’s start with a few things they are not:

Spiritual gifts are not natural talents~

A spiritual gift is a capacity given to a person when they allow the Spirit of God to live and work within them. You may have talents. And you may even use them to good. But, unless you are alive in Christ there cannot be spiritual gifts.

Now, a natural talent may be the “pre-wiring” for your gift. But it’s important to realize; spiritual gifts are **more than natural talents dedicated to God**. God may transform a natural talent, but that is not always the way He works.

Spiritual gifts are not to be confused with our responsibilities and roles as Christians~

For example, God equips some members of the body with an extra power in hospitality, but we all have a responsibility to be hospitable.

We all have a responsibility to practice **stewardship**; that is to give a portion of our money and time to the body in which we belong. However, God blesses some in the area of **making and giving**. *Quite frankly, if God allowed most of us all the money we wanted, it would ruin us.*

I think of the founder of the Caterpillar company. As I understand it, he realized from the beginning, his wealth was coming from God. He didn’t need all of it to live, and in fact he gave over 90% back to God. Imagine what physical things were accomplished to spiritual ends!

In other gifts; **kindness, mercy**, and such; we are responsible to be kind and to show compassion, even if it isn’t our “spiritual gift.” However, for the sake of His body, the church, He empowers some above and beyond in these areas.

If those are things spiritual gifts are not; what are some things the Bible says they are?

Here’s a quick list from a C&MA paper compiled by our previous superintendent, Fred Polding:

Romans 12 identifies the following spiritual gifts.

1. *Prophecy* (preaching, inspired speaking)
2. *Service* (ministry)
3. *Teaching* [a special ability to teach spiritual principles]
4. *Exhortation* (encouragement, initiating-stimulating faith)
5. *Giving* (generosity, contributing, sharing)
6. *Leadership* (guiding, ruling, administering)
7. *Mercy* (showing kindness, empathy, comforting)

... added to the list from 1 Corinthians 12.

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8. *Wisdom* (wise counsel, informed speech)
9. *Knowledge* (speaking with understanding, studying)
10. *Faith* [*in extra measure*]
11. *Healing*
12. *Miracles* (doing extraordinary-supernatural things)
13. *Discernment* (distinguishing truth)
14. *Tongues* (speaking in languages never heard, ecstatic utterance)
15. *Interpretation of Tongues*
16. *Helps* [Coming along side others]
17. *Apostle* [*Coordinating God's plan over a large area; more on that next week*]
18. *Administration* (managing, putting together systems to accomplish goals)

...Ephesians 4 adds two more.

19. *Evangelist* [*Communicating God's salvation to the individual*]
20. *Pastor* (providing care and leading God's people).

I don't believe this is a closed list. God cannot be limited. He gives special capacities as they are needed for the church, His purposes, and the times. ***Spiritual gifts are capacities that bring about Godly results.***

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

DESCRIBE A FEW SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN YOUR OWN WORDS

LOOK AT THE PERSON TO YOUR LEFT; WHAT GIFT MIGHT GOD BE WORKING IN THEM?

3. CONNECTING WITH OUR GIFTS

This could cause us some deep anxiety! If the gifts are a must; if there cannot even be real church without them. If even your personal experience in Christ will be tantamount to a coma! That is; you may be alive, but you aren't awake to the experience. ***Then, how do we find and engage our spiritual gifts?***

There's a little passage that holds a clue, if we will take it seriously. The Living Bible puts it in a great way: (**Main text**)

Romans 12

1. And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your **bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice**, holy--the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?

2. Don't **copy the behavior and customs of this world**, but **be a new and different person with a fresh newness** in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you.

3. As God's messenger I give each of you God's warning: Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you.

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4. Just as there are **many parts to our bodies**, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and **it takes every one of us to make it complete**, for we each have different work to do. So we **belong to each other**, and each needs all the others.

- **Your body as a living sacrifice**~

Your body does physical things. Physically you'll have to ***be still, sacrifice*** some time to God in order to hear Him. Physically you read His words. Physically, you act out God's principles before others. Physically you give. And when you and I make a practice of physically responding to God, a ***wonderful thing happens***: you get better and better at discerning where God is leading.

And here's the big payoff: **When you find yourself at the center of His Will, you will also find yourself at the center of His power.**

- **Do not conform but transform**~

There is something we need to realize: If we are going to be empowered by God's incredible gifts, we need to make up our minds; ***we are not going to be anything like the world where God's influence is absent***. We will be different. Always, it will be a blessing; but sometimes it will be awkward, maybe even embarrassing. There come times we ***will have to decide***: Be a "fool" for Christ, or sell out for the world's approval. It can't be both.

And before ***we can ever do God's will, we must be God's will***; that is, we must partner with God's Spirit to become more like Him; *inside out*.

Galatians 5

22. But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: ***love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,***

23. ***gentleness and self-control;***

That is what we are supposed to become. And as we become, we are being equipped to go out and do. And as we are equipped we belong like we have never belonged before. And we belong to the most glorious living thing in the universe; the body of Christ.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

IN YOUR OWN WORDS; WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A "LIVING SACRIFICE?"

NAME SOME WAYS GOD CALLS US TO BE "LIVING SACRIFICES."

CONCLUSION

Please take this home with you: ***The life of the church or your own spiritual experience for that matter; does not happen outside of our spiritual gifts.*** It simply can't be.

The secret to learning and engaging your gifts lies in this little phrase, "***present your bodies as a living sacrifice.***"

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If we bring this back around to where we started this morning, on the purpose, we discover this: ***When you are in presenting God to others in a way they can touch, feel, and understand; God will begin revealing your spiritual gifts; to you and to others.***

When you are physically there, where God is moving in His church, and you are physically engaged, He will ***begin revealing your gifts***. But you have to be there, and you have to engage.

You might feel you can't be at everything; but ***can't you engage in some?*** There's enough going on that you could engage in some; some prayer walks; some community service; some meetings on the lake; invite someone sometime; rotate in the teaching; minister in the music; live Christ before someone outside these walls; engage in some of the opportunities. ***You discover your gifts by being a living sacrifice.***

I have great news for you: ***You can have a "super power."*** It is so powerful that it can change the eternal course of people's lives. But first there is a question you must honestly answer; *to yourself and God*: ***Are you willing to be a living sacrifice?***

If the answer is yes, it is yours!