

Learn to Disciple from Jesus, Part 2

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You probably think we're going to be talking about Luke, and we kind of are. I actually *want* to preach from Luke 9, but we got bogged down last week and only got into the implications of the first phrase [of Luke 9:1]. This morning we're going to do a whole other sermon on the implications of that first phrase. So, if you have [your] Bible, you can turn to Luke 9, where we're just going to do a quick honorable mention. We're actually going to spend most of our time in other places [in the Bible].

This week at the dinner table, I asked my children to tell me about some things that need to work in order to be useful. One [child] said the refrigerator, and the other said the dishwasher. I said, "Yeah, the cars." After all, what good would a refrigerator be if it didn't keep anything cold? Why have a dishwasher that doesn't wash dishes? Why have a car that doesn't run? You see, dishwashers, and refrigerators, and cars are made for a purpose. They're made to function in a specific way. And you know what? That is exactly how it is for every single believer. [Each one is] made to function in a certain way. [Each one is] gifted to function in a certain way. Every Christian is saved by grace to serve a purpose.

[In] Ephesians 2:10, right after Paul talks about being saved by grace, [he] says: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" [emphasis added].

Paul, in Titus 2:11–14 says:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

That’s what it means to be “saved by grace.” You are not saved by grace to continue in rebellion. You are not saved by grace to be the same. You are saved by grace so you can serve a new purpose. As Paul says in Romans 6:4, [you are saved] to “walk in newness of life.” When we fail to run, when we fail to live, or walk, or serve according to God’s plan for us, we are like a brand-new refrigerator sitting in the kitchen: totally functional, [but] not plugged in. We do nothing but take up space.

Our text this morning is Luke 9. We first looked at this text to see what we could learn about the purpose of signs and wonders. We addressed that whole thing because the text actually tells us some important things about the purpose of signs and wonders. Then we came back and we began to look at the text from a whole different angle, from [what] I think [is] the main point of the passage, which is to teach us about Jesus’ methodology of discipleship—discipleship training. From Luke 9:1–11 I have identified eight specific principles that all of us could be, and *should* be, applying in our own discipleship ministries so that we can be and function in a way that is going to give glory to God. The first principle that we started to look at was: Call your disciples to engage in ministry.

Look at the first part of verse 1, where in the text we read: “And He called the twelve together.” That’s as far as we got [last week]. As a matter of fact, we didn’t even get there. We just read it so you could feel good. [So, Jesus] called the Twelve together. This is not a call to salvation—they were

already saved. It wasn't a call to initially follow Him—that had already happened. They were already saved, they had already left everything, they were already following Jesus, they were already engaged in ministry. This is just to call a gathering so [Jesus] could give the [Twelve] some instruction about how to go out and do ministry. This was right before He sent them out [for] the first time to do ministry on their own. He's going to send them out in twos [and] have them engage in ministry, so He wants to give them a little pre-instruction before sending them out. That's all that's happening.

But, before we [could] jump into the eight discipleship principles, before we [could] talk about engaging others into ministry, we talked about a problem—a problem that is prevalent in many churches and, I'm sorry to say, in this church as well. That problem is [that] there are many who profess to know Christ but [who] have no desire to serve Him. You see, you can't engage in *further* ministry until you are willing to engage in ministry in the first place. The Twelve had already made that commitment. They were already following Jesus, and so our text [in Luke 9:1–11] is about what to do when you get some people who want to follow. But the problem that we had to address last week and that we're going to [continue to] address this morning is: What happens when people don't want to follow?

It's kind of an oxymoron to call yourself a follower of Christ and not follow Christ. There's something wrong there. Last week, we [said that] one of the things that could be wrong is that you might not be saved. You might not be a Christian. You might call yourself a Christian, you might come to church, but if you have no love for God, which is demonstrated by your unwillingness to submit to Him, if you have no love for the brethren, which is demonstrated by your unwillingness to serve them, then how can you say you are [a] follower of Christ, or a lover of Christ, or a lover of the brethren—defining characteristics of what it means to be a Christian—if you're unwilling to do that?

It's not that works save you, it's that saving faith works. James makes this crystal clear in James 2, where he says, "Listen, dead faith, faith that is unwilling to jump into ministry and follow Christ, *cannot* save you. It is

a false, non-saving kind of faith, because true faith transforms you, makes you into a new creature. You receive the Holy Spirit, and you begin to desire, to hunger, after ministry—serving others, serving the Lord by serving others” [see James 2:14–26].

If that’s you, we implored you, we commanded you, we begged you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. I do the same this morning. Give your life to Christ. Don’t just call Jesus “Lord” [see Matthew 7:21], make sure He’s *your* Lord. Don’t just admit that He is the Savior; get saved by the Savior. Place your faith in Jesus, His work on the cross, [and] His resurrection to save you. Give your life to Christ. That is the first thing we looked at last week.

This morning I want to focus on those who are convinced they know the Lord and yet [who] still do not serve. Granted, their salvation is suspect, but for this morning, we’re going to talk about that particular group of people. You’re in the Body, you’re sure you’re a Christian, but you’re not engaged in ministry. You are that fully-functional-but-not-plugged-in refrigerator sitting in the kitchen.

You know, there are times when it is difficult to be involved in ministry. I realize this. You’ve just had all your major organs transplanted. You’re in a coma in the hospital. You’re paralyzed from the nose down. And yes, it’s difficult to serve. Yet if you are coherent, if you can minister, you *should* be ministering. There have been a lot of people who have done a lot of great ministry from their hospital beds—[they] have witnessed to nurses, encouraged doctors, prayed for people while in [a] hospital bed.

Ministry doesn’t have to happen on Sunday morning. In fact, most of it does not. You can pray for people—have a systematic prayer time where you’re praying for people. That is a great ministry. You can write encouraging notes or give encouraging phone calls, or you can do little acts of kindness and service, and give counsel, and evangelize the lost, and visit those who are lonely, and on and on and on. There is an infinite variety of things you can do as a Christian to be a blessing to other believers. You

don't have to have a committee in order to have a ministry. You just have to be willing to do something for other people in the Lord.

I had a mother [tell] me this week, "You know, I kind of felt guilty when I was listening to your sermon. I'm a mom and I have three kids, and I wish I could do more, but *all* I'm able to do is raise my kids, *and* serve in the children's ministry, *and* prepare meals for people, *and* do periodic other ministries. I just feel like I'm not doing enough." Well, stop feeling guilty. If that is you, stop feeling guilty. Raising your children, loving your husband, [and] keeping your home is your primary and greatest ministry.

Turn to Titus 2. Let me just show you the young mother's ministry description [in] Titus 2:3–5. Paul is speaking to Titus because Titus is the pastor of the church at Crete, and [Paul] is going to tell Titus what to tell the church. [Paul] says this:

Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women. . .

Here's the young mother's ministry description:

. . .to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

There you go. Raising children is your primary ministry as a mother. [Remember, however, that] it *is* possible to use your children as an excuse not to serve in the church. [If] you wake your kids up and you're still in your jammies, you plop them down in front of the TV, and then you plop yourself down in front of your TV and you watch TV all day, and you can't do ministry because you're a busy housewife [that's not right]. But, we have women who have one, and two, and three, and four, and five children, [and these women] are actively engaged in ministry and are able to love

their husbands, love their children, keep their houses, and not neglect the priorities given to them. It really depends on who you are, how God has gifted you, [and] your situation. But don't feel guilty if you are a mother raising your children, and obeying the Word of God, and doing that ministry that God has called you to do. Soon your children will be grown and you will have time to engage in those ministries that mothers engage in who don't have children at home anymore.

We also learned last week that it is not an option for a Christian to follow Christ. It's not an option to be a functioning member of the local church. This morning I want to further address this topic to make it crystal clear to you that it is not an option and why it is not an option. I will show you from the Word of God that if you are truly saved you have a spiritual gift and you are to be plugged in to the church using that gift. There are always those who have excuses: "I'm too young," [or] "I'm too old," "I have already served," "I'm in a really busy time in my life now," "Pay somebody else to do my ministry." Sorry, there's only one person who can do the ministry that God has for you to do and that is *you*.

So where do we begin? First, what do we mean when we talk about "spiritual gifts"? What is a spiritual gift? A spiritual gift is a gift, a talent, an ability, given to a person when they first place their faith in Jesus Christ. [When] you first come to know the Lord as your Savior, you receive the Holy Spirit, and God at that moment gifts you—enables you, gives you—an ability to be a blessing to the local church. That is a spiritual gift. The Greek word for "spiritual gift" is "charisma," [which is] a form of the word "grace." The Greek word for "grace" is "charis." The word often translated "spiritual gift" is "charisma." You've heard of the charismatic movement. Translated directly over it's the movement that believes all the spiritual gifts, even the miraculous ones, are still functioning in the Church today. They are the charismatic movement. But the word could literally just be translated "spiritual gift" or "grace gift" because that's what it means. It means an expression of God's grace. You're saved by grace and then you're given, by grace, an ability—a gift—to be a blessing to others in the church.

Now, this is not to be confused with what are called “common gifts,” or “common graces.” Common gifts and common graces are given to everyone whether [they are] a believer or not. You’re a great mathematician, you’re a great musician, you’re a great builder, an architect, a singer, an organizer, a whatever. You have this great ability, this great giftedness, and you had [it] before being saved. Then you came to the Lord and you still had that gift. Now, the question is: Does that common gift now become a spiritual gift? No. No, it doesn’t.

Let’s just for a second say you were a great singer. You had this great voice, you were able to sing, and then you came to the Lord, you started coming to church, you saw people singing, and you [thought], “You know, I can sing. I think I’ll get involved in the music ministry.” So you get involved in the music ministry and now you’re singing [at church]. Did your singing gift now transfer from common to spiritual? No. There is no spiritual gift of singing. However, there are spiritual gifts of giving and serving. And so, when you are called to serve, or to give, you look at your life and you say, “What can I give? I can sing. I will offer to the Lord my common gift of singing.”

This fall or winter, Lord willing, we’ll be able to start building mode, and there will be an opportunity for people in this congregation to offer their skills and talents [to the building project]. But I want you to know: there is no spiritual gift of plumber. There’s no spiritual gift of electrician, or painter, or drywaller. But you know what there is? There is the gift of serving and the gift of giving. You might desire to serve because God has gifted you in that way, or [to] give because God has gifted you in that way, and you just happen to have a skill, so now you can use your common gift in concert with your spiritual gift. That is how the two often work together.

There are two major texts in the New Testament that address spiritual gifts. There are quite a few verses that mention them and different lists are given. We can’t go through all of them. One of the more significant texts is Romans 12, and we aren’t going to go there. But in Romans 12:1–8, Paul explains [that] we need to be humble in the use of our gifts, we should

not be envious of other spiritual gifts, that in the Church there are a lot of different gifts and yet we all come together to serve one another. He makes it clear that all spiritual gifts are to be used for the common good. That's kind of the ultra-Cliff-Notes version [of Romans 12:1–8].

But what we want to do this morning is we want to look at 1 Corinthians 12. So if you have your Bibles, turn to 1 Corinthians 12, and I just want to take you through this text rather quickly and survey some of the key points. Now, as you're getting there, I just [want to] remind you [that] the church of Corinth was pretty much broken in almost every area. The church of Corinth had a lot of problems and one of the areas [in which] they had lots of problems was the area of spiritual gifts, specifically the really “wowie” gifts—miracles, signs and wonders, tongues. They were really messed up because they all wanted these prominent, upfront, awe-inspiring, attention-grabbing gifts. They knew they existed, they all wanted them, and it was causing problems in the church.

Paul writes three entire chapters to address the issue. In [1 Corinthians] 12, he says, “OK, this is what a gift is, and this is where they come from, and this is how they work together, and this is their purpose.” He gets all of that out, and then [in] chapter 13, he says, “Now, I want you to make sure that when you're using your gift, you're using it in love and” [in] chapter 14—the whole chapter—“by the way, those who are messed up about the gift of tongues, let me tell you about tongues, their purpose, how they are to be used, and how they're not to be used. [I'm going to] lay all of this out very clearly for you so that you don't mess up anymore in that area.” So he [writes] three entire chapters [on this subject]. Now, we're just going to survey chapter 12 and run through most of the verses in chapter 12.

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:1. Notice what Paul says there: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.” [This] tells us that they *were* unaware. Paul uses a different term here to describe spiritual gifts. This isn't the form of the word that comes from the word “grace,” this is not a “grace gift.” This is actually a whole different word. There is a word “pneuma,” which [means] “spirit” or “wind.” We get the word “pneu-

matic” from it, or “pneumonia.” You guys who have pneumatic power tools they run off of air [or wind]. [The] word [Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 12] is “pneumatica,” [which means] “spiritual.” That’s what it means—“spiritual.” “Now, concerning spirituals” is how [verse 1] might literally be translated. If you have the NASB, when it says “spiritual gifts” [in this verse], you’ll notice that “gift” there is in italics, which tells you it’s not in the original [text]. “Concerning spirituals” is really what it says. But, as Paul goes on, he is talking about spiritual gifts, which is obvious, so this is just another synonym used here. He is talking about spiritual gifts. He’s going to launch into three entire chapters [on the subject].

Now, he talks about a little bit of paganism, and what we were before being saved. Look down at verses 4[-6], where he continues: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.” Just stop there and notice several things. Notice [Paul’s] emphasis here on the same Spirit, same Lord, same God. This is important. The problem [of the Corinthian church was that] they all wanted these prominent gifts, these miraculous gifts, [and] they’re scratching and clawing for them, running over each other, competing, and they aren’t practicing love in the use of their gifts. [So] Paul’s whole point is: “Listen, God’s the one who gives gifts, and the Spirit is the one who gives gifts, and they all come from the Lord, and they’re all to be used in concert.” [The Corinthian church was] like an orchestra where everybody was playing his own piece of music. It’s a nightmare. But if everybody is playing according to the Spirit—if the Spirit is empowering the person and the Spirit isn’t schizophrenic—then everybody is going to function together. That’s [Paul’s] whole point—they were not functioning together, which means they weren’t acting in a spiritual way.

There are two different ways of looking at spiritual gifts. You can look at your spiritual gift as a single gift, which would [mean that] you receive a single gift and it has a variety of expressions. Or, you can look at your spiritual gift as a composite of many gifts [of varying] degrees. I think, re-

ardless of how you [look at] it, the end product is the same. Every single person is gifted—we know that. But when you talk to people, you find out that they have different degrees [of giftedness]. [For instance], not everybody who is called to preach can preach as well as other [preachers]. Some people have greater gifts in certain areas. Some preachers are great preachers and bad teachers. Some are really good teachers and OK preachers. Some can do both. And you know what? God is the one who is in charge of that. God is the one who gifts people. The Holy Spirit makes it happen. That's what [Paul] is saying here.

Notice at the end of verse 6, Paul says: “the same God... works all things in all persons.” You don't get to decide what spiritual gift you get. There's no use complaining, there's no use being envious, whining, being jealous, being competitive in the use of your spiritual gift because, listen, God's the one who gives them and it's not up to you. [Paul] makes this clear. Look at verse 7: “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Notice [that] you are passive in the process: you receive the gift. You don't go get it; you receive it. Notice the crucial, crucial phrase. He calls spiritual gifts here a “manifestation of the Spirit”—another synonym—but at the very end, he says, “for the common good.” That is so important. It's so important to know that you as a believer, if you know Christ, have been given some gift, some ability, some talent “for the common good.” God has for you a good thing [with which you can] bless everybody else. Isn't that great to know?

Periodically, I talk to people who say, “You know, I have the gift of tongues.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yes, yes. I have the gift of tongues.”

“Oh. So you are able to speak in a known language that is unknown to you?”

“Well, no. I have a *private* prayer language.”

Do you see what's wrong there? All spiritual gifts are “for the common good,” not the private good. If your “spiritual gift” is for private use, it's not

of the Spirit, and it's not a spiritual gift. All spiritual gifts are for common use, not self use. Keep your finger here, but look over in [1 Corinthians] 14:12, where [Paul] is addressing tongues and notice what he says in verse 12: "So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts," or spirituals, "seek to abound for the edification of the church." That is your goal: the edification of other people. Look down at verse 26: "What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for" what? "edification." That is a spiritual gift: a gift exercised for the edification of other people.

[Go] back to 1 Corinthians 12[:8–10]. Paul is now going to give some examples of spiritual gifts. He says:

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

Now, just think about that. Do you see how many times [Paul says] "of the same Spirit; of the Spirit; Spirit, Spirit, Spirit"? Why? The point that he's trying to make is: "Listen, there's only one Spirit, and that one Spirit isn't conflicted. The Holy Spirit is not schizophrenic, not bipolar. Don't give me this, 'I have a spiritual gift and [it] is of the Holy Spirit,' and somebody else has a spiritual gift and they're saying it's of the Holy Spirit and those two gifts are conflicting. No. That never happens because the same Spirit works all gifts so that they synchronize, not conflict. So if there is a problem, it's not with the Holy Spirit, it's with you."

I would love to be able to [go through and list more spiritual gifts that are mentioned]. I even tried at first and I had to cut it out [of today's sermon]. The Bible doesn't tell us all [of the spiritual gifts]. As a matter of

fact, there's probably an infinite variety of giftedness in the Church. But the [gifts] all fit under two categories. The two general categories are speaking gifts and serving gifts. For instance, "the word of wisdom," "word of knowledge," "prophecy," or "tongues" would be gifts of utterance—[speaking gifts]. [Paul] also mentions "faith," "gifts of healing," "effecting of miracles," "distinguishing of spirits," "interpretation of tongues"—these might be serving gifts. (Interpretation of tongues might be a speaking gift, too.)

[You may have] noticed [that all the gifts mentioned in this section are] all miraculous gifts. Why? [It is] because [those are] the gifts the people at Corinth had problems with. They all wanted those really cool, flashy, up-front, wowing, "Woo hoo, he spoke from the Lord," "Oh! He did a miracle" [types of gifts]. And they were being jealous and envious of each other. So [Paul] has to mention all of these gifts. Remember, this is the early Church, and the New Testament wasn't written yet. So what was interesting is if somebody stood up and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Jesus wants us to do..." how would those people know if that was of the Lord or not? You see, they didn't have a New Testament so they couldn't say, "Well, Paul says right here..." because it wasn't written yet. And so, God in the early Church gave the Church these spiritual gifts that Paul is mentioning, to make sure the Church humbled itself, [they] relied on each other, and so they weren't led into false doctrine.

This is kind of how it would work as far as these gifts would go: Somebody would stand up, give a "Thus saith the Lord" [statement, and] another person [who] had a distinguishing of spirits, which meant [that] he was able to tell whether or not an utterance, a prophetic utterance, was actually from the Lord or not. That [person] would say, "Yup, that's of the Lord." Another person would then have the word of knowledge or wisdom, and he would then explain what that prophecy meant. That way it took three people to all confirm the spiritual gift. And so, everybody had to humble himself and everybody had to submit to each other so that there would be unity. It would be like a triple-lock system so a false teacher couldn't come in, and say, "Well, this is what Jesus said." The guys with the distinguishing

of spirits [would say], “No. That’s not of the Lord. That’s of Satan.” And the guy with the knowledge and wisdom [would say], “Yup. I’m not getting anything from that.”

So that’s what was going on here. But, just to tell you, there are a lot of other gifts, and they can all be distilled down into, generally, speaking gifts and serving gifts. [The Corinthians] were all lusting after these flashy, miraculous, awe-inspiring, prominent, upfront, attention-getting gifts, and clawing, and scratching, and climbing over each other trying to get them. Notice Paul’s response in [1 Corinthians 12:]11: “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.” Notice it’s the Spirit’s will, not our will. He says it over and over again in this chapter. It must have been a big deal, because Paul keeps saying it: “The Holy Spirit’s will, not you, not you, not you.”

So, we get that pretty clearly. The point I want you to take away from this is: [If] you know Jesus, you have a spiritual gift. [If] you ask me, “What is it?” I don’t know, but I know you have one—“each one individually just as He wills.” Look at verse 12: “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.” [This is the] same thing Paul says in Romans 12: in the Church there’s a whole variety of gifts, and they all come together to make the Church function. Look down [at 1 Corinthians] 12:13–14: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”

Again, the thing [Paul is] emphasizing here is, “Listen, it doesn’t matter if you’re a Jew, it doesn’t matter if you’re a Gentile. There’s only one Holy Spirit and that one Holy Spirit is the one who distributes the gifts and makes the gifts all function together in *unity*, and *peace*, and *order*.” That’s what [Paul is] trying to say. Every believer is part of, and accountable to, the larger Body of Christ. He’s not talking about water baptism here, he’s talking about being placed into, submersed into, being united with, the universal Body of Christ. That is, all of the believers all over the

world comprise this universal Body of Christ. [Calvary Bible Church] is the local church or the local Body of Christ, which is composed mostly of people who profess to know Christ. Some know they don't know Christ, some do know Christ, and some think they know Christ but don't. This is a local church, not to be confused with the universal Church. When you are saved, you are placed into that universal Church and then usually become a member of the local church.

Look at verse 15. Paul is now going to explain to the Corinthians why it is wrong and foolish to complain and be discontent with the spiritual gifts God has given to you. Verses 15[-18]:

If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

Notice the emphasis. He keeps coming back to that. The whole point is: "Listen, not everybody is gifted the same way, but however we're gifted, we're gifted by the Holy Spirit and God wants us to function in unity." Look at verse 19. Now he's going to amplify this little analogy of the body. It's really quite clear, it's quite simple, it's easy to understand. He says in verse 19 and following: "If they were all one member, where would the body be?" That is, if everybody was a finger, then how would you have a whole body? You wouldn't. You'd have a finger.

But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it

is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [12:20–25]

This is what was happening [in the Corinthian church]: some people with prominent gifts were [saying], “Hey, I’m better than you. I’ve got this gift.”

Paul is saying, “Listen, God gave you that gift and in order to function you need those other people.”

It’s like this: we have a lot of parts that are outside of us: we have fingers, and hands, and heads, and eyes, and ears. You can see those parts of our bodies. But we have some other important things, like [the] pituitary gland. [Have] you ever seen your pituitary gland? [Probably not, but] I want you to know [that] you need it. [Do] you think you need a pancreas? Ask Wes Stone. He’ll tell you [that] pancreases are very important. You need these parts inside, these less honorable, less visible parts to function so that your outside members can function.

And you know what? I could never preach unless I had a whole army of people doing a whole bunch of things to free me up so I could preach. If the other pastors, and the other elders, and my secretary, and all these other people weren’t doing what they do, I couldn’t do what I need to do. And so, just because you’re not up front doesn’t mean you’re not important. I mean, what would happen if your heart just stopped working? You could be extremely fit in the rest of your body, but if your heart stops, you are in a world of hurt. And if you don’t get that thing pumping again, your whole body is going down. Bottom line: Every believer has a spiritual gift.

It doesn't matter whether it's a prominent gift or it's a behind-the-scenes gift, the whole Body uses [its] gifts for the welfare of one another. All are equally important.

Paul concludes in verse 26: "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." You know, if someone's hurt, if someone's sick, [if] someone can't do their ministry that is involved in ministry, the church feels it, doesn't it? Sure. You know, you have somebody who's really excellent in his or her ministry, and he or she is such a blessing to so many other people, and all of a sudden that person can't do his or her ministry, what happens? It's like an arm just going limp. It's over. The whole body then has to suffer because that person is no longer able to function in a way that God has called him or her to function.

[Say there was] a baseball player [who] could throw a 100-mile-an-hour fastball. [Someone] might say of [that player], "Oh, man. That guy's got a really good arm." But, hey, that arm's attached to his body. That arm doesn't go out there and play baseball, the whole guy does. You don't get to just have your arm do something. Your arm needs the whole rest of [your] body to enable it to [do] the 100-mile-an-hour fast pitch. [Similarly], you may see [somebody] in the church with a gift or an ability. It may be upfront, it may be very public, it may be awe-inspiring. But listen, that person cannot do their thing unless other people do their things. That is how God has made it so [that] everybody relies on one another in unity. *In unity*. So don't think of yourself as an individual who attends Calvary Bible Church, but as an individual member of a body of believers called Calvary Bible Church—a necessary member.

There are many other texts [that discuss spiritual gifts]. Let me just mention two more. Paul, speaking to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:14, says, "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery." Just because you have a spiritual gift doesn't mean you're going to use it.

You have to *choose* to use it. Timothy was neglecting his, so Paul had to say, “Don’t neglect your gift,” and he commanded [Timothy] to use it.

Peter, in 1 Peter 4:10 says the same thing. He says, “As each one has received a special gift”—each person receives a special gift from God. What are we to do? “Employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). You have the gift; you are to employ it. I think it’s an active participle there: always be in the process of using your gift. It is unarguable that every believer has a spiritual gift, and it must be employed to be a blessing to those in the Church. That is crystal clear. Hopefully you’re convinced by now.

So, what does this mean? What are the implications of this? If you’re not serving in the local church, there are three possibilities. [First], you don’t know Christ and that is why you’re not serving—because you don’t love God and you don’t love the people of God. You see, the reason people don’t like to serve is [that] they don’t love Christ. Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice. . . and they follow Me” [John 10:27], [and] “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” [John 13:35]. How do we love each other? By serving. OK? If you don’t know Christ, then you probably don’t want to serve. [The] second [possibility is that] you’re in a coma and that’s why you’re not here this morning. [The] third [one is that] you’re in sin. Those are the only three options, I’m sorry to say. That’s it. That is it. There are no other options. You’re either in rebellion, you don’t know Christ, or you’re in a coma.

Now, let’s say you’re sitting out there and you’re pretty convicted about this. You were hoping that I’d move on. Last week you thought, “Whew! It took me all week to forget this! To get over the guilt—the gift that keeps giving.” And [now] you’re saying, “OK, I need to do something. What am I going to do? I’m convicted. I realize I’ve let my job, the world, my hobbies, my laziness, greed, [and] selfishness stop me from being a blessing to others and loving the Lord. How do I get plugged in?” Here is the Jack Hughes quick, four-step method. This is easy.

[First], examine yourself to make sure you know the Lord, because if you don't know the Lord, you'll never have the desire [to minister], you don't have any spiritual gifts, and so you can't do anything that pleases God. So, the first thing [to do] is to make sure. If you're not sure you're saved, if you don't quite know what that means, if you've always thought you've been saved, but you look at your life and you see that you've never walked with the Lord, and never served the Lord, and never been involved in the church, you're probably not saved. You probably don't know the Lord because you've never loved the Lord. The Scriptures say, "Whoever does not love the Lord Jesus let him be accursed" [see 1 Corinthians 16:22]. John says, "If you don't love the brethren, the truth is not in you" [see 1 John 2:4]. That's clear. So if you look at your life and you're thinking, "You know, I thought I was a Christian. . . ." Find out. Get together with one of the pastors, talk to one of the counselors after the service, find out, make sure you know that you're a Christian.

Now, let's just say you know that you're a sinner, you know God is holy, you know you deserve judgment, you know Jesus died on the cross for your sins, you have repented of your sins. You realize that when you do that and you give yourself to Christ, He is willing to take your sins from you, to forgive them, and to give to you His perfect righteousness, and that one day you will be resurrected and you'll live in heaven for eternity since He is the firstfruits of the resurrection. And you say, "OK. I've got that down. Now what?"

Second, pray. Pray and ask God to help you find your niche in this Body—in His Body, the Church. What appliance are you? What part of the Body are you? It may not be a prominent one, it may not be a huge one, you may not need a committee, but you need to be serving in the Body. Ask God to help you find your place in ministry. Get on your knees at home and beg Him. Beg Him. Say, "Lord, please, help me. I realize I haven't been faithful here, I haven't been serving You, I haven't been involved. I need to do this, I know I need to do this, but I don't know where [I belong]. Please, help me."

Third, take action. Get involved, show up, and start serving. If you're out there [thinking], "But I don't know where. Where do I show up? I don't know where I'm gifted." Well, don't be like those people who say, "Well, no one ever asked me." Listen, do you ever tell your lungs to breathe all night for you? "All right, Lungs, I'm wanting to fall asleep now. Heart, make sure you keep pumping. I don't want to wake up dead." You just do it. You find somebody. You know why that's the best way? Because, I can go up to somebody and say, "Hey, I notice you've been holding up the wall here every Sunday. Why don't you do this ministry?" Why [is that person] doing the ministry? He's not doing the ministry because he wants to do the ministry, he's doing the ministry because why? I asked him [to]. *You* take the initiative. *You* follow the desires of your heart. I mean, I can say, "Hey, listen, you need to have the ministry of spider catcher in the attic." Do you want that ministry? Well, then you find your own ministry. You know, I'll volunteer you for something, [and it will probably be] the [ministry] that no one wants to do, [like] go[ing] up on the roof and patch[ing] it in the middle of summer.

You take the initiative. You say, "Well, where? Where do I start?" What are your desires? Narrow it down to two areas. "[Do] I think I'm more of a service kind of a person or a speaking kind of person?" Get that done. Then, once you say, "Well, you know, I'm more probably... no, not speaking. I'm more of a service kind of person." OK, you've narrowed it down. You've got half the pie to choose from. Now you can start serving in an area. Have you ever tried serving in the children's ministry? "Uh uh. I'm scared of children." OK, all right. It's probably adults, then. But you know what? You can still serve in the children's ministry because there are all kinds of things—crafts they have to put together, there are all kinds of organizational things, there are all kinds of things [that you could do]. And you might find out, "You know, I like doing this."

So, start in the area of your desires, but just start some[where]. If you are young in the Lord, and you go, "I hardly know anything. I'm a baby believer," then just do whatever you can. You know, help people move, and

[arrange] chairs, and have the gift of bulletin folder—I don't know. There are lots of things that have to happen—fill up the pews with Bibles, collect little communion cups. You can do that. Serve. There are lots of areas to serve—lots and lots. Start serving.

Now, as you start serving, start taking note of how you're blessed. You've got to do this. When you go home at night [you'll think], "Man, that was cool. I went over and did this, and, man, it was neat. I learned some neat things about this person. I got some new friends. I was blessed. Whew! This was great! I'm actually functioning! I'm keeping things cold in the kitchen." As you serve, notice how it will motivate you in other areas of your life. You start serving and you're around people who know things and you realize, "I need to study up on this," and all of a sudden now you're studying more, you're reading your Bible more, you're getting more equipped. Now you have more things to pray about because you know what's going on in the church. You're thinking, "Man, I need to do this!" and the light comes on and pretty soon you're motivated. All of these areas in your life begin to generate because now you're functioning instead of just [being] unplugged.

Fourth, evaluate your ministry periodically. You know, you may think, "OK, I'm going to try this," and you hate it. You serve for a while and everybody else hates it, too. All of a sudden, you realize, "You know, this is probably not my area of giftedness."

And other people are saying, "You know, you're right."

If that's the case, then you try something else, try a different area. Again, it doesn't have to be a huge thing. It doesn't need a committee—you don't have to have a big banner. Pick something, do it, serve. Serve. Be faithful, be consistent, and strive for excellence. [Eventually] you [will] find that ministry that [makes] you think, "You know, I like this. And you know what? Other people like this. And you know what? I'm seeing fruit and I'm being a blessing, and man, this is great!" You've found at least *one* of your niches. So that's it. Make sure you're saved, pray, take action, [and] evaluate.

Let me just close by telling you a little bit about my own personal journey in trying to find my spiritual gift. This will give you an idea of what some of you will probably have to go through. Hopefully not to this same extent, [though].

So, here I am, I'm a young believer. I don't even know what spiritual gifts are. I don't even know they exist. I came to the Lord my junior year of high school. After graduating from high school, I lived in the mountains of Idaho [and] I worked for the forest service. [I] never went to church. [I] just read my Bible and was slowly, very slowly, getting a clue.

In the winter, I went to Hawaii [and] started working on a boat as a commercial fisherman. We were in port a week, then went out for two weeks. Came back for a week, went out for two weeks. I lived on the boat. I never went to church. I was studying my Bible. I was getting a clue more and more. When summer came, I [changed the kind of fishing I was doing] to where I would be in port for about three weeks and then go out for eight to ten weeks. I never went to church, but man, I was starting to get a clue. I was reading [my Bible].

One day, when I was working on the boat, I was turning [the channel on the radio] and [I found] a Christian station and there was this guy preaching. I stopped and thought, "This is interesting. I'm going to listen to this." All of a sudden I was roped in. I could hardly do my work. I thought, "This guy is *awesome!* He can *preach*, man. He's making it clear. Man, I wish I could go get my Bible so I could follow along!" At the end [of his sermon], I discovered it was this guy named John MacArthur. I had no idea who he was. No idea at all. At the end of the program, after I learned who it was, I [thought], "That guy can teach! Man, I would *love* to be able to teach like *that* guy." That was the first time in my life I ever started "lusting" after somebody with a great [spiritual] gift. I thought, "Wow, man, that was cool. There needs to be more guys like that," because I kept listening and there were some guys who shouldn't have been on the radio.

The Holy Spirit had already given me the gift of preaching and teaching, but I didn't know it. I hadn't even started attending a church faithfully yet.

I was a young believer, I was living on a fishing boat in Hawaii, I wasn't attending any church, I didn't even know what a spiritual gift was. But, as time went by, I eventually moved back to the mainland, I got plugged-in to a church, [and] I started growing. I had learned tons. I started attending faithfully, I became a member, and I was involved in ministry. And you know what? I thought to myself, "You know, it would be kind of cool to be a teacher—maybe in like a Christian school or something—and teach the Bible." That was my first thought. "Maybe I could just learn enough to teach at that level. That would be kind of cool." But after a while, I thought, "Maybe I can teach at a Christian college. I could probably do that."

As I grew in the [Lord], I started serving in various ministries. I had a pickup truck, so I was in the moving ministry. Anybody with a pickup truck is in that ministry—especially [at] a church with a lot of singles. I mean, every month I was moving people. So, I was in the moving ministry. And, I served and did a little usher stuff. I was good at fixing things, [so] I helped people remodel, and wire, and plumb, and do concrete work. I don't have the gift of concrete, but I like doing it. So, anyway, I just had these different abilities and so I was using them to serve other people because that's all I knew to do.

But, you know, what was really weird was [that] I loved studying the Bible. The reason that was weird was because when I was in high school, I *hated* to study. I was the fisher, and the hunter, and the woodsman. I liked being out in the woods and killing furry creatures. That was my gift. [But] when I came to the Lord, everything changed. Before I came to the Lord, I would get Ds and Fs in school [until] the mid-semester. Then I would work just hard enough to get a C-minus or a C so I could pass. I didn't [really] care about passing, I didn't care about good grades, I didn't care about learning anything. Why? I didn't have a reason to live.

Then when I came to the Lord, all of a sudden everything in my life changed, because I came across that verse [that] says, "Whether you eat, or whether you drink, or whatever you do, you do all for the glory of God" [see 1 Corinthians 10:31]. And I thought, "I have to study." So I started

getting As and Bs, and I graduated shortly thereafter. [Eventually] I moved down to the big city.

All of this was happening and I was just consumed with Bible study. I *loved* studying the Bible. I would walk around with flashcards all the time, memorizing Scripture. I just wanted to talk theology with anybody I could find. I wanted to listen to as many sermons [as] I could possibly listen to. I just wanted as much as I could get in me. No one disciplined me. I didn't even know what discipleship was. [Then] one day, somebody came up to me—an older gentleman—and said, “How would you like to teach my Sunday school class because I'm going to be gone in a couple [of] weeks?”

“Me?”

He said, “Yeah! I know you know quite a bit. I can tell you're a pretty faithful student of the Bible. Would you like to do this?”

And I thought, “Well...OK.” He didn't give me any instruction. He didn't teach me how to study the Bible [or] how to prepare a lesson. I want you to know: I studied. I was Hercules Unchained of study. I studied like a fanatic. Then when I showed up to Sunday school class, I told them *everything*, which was *way* too much. It was boring, pathetic, data-dump is what I call it to [my] seminary students. It wasn't illustrated, it wasn't structured, it didn't apply to life. It was just, “I discovered this!” [and out it came] for an hour. That was it.

The only thing I had going for me was [that] I was zealous and I did love the Bible. So I had that, but that was all. I had some faithful people come up to me and say, “You know, you ought to teach a little less next time. Chop it down a little bit. You can study a lot if you want, but maybe just go a little slower and maybe stretch it out a little bit. You know, [leave] some time for interaction.”

“OK.” I mean, that was it—that was my complete training in teaching. That was it. So what was interesting was [that] people kept asking me to teach. I said, “OK,” and eventually I started getting better. I got involved in the singles ministry [and] started teaching there. I started doing a dis-

ipleship thing. Pretty soon I thought, “You know, I *like* teaching. This is fun!”

Somebody came up to me one time and said, “You know, Jack, have you ever thought of going into the ministry?”

“Well, what do you mean? Like, be a pastor?”

“Yeah.”

“No. No.”

He said, “You know, I think you may be gifted.”

And I thought, “Hmm. You know, I thought about maybe being a Bible teacher or something, but I don’t know about [being a pastor]. I don’t know. Doesn’t that take a lot of *work*? I mean, don’t you have to go to lots of college and all that stuff?” So I started investigating and asking people about it. I even went to a good friend who was in the ministry, and I said, “You know, I’ve never been a good student, I’m a slow reader, I got bad grades in high school, but what do you think about me going to seminary?”

Do you know what [he] said? “No. I don’t think it’s for you.” But you know what? God had put this desire in my heart, [and] I just decided, “I’m going to go for it anyway. I have no idea how. I don’t have enough money to pay for school. I got crummy grades so I can’t get a scholarship. I work too hard so I can’t get any grants. I’m the youngest of eight kids, so my mom and dad aren’t going to help me. Besides, I departed from the Catholic faith. [But] I’m going to go into the ministry. What can I do to go into the ministry? How can I pay for seminary?”—because I checked, and seminary was really expensive.

So this is what I thought, and again, I had nobody helping me. I just thought, “You know, I think I’m going to get my degree in electronics technology. That way I can put myself through school. I’ll move to wherever the seminary is, I’ll get a job in the field of electrical engineering, and I will put myself through seminary and work part-time.” That was my thought. That was my worldly thought. But instead, I got a wife and that’s better than a degree in electrical engineering. So I got a wife, and we were both going to school, finishing things up. She had a desire [for] ministry, I had a

desire [for] ministry, and when we finally both got through college, off we went to seminary.

You know, in college, at first I was working [the] graveyard [shift], and going to school all day trying to pay [for my education]. Then, my brother helped me out, my sister helped me out so I could get involved in ministry. That's where I met my wife, and God was just orchestrating all of these things. I moved down here, I had \$185 and tuition was \$3,500 and it was. And so, [I thought], "God here I am, voila."

You may be sitting out there sometime and you may be thinking, "Wow, man. I sure would like to preach." I just want you to know [it takes] fourteen years of school. Zip zop, you can do it. And [there's] a lot of agony along the way. You know, not everybody's gifted in the same way. I didn't have a great intelligence, I didn't have great money, I didn't have anybody backing me except God and He just made me tenacious, so I persevered.

And you know what? You may not have to go through that. I hope you don't. You may be fully equipped right now. All you need to do is get up and start serving. I don't know how God is going to get you from where you are to where He wants you to be, but I know this: you've got to be saved, and if you are, you are gifted, and if you're gifted, you need to be serving.

Oh, pew sitter, oh, pew sitter. What do you hope to gain by not playing your position in the Body of Christ? What do you hope to gain? Do you expect that by not giving God will bless you? That by not serving you'll have more joy? That by not being what God wants you to be you'll get to heaven and be less ashamed, and more glad, and more thankful for what you've done with your life? Don't let your flesh, don't let your greed, don't let your covetousness, or your laziness, or your job, or any other excuse keep you from doing what God commands you to do. This is not an option. I have shown you from God's Word that all believers are gifted and [are] to be serving.

So, lay aside your excuses, refuse to let Satan lull you into complacency, arise soldier, enter the battle. Get on the field, "put on the full armor of God" [Ephesians 6:11], and serve the Lord. That is what God's will is for you.

I know this. It is in the Word and you have to do it. So, if you've been out there, and you've been sitting there [thinking], "I know I haven't been serving," then you need to go home, you need to confess your sin to the Lord, and then ask Him to help you [to] take action, because this church is never going to be what God wants it to be until *you* are doing *your* ministry, whatever ministry that might be.

If you're out there thinking, "I don't even know where to start," there are handouts in the back. Those handouts have a list of different ministries in the church. Just go back and grab one. Your ministry may not be on there. You may have a totally different ministry. Those are just some examples of where you could serve. But take action, because this church suffers when even one member doesn't serve. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You. We thank You for this text that we've seen in 1 Corinthians 12 and the many others that we looked at this morning. Father, I pray that no person would leave here unsaved, and that all who leave here knowing You would commit today to serve You with a whole heart and a willing mind. That we would lay aside excuses, that we would confess any sins of being unwilling to submit to You in this area, that we would all do our part. How that would make it easy on all the rest! How that would bring You so much more glory! How You would bless Calvary Bible Church in such great ways if we would just get up and engage in the battle! Father, may we all commit to do that this morning.

If there are people here who don't know You, bring them to repentance. Help them to confess their sin. Help them to realize they've been playing a game—a very treacherous game—and [that] if they delay too long, it may be too late, for "today is the day of salvation" [see 2 Corinthians 6:2]. May they confess their sin, repent of it, and give their hearts to Jesus, to follow Him and be His sheep. And, Father, may You bless us as a church, as we seek to do that. May You sustain those who, right now, are so overly committed and burdened in the ministry, but, Father, who love You so much they cannot stop serving more than they even should because other people aren't helping. Father, may we all help one another out, and may You be

glorified. Give us the grace, give us the mercy, change our lives that we might fulfill Your call on us. We pray this in Christ's name because we know it's His will, Amen.