

“Why God Gives Gifts”
Selected

- INTRO. - ILL. - (Imagine this happening to you)
It was the most unbelievable night of your life! You are one of those who have never been sick a day in your life. You have never even seen the inside of a hospital, except when your children were born or when you went to visit someone who has *not* enjoyed the same degree of good health you have.

But tonight was different. You had no sooner gotten to sleep when an excruciating pain shot through your body. The pain was so intense that you could *not* even sit up in bed. You did all you could just to curl up into a ball and scream out to your wife, who quickly became hysterical.

You hardly even realized that she eventually calmed down long enough to dial 911, and the next thing you know you are being loaded into an ambulance and whisked away with the blare of sirens through the night.

Little did you know (however) how much danger you were really in. A ruptured appendix can certainly be fatal. But even less did you realize what an “adventure” you would experience when you got to the hospital.

In fact, the first thing you noticed (that seemed strange) was long before you even *arrived* at the

hospital. *Not only* did the ambulance driver *not* know how to drive this ambulance, he got lost several times on the way to the hospital. He kept saying something about, “This is my first time to drive this thing: I’m usually the chief of surgery.”

When the ambulance finally *did* arrive at the hospital, no one in the emergency room seemed to know what to do. One guy said, “I don’t know what to do with him, I work in the cafeteria.” Another one said, “I guess we should put him on this gurney, but I’ve never done that before. After all, I’m usually at the front desk.”

The radiologist was trying to figure out how to fill out the insurance forms. The cardiologist was putting swizzle sticks in all the little canisters and the head nurse was mopping the floor in the lobby.

Everywhere you looked, people were in the wrong place and everything was total chaos. But the straw that broke the camel’s back was when the custodian stepped up with white gloves on and announced, “We’re going to have to operate!”

Fortunately, this shocked you so much that you passed out, and didn’t have to witness any more of this madness.

- What a silly story! It’s hard to even *imagine* something like this being true. But what if it *was* true? And what if the stakes were even *higher* than the loss of life (as precious as life is).

- What if the stakes were *not* a matter of life and death, but a matter of where you would spend eternity? Wouldn't it be even more critical that the right people were in the right places serving in the right way?
- As ridiculous as our story is, I am convinced that something very similar to this occurs every day in thousands of churches across America and around the world.
- And I can't help but wonder how many people have stepped out into a Christ-less eternity because the chief surgeon was driving the ambulance instead of performing surgery...
- Listen, if the church of Jesus Christ is going to be all it *can* be for the glory of God, it is *imperative* that each member of His body is functioning in the place where God has designed and gifted them to serve!
- Do you know what spiritual gifts God has given you? Do you know what ministry He wants you to perform in the body of Christ called the church? Do you know where you "fit" best in His work and where you can make the greatest impact for Him?
- When we don't know the answers to those questions, or are *not* doing what we know to do, the body of Christ becomes crippled and ineffective, just like that crazy hospital.
- Paul said in 1 Cor. 12:1, "Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware." (Turn with me to 1 Cor. 12) It is absolutely *vital* to the health and well-being of the church that each one of us understands our spiritual gifts, and is active in using those gifts, to do our part in the work He has for us to do!
- Now, in Romans 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4, and 1 Peter 4, God's Word tells us what these things (called spiritual gifts) are, and why God has given them to us.
- Paul uses the human body as an illustration of our Lord's spiritual body, the church -- and (personally) I'm glad he does this, because it is a great reminder of what the church really is.
- You see, the church is *not* an *organization*; it is an *organism*! It is *not* to be operated like a business, run by paid professionals using Madison Avenue marketing techniques. It is a living organism with the very life of God flowing through it. The Bible tells us that (pulsating through the church) is the "aionios zoe," the very life of God.
- And, as we have already seen, God has promised to build His church, and we are the "living stones" with which He intends to build it. And since He is the builder, we must understand how He intends to build it.

- Good organization is *not* enough. A corpse is organized, but it isn't alive. Most cemeteries are organized, but there is *not* much life there either. The life of God is what makes the church a living organism, *not* just an organization.
- And we often think in terms of church buildings made of brick and mortar, but He is building something far more eternal. The building He is building has nothing to do with steel beams and sheetrock. It has to do with changed lives, transformed by the HS.
- And His building blocks are *not* sandstone and glass, but gifted men and women whom He desires to carry out His will.
- Now, as we think about why God gives spiritual gifts today, there are three things we must make sure we understand. First of all, we need to understand:

I. THE DIRECTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- All the gifts *must* work together. In 1 Cor. 12:20 Paul wrote, "But now there are many members, but one body." Verse 12 says, "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."
- Paul refers to the physical body and says (in effect), "You know that a physical body must function as a

whole unit. You cannot put parts of a body in a big pile and expect them to do anything useful."

- There must be a way to coordinate all those different parts to work together as a whole if there is to be any meaningful existence.
- And so it is with the church. There must be a head which unites and coordinates all the various parts of the body -- and in the church, that head is (of course) Christ Himself.
- In Eph. 4 we read, "*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." (Eph. 4:4-6)
- All the parts are intended to function together as one harmonious whole. And this will only happen as each of us is yielded to the authority of the sovereign head.
- In the Corinthian church, one of their biggest problems was that the different parts of the body were "doing their own thing" instead of functioning in submission to the divine plan of the Head.
- They were all trying to have the *same* gift instead of using what gifts they had been given by Christ, in harmony with the other gifts, for the greatest impact in the church as a whole.

- And the result was, that there was as much chaos (and confusion and ineffectiveness) as there would be in a hospital like the one we thought about earlier.
- Listen, whatever gift (or gifts) you have (and Scripture makes it clear that every Christian has at least one), it is absolutely *critical* that your gift is being used in harmony with all the other gifts in the body -- and *that* can only happen as we yield ourselves in total submission to the Head, Jesus Christ.
- So that is the *direction* of the gifts. He is the One who directs the use of all the gifts, so they function together in such a way as to accomplish His own purposes. But there is a second thing we need to see here, and that is:

II. THE DIVERSIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- Paul says (in Rom. 12:4) that although “we have many members in one body, we do not have the same function.” In 1 Cor. 12:14-17 he said, “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, ‘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 should say, ‘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?”

- ILL. - Can you imagine your foot one day saying, “I’m tired of being a foot. I’m tired of doing all the walking. I refuse to crawl into that stinky sock one more day. I’m going to become an ear.”
- ILL. - Or imagine your nose saying, “I’m tired of being a nose. I’m tired of smelling all the time. I’m tired of holding up a pair of glasses. I’m tired of getting runny in the winter. I think I will become a hand.” (Try catching a softball with your nose...)
- OK, the point of this is obvious. The human body is one unit and yet there are many different parts. There are arms and legs and hands and feet, (and all the internal organs), and they all have a unique function -- yet they *all* contribute to the over-all health and welfare of the body. But they each have to be functioning the way God has made them to function.
- And so it is in the church. For the church to be all God desires for it to be, every member of the body has to be functioning, and functioning the way God has designed them.
- And the point of application (here) is that every member must have some kind of ministry to the whole body. Every member of the body is critical to the over-all health and well-being of the whole.

- And listen, if *my* part of the body is *not* functioning, or *your* part of the body is *not* functioning, then the body is being crippled! You say, “You mean I’m that important?” YES. That is exactly what the Word of God declares.
- If your spiritual gift is missing, then the whole body is hurt. If your position is vacant, then the whole team suffers because of it.
- ILL. - Think about the game of football for a moment. In the game of football, coaches are always trying to drill it into the head of their players how critical it is for everyone to play their position.
- There is a constant temptation to follow the action rather than to stay where they are supposed to be. And when players do that, it can be disastrous. Your team cannot afford for you to be out of position. You have to fill the gap you are supposed to fill. You have to be where you are supposed to be on the field.
- And, you know, there is an interesting thing that happens in the game of football. In the locker room, when the coach diagrams the plays on the chalk board, the plays always work perfectly because on the chalk board everyone is always where they are supposed to be.
- But when you get on the field, it can become a very different story. And in the church it can be a different story as well. *Not* everyone always plays their position.
- If I’m a tackle, and I’m trying to cover the deep ball, it is *not* going to work very well. If I’m a teacher, and I’m using all my time on administration, it is the same thing.
- Listen to what Paul said in 1 Cor. 12:29, “All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of* miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”
- What is the implied answer to these questions? NO. Of course *not*. *Not* everyone does the same thing. And there are some “miracle sign gifts” (here) that passed off the scene when the apostles and prophets did, but in *our* day and time, we might ask, “Are all preachers and teachers? Are all deacons? Are all missionaries? Are all evangelists or church planters? Do all people have the gift of mercy or the gift of service? Do all people have the gift of hospitality?” NO.
- Everyone of us has been given different gifts, but all of our gifts are for the good of the whole body. The body needs our gifts to compliment the other gifts. No one can be everything that is needed (*not* even pastors -- in fact, *especially not* pastors).

- Why? Because the pastors have been called by God to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. And yes, they *do* exercise their gifts in order to do that, but they were never intended by God to do *all* the work of the ministry.
- ILL. - Imagine a reporter coming to interview a quarterback, and he asks, “Are you ready for the big game tomorrow?” And he says, “Oh, yeah! I’m really ready! I am so ready that I have decided to play all eleven positions on offense myself.” How do you think that would turn out?
- Listen, if I could put a big “S” on my T-shirt, and walk around here with some sort of cape on my back, and I could leap tall buildings with a single bound, and I could fly faster than a speeding bullet, and I could teach every Sunday School class, and could make every hospital call, and could counsel every need, and know everything about everything in the church, it would be the worst thing that ever happened to this body of believers.
- It would cripple the church, because that is *not* how God has designed His church to function. God desires for *all* of you to be equipped, in order for you to use your spiritual gifts, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ.
- 1 Cor. 12:4-6 says, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are

varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*.”

- Listen my friend, there is no one under God’s heaven quite like you. Your gifts are as unique as your fingerprint. You are like a “spiritual snowflake” – there are no two alike. There are varieties of gifts, and a lot of different ministries, and a wide range of results.
- So don’t place limitations on yourself by looking at a few basic ones and saying, “Well, I don’t have that gift, so can’t really do anything important.” Get that nonsense out of your head right now! Instead, begin releasing your gifts to God to be used of Him to do what He wants you to do with them.
- There is a place in the body of Christ for you! Don’t try to be something you are *not*. Don’t try to be someone else. Just like a football team doesn’t need 11 quarterbacks, so God doesn’t need all of us to be in the same role.
- He has created us differently to accomplish different purposes. So be the very best “you” that you can be for the glory and purposes of God. Play your position. If you are a left guard, then be the very best left guard you can be. If you are the waterboy, then be the absolute best waterboy there ever was.

- Well, there is one last thing we need to see (here) this morning (in regard to spiritual gifts). *Not only* do we see the *direction* and the *diversification* of the gifts, but thirdly we see:

III. THE DETERMINATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- Mark this well: God is the One who determines how the gifts are distributed! We don't get to decide which gifts we get. God does that. There is *not* a single command in Scripture to pursue a specific gift. Why? Because God is the one Who determines all that.
- 1 Cor. 12:18 says, "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired." Verse 24 says, "...God has *so* composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked..."
- Verse 28 says, "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues."
- God Himself has designed each and every member of the body of Christ. He did *not* turn out a monotonous line of uniform Christians. He did *not* make us all boringly alike.
- The word for "placed" in v. 18 refers to the act of divine appointment. Just as God planned the

physical body with all its various parts, (all with different functions for the good of the whole), so He has planned the various parts of the church as well.

- Listen, (let me ask you), what does the Bible say? How many members has God placed in the body as it pleased Him? How many? ALL OF THEM. EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM.
- And when you and I are *not* content with the set of gifts He has given us, we are really rebelling against the sovereign will of God for our lives. We are acting like the imaginary antagonist in Rom. 9:20 who says to the potter, "Why did you make me like this?" (expound)
- Hey, there is no place for discontent. There is no place for selfishness. There is no place for jealousy or conceit. Why? Because God is the One who gives the gifts as it pleases Him. He is the potter; we are simply a lump of clay.
- And notice something else here. The word for "composed" in v. 24 means "mixed together." It is a term for mixing colors. This is artistic terminology.
- And what this points to is a harmonious blending of just the right tones and hues and colors to create the perfect painting.

- ILL. - Perhaps the best way to think about how the blend of spiritual gifts make us unique, is to think of a color palette with all the primary colors on it. An artist can mix and blend those few primary colors in such a way as to create literally millions of different shades and tones and hues.
- That is what God is doing in the giving of spiritual gifts in the church. God's diversity in giving the gifts is *not* accidental. It is *intentional*. God does *not* say, "Let's see – I'll throw a few gifts down and see where they land..." NO. He is creating a masterpiece with the perfect blend of the gifts He gives.
- We are His masterpiece and He is the artist. He has gifted us in exactly the way He desires for us to be gifted in order to accomplish exactly what He desires for us to accomplish.
- Listen, God *not only* chooses the right gifts for you and me, but He mixes us in with the right people, so that the combination of those gifts will result in the accomplishment of His purposes in a given location.
- God has you here at PBC for a reason. He wants you to use your spiritual gifts to help build up this body of believers. He wants you to have a ministry in this church.
- You are *not only* the right color (to use artistic terms), but you are the right color in the right place

to produce the kind of masterpiece He wants to produce here.

- Folks listen, whatever your gifts are, they are essential for this church. God wants them to be functioning. That's *not* my opinion – that is the Word of God.
- Listen to what the Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:10. He said, "As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."
- Can it get any clearer than that? And that is a command. That verse tells us that every last one of us has received some kind of spiritual gift, and every one of us has the responsibility before God to "employ" that gift (or those gifts) "in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."
- We're all stewards of God's grace. We don't get to decide if we are going to be a steward or *not*. If you're a child of God, you are a steward. The only question is, "Will we be a good steward or a bad one?" And there is going to be a day of reckoning, when we will give an account for our stewardship.
- I promise you, my friend, (by the authority of the Word of God), our Lord does *not* want you to be sitting on the sidelines; He wants you in the game. He wants you to play your position, and to play it well.

- A wise coach once said, “If you believe that your position is the most important one on the field, and if you play it that way on every play, we cannot be beaten.” (apply to the church)
- PRAYER