

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: 1 Corinthians

Spiritual Gifts Pt. 6

1 Corinthians 12:8-11; 28-31; Romans 12:4-8

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 07.09-10.11

Page 959 is also 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 so if you've brought your own bible let's turn there together. There are sixteen chapters in the book of 1 Corinthians. Three are devoted to understanding the spiritual gifts. That ought to give us an idea of the importance of the gifts to the church and to us as individual believers. One-fifth of the book of 1 Corinthians is dedicated to the spiritual gift. John Owens, who was a Puritan, living in the 1700's, a prolific writer wrote this about the spiritual gifts. Quote "Spiritual gifts are that without which the church cannot subsist in the world (or survive in the world), nor can believers be useful to one another and the rest of mankind to the glory of Christ as they ought to be. They are the powers of the world to come, those effectual operations of the power of Christ whereby His kingdom was erected and is preserved." End Quote. He says the spiritual gifts are that without which the church cannot survive in the world. That's why we're taking our time moving through chapter 12; evaluating, understanding, learning about the spiritual gifts. Reality – we could have blown through chapter 12 in about two weeks. We are in week six now of our study. Why are we taking our time? Because spiritual gifts are vital to your spiritual growth and to the church. When you understand your spiritual gifts you understand how you operate; how you operate as a person; how God has uniquely gifted you. But more importantly than that you understand your place within the body of Christ. So, we're going to be moving slowly. Why? So that we can have an understanding, a collective understanding how we fit in the church and then how we can then turn around and thus glorify Christ through our gifts.

Let me just back up for a moment and let me re-lay that foundation of understanding what a spiritual gift is and what it is not. There are four aspects of a spiritual gift. Number one – we learned that it is a spiritual gift. In other words, there is a spiritual dimension to this. It's not a natural ability or talent. We all have natural abilities. We all have natural talents. Not what we're talking about. We're not talking about those. We're talking about something God has given you that is spiritual in nature; that at your new birth when you became a believer that God gave you something, a gift so that you can then return it in service to him and the body of Christ. It's spiritual in nature. It is verse 4, a gift. He gave it to you. It was His. He gave it to you. It's not something that we look for, anticipate. It's not something we work up within ourselves. It's something that's been bestowed to us. It's a gift. Thirdly, we are to use them for service. Verse 5 tells us that we are to use these not for our own personal benefit, not even for our own spiritual growth although that is a byproduct but rather He's given them to us so we can turn around and we can give those back in service to Christ. And then, fourthly they are for the manifestation or that which is to be made known. Manifestation means to be made known. We are to use these gifts to make known the giver of the gifts – Jesus Christ himself. So, they are spiritual, they are gifts, they are services, they are manifestations. That is what we're talking about when we talk about spiritual gifts.

Now, what we've been doing over the last several weeks is that we've been dissecting this chapter – chapter 12 and we've been working very slowly through the gift list so that we understand what gifts are available to us as the body of Christ. I just want you to look; just peruse yourself through verses 8 through 11. Then drop down into verse 28 of chapter 12 in 1 Corinthians. You're going to see a number of different gifts listed. I'm not going to read them again but what have we learned? We've learned that these gifts are placed into three different

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categories. The category of teaching. There are teaching gifts. Sign gifts and leadership gifts. Now today what we're going to do is we're going to add another category. We're going to widen our scope, our understanding of spiritual gifts and what I'm going to do is I'm going to introduce to you a new category called the category of serving. So they have serving gifts in this category; gifts such as the gifts of helps; the gift of giving; the gift of mercy. Now notice that Paul mentions this gift down in verse 28 of chapter 12. It's in the midst of the gift list. He says in verse 28 God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. The gift of helping is a service gift. You say but where are those other gifts – the gift of giving and the gift of mercy? Where did you find those? Well, just as we had to go out of the book of 1 Corinthians when we were studying the leadership gift and go over to the book of Ephesians today we have to go out of 1 Corinthians. We have to go back to the book of Romans if we want to understand the rest of the service gifts. So, what I want you to do is I want you to go back. It's as if you're heading towards the front of your bible. You only have to go one book. You're going to find Romans. Romans chapter 12 and in Romans 12 we learn of another gift list. Now, what does that tell us about our list in Corinthians? That it's not exhaustive, is it? That we have a partial list, that is we want to understand all of the gifts we have to go to Corinthians, to Ephesians, to Romans. We piece this together – we have a larger working model of the spiritual gifts that are available. Now let's start in Romans, chapter 12, verse 4 and I think what you're going to find is it sounds very familiar to Corinthians.

Paul writes, for as in one body, verse 4, we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. Stop right there. That sounds familiar doesn't it? It sounds almost identical to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 12. The idea that Jesus Christ makes up the body of the church with many different people, individual people. So all of us individually collectively though make up the body of Christ. But individually we all don't have the same gift. That's his point. We've all been given different gifts and then he gives us the gift list. In verse 6, for example he says let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Now stop right there. What have you seen? So far you've seen seven gifts listed – prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and mercy. Four of these we've already studied, haven't we? We've studied them in 1 Corinthians so there's overlap. Three of them are brand new to us and those are the three that we're going to study today and all three of them fall into this new category, the category of serving.

Now let me just stop before we get into the details. Let me just say that these three gifts are probably the most widely distributed gifts that we have within the body of Christ. In other words, if you've been working through this list with me over the last several weeks then you're looking and you're thinking I don't fit any of these gifts. None of them seem to be reflective of my experience of my life. In fact, you might have been a bit confused or a little bit disappointed and

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said I don't know if I have a gift. I can't seem to find it. You know what I say, well, you know I don't think I have the gift of wisdom or knowledge. I'm not much of a student of the scriptures. I don't think I'm a teacher. I don't think I've been called to be a shepherd or an evangelist. Where do I fit? Well, there's good news for you. Likely you have a gift within the category of serving. There are more people, I believe who have the gifts in the category of serving than all the other gifts combined; that most of the church of Jesus Christ has been endowed, given the gift of either helps, giving or mercy so if you haven't found your gift yet you might be in for a real treat today because something that I say today might set off in you a sense of understanding about yourself that you haven't had before. You might think that how you act and how you've been has just been instinctual, been kind of who you are, makes up your personality. What you're going to find out is actually God has gifted you with abilities to serve, to sense, to feel, to put into actions things that have just been a part of your life all along and you're going to be able to use those for His glory in the church.

So with that knowledge let's look into these three gifts. Let's start with the gift of what Paul calls the gifts of helps in 1 Corinthians he also calls the gift of serving in Romans. Basically the same gift but two different words. Now let me just start off with a definition. The definition for helps or serving is the ability to work along side another person or group to assist in completing the task God has given them. Not real exciting so let me just add some flesh to the understanding of what these gifts really are. There are two different words that represent this one gift. The first word is the word helps and it's the Greek word *ἀντίληψις antilēpsis*. We get the word antiseptic from this word and it means to bring relief. Just like an antiseptic brings relief to a wound the gift of help brings relief to someone in need. That's very similar to the word service that Paul uses in Romans and this word *διακονία diakonía* means burden bears, one who also brings relief. That's a great word picture. When you hear the word burden bearer you need to think of someone carrying a large burden and they're taking it off someone else and they're putting it on themselves.

Whenever I hear this word I think of the Tibetan Sherpas. Do you know what a Sherpa is? In Nepal they've been made somewhat famous within the last decade because Europeans have been climbing Mount Everest. They would never be able to get to the top of Mount Everest without the locals, the Sherpas who are carrying the heavy loads up to the different camps – the base camps and beyond. Well, for generations these Sherpas have been people who are like human transports. They are like cargo transports. They can take huge loads on their backs, with their necks, their legs. They move up the hill, move this cargo in and around the villages. Their Sherpas. When you look at scripture you find that scripture is filled with examples of people who are the Sherpas of scriptures. They bear the burdens of other people.

For example – Epaphroditus. For Paul in Philippians 2 was called a burden bearer. One who served him. In fact, Paul was so busy with the day in and day out ministry requirements he couldn't do it on his own. Epaphroditus saw this, looked into his life, started to carry the burdens for Paul and he was with Paul for much of his travels. Many think he was an emanences,

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actually helped deliver some of the letters Paul was writing. Epaphroditus so served Paul that he nearly died doing it – taking the burden off Paul and putting it on himself. Phoebe in Romans chapter 16 Paul calls a burden bearer. She had a great help to many people he writes. Martha in Luke 10. Luke writes of Martha as one distracted with so much serving. She was a servant at heart. The word **διακονία *diakonía*** is very close to the word **diakonos διάκονος** which is the word for deacon. Deacons are considered people who serve. They are men with the gift of serving. You see that in Acts 6. Many of you, listen – many of you have this gift. What's ironic is that most of you don't even know you have it. It's just so much a part of your personality. Do you know what is most common with people who have this particular gift? They think they don't have anything to offer the church. They come and they say I don't know. I don't seem to fit anywhere but all the while, all their life they have been gifted with this ability to take the burden off of someone else. In fact, they find great joy in serving that way.

When we were first launching the church I met a gentleman who had a great passion, a great desire to serve in the body but he felt like he couldn't fit anywhere. Help me figure out where I can fit. So, we went out to lunch one day and we just started working through his personality and things that create a passion in his life. And we started talking about the different things that were available in the church and said, well, you know, maybe God's prepared you to teach. He said no. I'm not much of a teacher. I don't think that would fit. I said, well, alright. Have you every thought about teaching in the Children's Ministry? Oh...no...I don't really want to serve in the Children's Ministry. So we started working through some of the service ministries – the Café, working around the church cleaning or repairing things. Nothing really struck home for him. A couple weeks later a young woman came to our church; was actually a part of our church. She had two children, her husband had left her. She was having car problems and she couldn't afford to get her car repaired. This gentleman came to my mind and I called him and I told him the situation. Before I could even finish the scenario he said, yep, I'll do that. And actually for awhile there that was kind of his persona in our young early church. He would repair cars for people and he would do it free of charge. I know some of you are thinking I need that guys name right now. I want that name. But that was a part of who he was and it clicked for him. And we started talking and I said do you realize that God's gifted you with the gift of serving or the gift of helps? And he had great joy in doing this; in giving of himself and many people were a part or at least a receptive part of his ministry to them – taking the burden off of them; doing something he naturally loved to do and putting the burden on himself. That's the gift of helps.

Let me just paint a picture of in case you're thinking I might be that type of person. If you feel you have the gift of helps it's likely you'd like to come along side someone you don't want to be the leader of it. You want to just work with a leader or work with a group to accomplish a purpose. That's kind of classic of someone who has the gift of helps. They don't want to lead. They just want to be part of the group and many times they want to be behind the scenes. They don't really want to be known. They like to take the burden on and sometimes do it secretly. If this is starting to describe how you operate then you have possibly the gift of helps.

Another aspect of it is they have great joy in doing the simple things that sometimes other people just don't want to do. They have joy in picking up the slack of a project; working some of the details – some of the things that are hands on. Many times the people in our church who have this gift are those people who none of us ever see. They come after hours. They're repairing things, fixing things, cleaning things, putting things together. They're part of teams that have a project and they're one of the members who

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really build the foundation to accomplish that particular project. If this sounds like you then I'm going to tell you what Paul told not only the Corinthians but the Romans in Verse 6. Do it. Be a part of it. If this is part of who God has made you don't let this gift lie dormant. Get involved so that you can glorify the name of Christ by servicing the body of Christ. Many times we see people who have this gift and it's just kind of their natural inclination and they wait and they wait and they wait. Don't wait. Jump in.

Understand your makeup, who you are and get involved. This is the gift of helps or the gift of serving.

Now, with that in mind let's go to the second gift in our list – the gift of giving. Paul calls this the one who contributes. This is clearly a financial edge in this gift. Many of you are thinking right now, I hope I don't have this gift. But listen, you know who you are and you actually will find great joy in it. Let me give you the definition. It's the ability to give financially to meet the needs of others and to support the work of Christian ministry. It's the ability to give financially to meet other people's needs as well as to give financially to support the work of ministry. The word contribute or the word giving is the word **μεταδίδωμι** *metadidōmi*. It's two words put together. *Didōmi* means to share or to give of one's own. *Meta* is the preposition "with". The preposition intensifies the root so it means to share with. You don't just give but you give with or of yourself. Jesus used this word in Luke 3:11 whenever He said whoever has two tunics is to share with one who does not or has none. The idea there is to give of yourself. Now, Paul's not talking about just giving of your person, yourself, general giving. He's talking more specifically about financial giving. You say how do you know that? Because Paul chooses his words carefully here. This word has the force of a possession or a financial value. Now, notice the text. Look at it. Paul qualifies the gift. He not only teaches about the gift but he teaches how to use it. Look, he says the one who contributes in generosity. The other way of looking at this - the one who contributes do it in generosity.

Generosity is the Greek word single-mindedness. In other words when you sense God calling you to give single-mindedly – give. Just give. Be obedient. Don't have any ulterior motives. Don't second guess it. If you sense God is calling you to give – give and that's my advice to you. If you feel that twinge of the Spirit that God calls you to meet somebody else's needs or to give financially so a ministry can move forward – do it. Trust Him. Trust that He's going to meet your needs.

Now, what I find is that many people in the body of Christ actually have this gift but for many it lies dormant because they've never really practiced it and so what I often tell people is start by simply practicing regular giving called the tithe. Now the word tithe simply means a tenth. And so at Crossroads what we teach is that God gives us it all but he calls us His stewards and in obedience He calls us to give back a tenth to honor Him. And that's just simply the way that we understand the scriptures that God gives it all to us but because we're called His stewards He says I want you to turn around. Honor me. Give a tenth back. I've been teaching this to my kids since they were little. In fact I've taught this to Jack. Jack gets two dollars a week for making his bed and for taking out the trash. Honestly, he's never really made two full dollars because he can't seem to get them both going for an entire week but he gets there close. And what I do is at the end of the week I give him a dollar bill and then I give him the change and if it reaches two dollars I'll give him the change that matches that two dollars. I'll say now take two dimes – a dime from each dollar and put that in your tithing envelope and then take two dimes and put that in your saving envelope and the other eighty percent you can do whatever you want with. Now, really he doesn't have that much of difficulty understanding the tithe. We've talked about that. We've talked about God gives it all to you. God tells us to give ten percent but he really struggles with the savings side of that. He can't figure that out. He says, what? I put this in the bank and it's my money but I'm not allowed

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to touch it? I want to go buy Hot Wheels. Why can't I go buy Hot Wheels with my savings? Because we're saving that money Jack. It's for your college some day. Yeah, but I want Hot Wheels today. So he has a hard time understanding that. Now, we've been working through this as a family for some time. My girls make a little bit more in their allowance than that but interestingly they've followed the same practice and the more they make we still divide it out, put it in the two envelopes and that's kind of how life is.

Funny. The girls this year were taking a class called Life Skills at school and the teacher was teaching them how to budget their money and she asked the class what do you do when you first get your paycheck, you get your allowance, your money? What do you do? Well, one of my girls shot their hand up and said well, the first thing we do is we take ten percent that and we give it to the church and ten percent we put it in savings and I guess the class just came apart. What? You give ten percent of your money away to the church? Why would you do that? Well, interestingly enough many times we get that same reaction here in the church. Some of you have come out of backgrounds, you're just now starting to follow Christ. You're starting to learn about what the bible says about you as a steward and this whole concept is foreign to you and sometimes you have to work through it. But let me tell you – just start giving because you know what? You might discover in your regular pattern of giving that God has actually gifted you with the gift of giving and you're going to find great enjoyment in it. But not only that but you're going to find out that you're growing spiritually because of that particular gift.

I know of many people who never gave. They started giving. There was something inside of them that clicked. They were a part of something that God was doing and then something came along where they had the opportunity to give above and beyond their tithe. For example when we did the Cambodia Orphanage Project. For some of you that was the first time you gave beyond your tithe. You gave to something special and it clicked for you. It's like you know, God's using me to change another person's life and you discovered you had great joy. You know, God might call on you again to give. That the issue now for you will be how quickly will you respond? And I want to encourage you that when you feel that tinge go ahead and step out on faith. I'll you this. You can never out-give God. If you're faithful to Him He's going to be faithful to you. Listen. I'm not saying He's going to return that back to you or He's going to multiply it ten fold or anything like that. That's a prosperity gospel we don't believe in here. But I do believe when you're faithful to God He'll be faithful to you and you can never out-give God so when you sense that step out.

There's a friend of mine her in the church who I believe has this gift and the first time I ever asked him for something he turned me down because I didn't really know what made him tick. I didn't know where his passion lies. But when I got to know him I started to understand for one thing he has a great love for the Word of God. When our church needed bibles I went to him and I said would you be willing to give for bibles. He said I'll buy all of the bibles for the church. I have that kind of passion. He also has a great passion for children and when we started working with Asia's Hope I went to him and I said would you be willing to jump start our contributions for the Cambodia orphanage? He gave a large portion for that and that was his passion. And you know what he said? I started to pick up a pattern with him. Every time he gave I would call and thank him and he would say the exact same thing. He's say Tim. It was my pleasure. If you need anything else don't hesitate to call. That's a person with the gift of giving. They're looking for opportunity to be used by God again. But you won't know if you're that person unless you step out on faith and trust that movement of the Spirit and be obedient. That's the gift of giving.

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Now, let's go to the last gift and this is the gift of mercy and I want to give you a warning on this one because when I say the word mercy you might be tempted to click me off right here because mercy is a concept that we often talk about. It's kind of easy to grasp. The thing you have to be careful of is that mercy in the New Testament is used seventy-one times through six different words. It's really a complex word to understand and so you have to dive in. It can mean mercy. It can mean compassion. It can mean pity. It can mean sympathy. It can mean a feeling. It can mean propitiation. It can mean an action. So it's very diverse. What you need to do when you come across the word mercy in the scripture is you really need to do a study, a word study and that's what I did this last week. I did a word study on the word mercy so I understood what Paul was talking about and I came up with this diagram. This actually comes out of the Logos Bible Study Program. It's a diagram of the word study for mercy.

Now, you've heard me talk about Logos. Great resource. All of our House Church Pastors are using Logos. Our teaching pastors use Logos. Most of our teachers of the Classes at Crossroads use Logos. I'd really like to have all of you use Logos. It's so simple to use. Really makes the bible come alive and this is a great example. Here is a word that is used many, many times in the New Testament. Breaks them all down – all seventy-one words are used in this particular circle. You can click on a portion and it will explode it out and you can see the definition and how it's used but in many of the cases mercy is used as a feeling; to have a feeling of compassion. Other times it's this idea of pity or sympathy. Occasionally, though, it's used to mean mercy or compassion with action and that's how our word is used. You notice the bottom of the diagram the word is ἐλεέω *eleēō* or which is the word compassion but not only compassion but the idea of compassion and extending help. It's used twenty-eight times throughout the New Testament. So when I came to this word and I did the study now I understood what Paul is saying here. He's saying I don't want you just to feel a certain way. But the person with the gift of spiritual mercy not only feels but has a desire to act upon this. The definition is the ability to feel and express deep compassion for those in difficult situations and, here's the key – provide necessary support to assist them. Do you hear the difference? It's not just an emotion. It's a sense of emotion and involvement.

Honestly, the people with the gift of mercy these are the type of people we like to be around. They are the type of people who can see into our lives and see things that others miss. They can tell when we're depressed or when we're down or when we're concerned or when we're burdened and they sense that in and of themselves. And they have this desire not only to feel for you but to come along side and walk with you; to be there with you. This is the type of people who show up late at night at your home; who visit you in the hospital and stay with you; who bring you meals. These are the type of people who have the gift of mercy.

Our family has been fortunate enough to be involved with a woman who clearly has this gift. We've known her for fifteen years. She's a nurse by trade but she's been practicing mercy through nursing and she's been doing in with many families. Ours is just one. She's been involved with every one of our children's birth. She's been right there with Michelle and myself. She's bandaged up my family on various occasions. When one of our children is sick or something goes wrong we call her before we call the doctor. And sometimes she'll come over and look at it and say, no, he has nothing to worry about, go on or yes, you better take them to the doctor. She's been very involved in our lives. This last week actually Michelle was in the

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hospital. She had a surgery and had to stay for several days. This person was the first person on the scene when we were there for the day of the operation. She sat with us and she waited until Michelle was in recovery and then she went back and she stayed with Michelle. Then when Michelle went to the room she was there taking care of her; working as a friend but also with her expertise as a nurse making sure she had the right medication. When I came back and we decided that she was fine, tired, needed some rest and I needed to go take care of the children this woman stayed the next several hours and just stayed with Michelle to see if she needed anything. And then when Michelle went home from the hospital guess who showed up at our house with food in hand for our family? She has the gift of mercy. And she has great joy and most of you would never know her. You walk by her all the time. She's just this little woman who has this great presence in many people's lives because she sees their need and she acts in response mercifully.

You know what? That also is a description of many of you. And you know it's just innate for you. That's just who you are. You think of people and you pick up the phone and you say, you know what? I just have felt something for you. Is everything ok? Is there anything I can do? You go over to people's houses and you take them meals or you care for them. Guess what? It's likely God has given you the gift of mercy. Use it. Use it to glorify Him. Trust that sense, that movement of the Spirit. When the Spirit is telling you to act – act upon that.

Now, what do we know about the spiritual gifts? We know it's not an accident. We know it's not an accident that you feel the way you feel, respond the way you respond or act the way you act. God has uniquely gifted you for that role. And we can see that throughout scripture. Do you remember the classic example of someone who had mercy in scripture was the Good Samaritan. He didn't just act the way he acted or feel the way he felt or did what he did. He actually did this because this was a part of who he was. Do you remember what the Good Samaritan did? He's walking down the road. He sees a Jewish person who had gotten jumped and rolled; kind of left over to the side of the road to die. Many of his Jewish brothers just walked around him; didn't want to have anything to do with him. The Samaritans, by the way were bitter enemies with the Jews. The Samaritan stops and does what? Cares for this person; bandages his wounds; takes him to an inn; pays for him to stay there; comes back and checks on him. Classic example. The people with the gift of mercy they can see pain. They act upon it. They have a desire to change the situation. The ethnic, religious, socio-economic issues not a part of their concern. They're not judgmental of how you got into that situation. They just want to care for you when you're in that situation. And they have a great deal of empathy, sympathy and they get involved in your life. That's the person with the gift of mercy. If that describes you use your gift to glorify Christ.

Now, I want to take you to one more passage. Are you ready for this? I want you to go to the book of Ephesians and we're going to be done. Ephesians. You just go to the end of your bible like you're going to Revelation. You only have to go past 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and you'll hit Ephesians. I want you to go to Ephesians 2, verse 10. I want you to have that open on your lap. Because while you're turning to Ephesians 2:10 I'm going to read to you Philippians 1:6 and then we're going to put the two passages together. Ok. You're turning to Ephesians 2:10.

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I'm reading Philippians 1:6. Philippians 1:6 says I am confident of this. Paul says I am absolutely sure of this that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. That He who started a good work – you're salvation is doing a continual work in you right now and he's going to bring it to completion. Now, look over to Ephesians, verse 10. For we are his, what does it say? Say it. Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Do you hear what the scriptures are saying? That God started something in your lives. It's a good work. He's called you to something. Now He calls you his workmanship. It means He's creating something in you, through you and what is He doing? He's calling you to good works. Listen, how can you do the good works of God if you don't know how God has gifted you to do the good works? Get it? You've got to understand how God has uniquely designed you which means you need to study, evaluate, carefully look at yourself in light of the spiritual gifts so that you can turn around and say God, now I get it. Now I understand how I'm wired. Now, I'm going to turn and give that back to you so that your name is glorified and that the church of Jesus Christ matures and grows. That's your role. He started a good work in you. You're His workmanship to this very day. Now use those gifts and abilities to do the good works to glorify his name and what will happen in your life? Well, you're going to find a great sense of satisfaction because you're actually living out your purpose and not only that you'll be using your life to glorify Christ. And isn't that what we want to do? We use our life to glorify Christ.

Let's pray together.